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Divisions 19 to 22: Education and Training, \$3 263 176 000; Country High School Hostels Authority, \$13 351 000; Curriculum Council, \$21 661 000; Education Services, \$250 119 000 -

Hon Giz Watson, Chairperson.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, Minister for Education and Training.

Mr P. Albert, Director General, Department of Education and Training.

Mr P. McCaffrey, Chief Finance Officer, Department of Education and Training.

Ms S. O'Neill, Acting Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education and Training.

Ms C. Cook, Acting Executive Director, Curriculum Standards, Department of Education and Training.

Mr M. Parr, Acting Director, Facilities and Services, Department of Education and Training.

Mr J. Hopkins, Director, Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mr C. Shimmon, Finance Manager, Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mr. R. Strickland, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Department of Education Services.

Mrs E. Iaschi, Manager, Financial Services, Department of Education Services.

Mr B. Parkin, Director, Non-Government and International Education, Department of Education Services.

Mr D. Axworthy, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council.

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 witnesses' request. 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 - I thank them for doing that - over to my left, 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 fund 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 clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers.

The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask that the minister introduce her advisers to the committee. 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 the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

The Witnesses: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have lost my voice a little. However, I feel very good otherwise, so do not feel sorry for me. We will battle through. Madam Chair, I wonder whether we can now get a clarification of how we will handle each of these four divisions.

The CHAIRPERSON: Certainly. It is my intention to ask members, if they could, to direct their questions in the order of the divisions that are listed on the agenda with which they were provided. As listed on that agenda, division 19 is first, followed by division 20, Country High School Hostels Authority; division 21, Curriculum Council; and division 22, Education Services. That would make it easier.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: Do you want each of us individually to do it that way?

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The CHAIRPERSON: I will ask whether there are any questions on division 19, to start with. Once we have run out of those questions, we will proceed to division 20. With that clarification, I ask members whether they have any questions they wish to ask.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have a couple of questions about the figures. However, before I do that, I welcome all officers from the various departments. It is good to have them here. On page 8 of the *Budget Overview*, it states -

Accordingly, spending on education and training will reach \$3.6 billion in 2006-07 - an increase of \$304 million or 9.4 per cent from 2005-06.

I wonder whether the minister is aware that increases for capital user charges, depreciation and amortisation charges, all being accounting entities, do not represent a real increase in spending on education. In fact, they account for \$151 million of the \$304 million increase, which is effectively half. I was wondering whether I could get a clarification from the minister of what is the real increase in spending on education.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I thank the member for the question. The education and training budget represents 26 per cent of the total 2006-07 state budget of \$19 billion. In the recurrent budget, we have an allocation of \$3.017 billion. In the 2005-06 estimated actual budget, there is an increase of 9.4 per cent, which is \$259.9 million. In the capital budget, once again there is a real increase. The total amount is \$245.2 million. It is up by \$82 million, representing an increase on the 2005-06 budget. Before I go on to the specifics, I will say that the total spend in the 2006-07 budget is \$3.55 billion. That is an increase of \$304 million, or 9.4 per cent, on the previous budget. I do not think that there has been a time in the history of any government in Western Australia in which education has had the biggest take of the budget. This is unprecedented, and it reflects the state government's commitment to and recognition of the importance of education and training for the future of this state and certainly for the long-term prosperity of this state. As to the specifics of the capital user charges and amortisation, and how these figures fit into the total budget allocation, I will ask Peter McCaffrey, the chief finance officer, to comment on those matters.

[10.10 am]

Mr P. McCaffrey: Yes, quite correctly, there are some very large increases in the capital user charge and depreciation. In 2001, when the current government introduced accrual accounting, a number of expenses related to the education portfolio were not included in our budget statements, notably the Department of Education and Training did not have the authority to borrow money. The cost of capital was then included in our statements; therefore, from an accounting standards point of view - accrual accounting - it is a legitimate charge against those items. Although the percentage in cash terms is lower than the 9.4 per cent, it is an accepted accounting standard.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I direct the minister to page 68 of budget paper No 3.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What is that; is it division 19?

Mr P. Albert: It is the whole-of-government statement.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, it states -

... \$9.7 million will be spent to initiate strategies associated with the implementation of Outcomes and Standards Education in Years 11 and 12.

In particular, the growth in expenditure will:

It lists a couple of areas, one of which is to ensure assessment and reporting consistency across public schools. Will the minister explain how this funding will be spent to ensure assessment and reporting consistency; and what form it will take?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I thank the member for the question. It is certainly no secret that since becoming the minister, I have listened to a range of issues on the implementation of outcomes and standards in years 11 and 12 and the introduction of new courses of study. As the member would be aware from the day-to-day across-chamber debate on this issue, the government has implemented considerable changes. I will go back to the shifting of the implementation of 10 courses of study from 2007 to 2008, and the reduction from 20 to 17 in the courses due for implementation in 2007 on the recommendation of the assessment, review and moderation panel. The member will recall that in June 2005 I established a ministerial task force, which was then known as the Robson task force. That task force made nine recommendations to the government. In order to deal with the recommendations in the report of the task force, which were about securing additional resources for professional development support to assist teachers and consideration of moderation, assessment and a range of other issues, I then sought additional funding from the expenditure review committee, because none of these initiatives could be achieved without additional funding. As a result of the grant of that additional funding, we have implemented

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a number of initiatives that will provide teachers with the assistance they need. I will ask Mr Paul Albert to comment specifically on where some of those initiatives are at currently.

Mr P. Albert: The actual amount that we have budgeted for over the next four years is \$14 million, which is, first of all, for teacher development centres. The teacher development centres involve an expert teacher who must be teaching one of the new courses of study, but is freed up for 0.4 of a week.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is that for every course of study?

Mr P. Albert: For every course of study. We have teacher development centres now in place for English, aviation, media and engineering. From the beginning of next term we will have teacher development centres for the full 17 courses of study, with approximately 110 to 115 teachers freed up for 0.4 of a week. We cannot be precise at the moment, as we still need from schools the exact number of students enrolled in a course of study and which schools will take up that course of study. The way we have worked the teacher development centres is that each of those teachers will have one school reporting to them, and each school will have a contact person. Each teacher at the teacher development centres has been provided with a budget of approximately \$12 000; it varies slightly between \$10 000 and \$12 000 depending on the need. That money is to ensure that the teachers in the various schools will be supported with materials and, of course, part of the strategy is to ensure that each teacher has a teaching program prepared by the centres that each teacher can use or adopt as the teacher sees fit. Also, part of the funding is for the senior secondary academic standards team. Initially that team was established to basically lift the understanding of government schoolteachers of the way in which the tertiary entrance examination works and to target improvement. That team is now highly dedicated to the implementation of the new courses of study.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is there any provision in that funding for independent and Catholic schools?

Mr P. Albert: Perhaps the minister will answer that question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The government has already made it public that it will provide additional resources to assist Catholic and independent schools with implementation.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does the minister have any idea how much that will be?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We are currently working with both the independent and Catholic schools on that matter.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will it be in addition to the amount they get at the moment, which is about \$180 000?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Page 68 of budget paper No 3 continues in regard to professional development that some of the \$9.7 million that will be contributed is to -

- provide professional development on assessment, an assessment consultancy for schools and develop assessment support materials for classrooms.

Does that refer to the additional professional development or - particularly in regard to the government's announcement on Sunday - will there be extra professional development, which I imagine would be necessary?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I thank the member for that question. I take him back to an announcement I made on 11 September 2005. The member might recall that the professional development days were originally to be conducted at the end of the school year.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

[10.20 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: As I travelled around the state and listened to the concerns of teachers, I heard some very serious reservations about PD days being conducted at the back of the year. Some argued that it was particularly difficult for them to do systems and school development if they were logged at the back of the year, on account of the fact that transfers etc would be occurring. This was therefore an issue that I recognised and responded to. I also recognised that with a major education reform program there was a need to provide additional professional development support. Therefore, on 11 September 2005 I announced two extra professional days for secondary schoolteachers, which took the number of professional development days for them to a total of nine in one year; and on that same day I announced one extra PD day for primary schoolteachers, which took the number of professional development days for them to a total of eight.

That was very well received. We also announced that those five PD days that were at the end of the year would be, as I said, redistributed throughout the term. That gave teachers a great deal of comfort. In relation to the changes made more recently, we have reached a very positive situation indeed. There was a perception that we were moving towards a one-size-fits-all curriculum framework. That framework was legislated for, and, for K-

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10, most people accepted it. However, some concerns were expressed that perhaps the one-size-fits-all model for years 11 and 12 was not the way to go. Some concerns that were made very public - we have been working on them for quite some time - were that the format in which the information was presented to teachers made it very difficult in some cases to draw a comparison between the new courses of study and the old syllabus; it was more difficult for teachers to be specific about the content of the new courses of study; and, of course, issues were raised about the assessment process. We have since put the new courses of study within the traditional syllabus framework, with which teachers are very familiar. As a former economics teacher, I examined the course that was prepared for economics and I can tell members that about 90 per cent of the old course content is in the new course of study.

I am a bit regretful that perhaps that exercise on the professional development was not done earlier. We will certainly be providing additional support for teachers. The Curriculum Council has been given an additional allocation to meet that requirement. I will ask David Axworthy to comment. An allocation of an extra \$4.5 million is in the 2006-07 budget.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Has there been a further increase since the changes?

Mr D. Axworthy: The appropriation of the Curriculum Council for the 2006-07 financial year has increased by \$4.456 million and a further appropriation is in the forward estimates for the years ahead. That money is primarily for the establishment of assessment of both the external examination and the internal comparability and moderation activities that will occur as we roll out these courses over the next two years.

The CHAIRPERSON: I have done some mental arithmetic. If we try to cover all these divisions, we will need to allocate 20 minutes each. I can return to Hon Peter Collier, but do any other members have questions on this division?

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: I refer to page 68 of budget paper No 3 and the specific allocation for additional funding for teaching resourcing. It indicates that an additional \$9.7 million will be spent to initiate strategies for years 11 and 12 and the first dot point refers to helping to develop and make available K-10 syllabus and support materials for teachers. How much specific funding is in that figure to be given to support teachers in the early years, the kindergarten and preprimary years, to deal with the outcomes-based reporting? Can the minister advise what specific amount will be quarantined for teacher support for the early years?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want to put on record something that I think is very important for people to understand. When the Curriculum Council Bill was passed by Parliament in 1997 to create the Curriculum Council, it was very clear that the intent of the then government - Hon Colin Barnett was the minister - was that a very pure model of outcomes be established. At the time that bill was passed, the then Minister for Education got rid of the whole curriculum branch within the Department of Education. I will provide the figure.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: I want the answer to my question. This Minister for Education and Training abolished the early childhood branch.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: At the time, 330 curriculum writers provided curriculum and resource materials for teachers in the education system, and they were wiped out. I will answer the member's question, but it is a bit of a nerve to ask this government what it is doing about providing resources when the then Minister for Education got rid of 330 curriculum writers within the department. I assure Hon Barbara Scott that I do not hold the same view as Hon Colin Barnett, the former Minister for Education. I believe that we need to provide support to teachers whether they teach at kindergarten, primary school or high school. I do not believe that that was an appropriate move by the then minister. I have sought additional resources from ERC so that we can have curriculum and support materials written to support primary school teachers. As has already been explained, obviously that has been done also to support secondary teachers. It is a bit rich when the opposition runs around saying we need curriculum support materials.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: With all due respect, we have limited time and I have asked a specific question. The minister has detailed -

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am putting it in that context, and I will ask Mr Albert to comment on kindergartens in particular.

Mr P. Albert: I cannot provide the exact amount allocated in the budget for early childhood. However, the department has allocated internally \$6.4 million for the development of syllabuses from kindergarten through to year 10. We have also re-established the early childhood branch. There is a bit of an issue about the classification of the head of that branch.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Who is that?

Mr P. Albert: It is an acting position at present.

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Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Is the person early-childhood trained?

Mr P. Albert: We are in dispute over the classification of the position at the moment because it has been classified as an area director. We in the department believe that it should be classified as a director. Once we have established that it is a director, we will proceed to advertise it. However, at the moment it is only at area director level.

[10.30 am]

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Is that person early-childhood trained?

Mr P. Albert: My understanding is that that person has experience in early childhood education.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Can you answer the specific question?

Mr P. Albert: That is the acting person.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Can you answer the allocation for early years teacher support?

Mr P. Albert: As I said, the total that we have allocated is \$6.49 million. However, that is for kindergarten through to K-10 syllabus development. I will have to provide as supplementary information the amount that has specifically been allocated to early childhood.

The CHAIRPERSON: That will be question A1 and Hon Barbara Scott will receive an answer.

[*Supplementary Information No A1.*]

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: The fourth dot point on page 342 under "Significant Issues and Trends" states -

The ageing population will impact on the staffing at schools and TAFE colleges with potential for shortages emerging as the retirement rate accelerates.

I am constantly asked questions by communities and school administrators across WA about maintaining teachers at rural schools. How does the Department of Education and Training propose to address the problem of attracting teachers to rural schools and communities and then retaining them? Will the minister provide information on how the department proposes to address the issue of providing extra support and resources to new graduates, particularly those teaching in remote and rural locations?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I think this is a very important area. It is very important that we attract good staff to regional and rural schools. The days of teachers having to do a mandatory two-year stint in the country have gone. I understand that policy shift occurred as a result of an equal opportunity ruling some time ago. A recruitment campaign is the main vehicle for delivering relevant employment and recruitment information to the general public and university students who are qualifying as teachers. I think that there is work that the department can do but we have some problems, one of which is that we need to ensure that there is certainty for teachers to return from regional and rural areas. Currently, that certainty is dependent on the movement of teachers and on supply and demand across the whole system. One of the things that I am advised when I visit schools - I have gone to plenty of regional and rural schools - is that teachers love working in different parts of the state. However, one of the difficulties is that they want a guarantee that when their three, four or five years is up, they can come back to the metropolitan area. Therefore, we need to do some work in that regard. Also - I have discussed this with the director general - we need to be more family friendly in placing teachers in regional and rural areas. I refer to a husband and wife with a couple of children, the husband of whom is the teacher but his partner is not in the teaching profession but who might be happy to go to Kununurra or Derby, for example. The Department of Education and Training should act as a bit of a broker for the non-teacher partner and assist that person to make contact and look for employment opportunities. I believe that if we can keep the family unit together, first it will attract more people to work in regional and rural schools, and, second, they will probably become a more integral part of the local community. Currently, I believe that if the family members of the people who go to regional and rural areas stay in Perth, and the teaching partner drives back to Perth when school finishes at three or four o'clock, they miss out on the opportunities to become a local community member. Therefore, there is more work that we can do in this area. Incentives for teachers in rural and remote areas are at the forefront of my thinking. We have tried to build incentives relating to difficult to staff schools and more remote schools into enterprise bargaining agreements. In other words, people get additional allowances for going to these schools, and we will continue to build on those incentives. I will ask Mr Albert to comment on the specific incentives, because they cover locality incentives. We offer final-year scholarships for people who are at university with a view to attracting them to regional and rural areas.

Mr P. Albert: Recruitment is a major issue, particularly the placement of teachers in country and rural areas. We now have a locality allowance and that will be substantially boosted under the EBA that is currently on offer to teachers. We also have a very significant remote teaching package. Again, under the proposed EBA that will

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be substantially boosted. In fact, the proposal is for the allowance to go from \$11 500 to \$15 000 annually. Therefore, our teachers will be competitive with some of the people working in the mining community and so on. We also have what is called the country teaching program. Under that program, teachers qualify for an allowance. All the country schools now operate under that program and those allowances have been boosted. We also provide scholarships, which members are probably familiar with. They are to do with general placement in rural areas, plus of course the areas of shortage, which include mathematics, languages other than English and so on. Then of course, in science we have the higher education contribution scheme reimbursement scheme. Finally, we have the student practicum rural placement scheme, which has been very effective. Attracting people to the country is still a major issue. We are now looking at ways in which we can boost the numbers. The minister mentioned the family-friendly policy approach. The other tack we are taking is to promote more effectively the attractiveness of teaching in the country and to make country teaching positions much more of a higher status than many teachers view them. It is a challenge, but we will not shy away from it.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: On page 352 under “Miscellaneous/Other School Facilities” the *Budget Statements* read -

The 2006-07 Budget provides a \$7.5 million commitment for the provision of administration upgrades, covered assembly areas, library/resource centres and toilet upgrades at various schools.

Esperance Primary School was informed by the then district superintendent in 1992 that it had been identified as the school to receive the next administration upgrade in the district. Despite working closely with the Department of Education and Training for 14 years, the school is still without workable administration areas, and there are various rooms with regard to that which I will not go into. Can the minister tell me when Esperance Primary School will receive funding to proceed with the much-needed administration area upgrade? Can the minister also please provide details of the schools and projects that will share in the \$7.5 million announced for school facilities in 2006-07? The minister might provide that information on notice if she wishes.

[10.40 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am happy to provide some comment and then I will ask Mr Mal Parr to provide some comment. There is a process for how these issues are prioritised. As the member will be aware, I sometimes get called to schools in the metropolitan area and have meetings with representatives of the parents and citizens associations or school administrators. Everybody has a very compelling case for why their school needs something extra. The only point I make is that, as minister, I must consider all schools. There are 772 government schools in the state and every one of them would have a compelling reason for it to be considered a unique case. In some ways they are all unique cases, but it comes down to a question of available resources. There is a process that schools go through to ensure that they are put on the priority list. Basically, they submit their priorities to the district office.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: That is what happened in 1992.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We were not in government in 1992.

The district office then prioritises. The member will be happy to know that we have set up a special program to upgrade toilets etc. These programs did not exist under the former government. The member must give credit where credit is due. Obviously, district priorities will determine where we get to. I will ask Mr Mal Parr to comment on the specifics of Esperance Primary School, because he is the fount of all knowledge on capital works, toilets and resource centres.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: And shades.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, and shades.

Mr M. Parr: The process that the minister outlined for setting priorities for the 2006-07 capital works program is in progress. The various district education offices have submitted their assessment of priority for each of the sub-programs that have been referred to, and they are being assessed at this stage. Administration upgrades vary significantly from school to school, and we contend that it is prudent to undertake some feasibility work on each of them to ascertain the proposed solution and obviously the estimated total cost. We expect to make recommendations to the minister later this year, and announcements of the schools that will attract funding are expected in November. Within that context, Esperance Primary School will receive consideration.

The CHAIRPERSON: I will give the next question to Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, but I am aware that Hon Peter Collier has more questions. I also indicate to members that there may not be many questions asked during a couple of the other divisions, so I am allowing this division to run on a bit in case members are watching the clock, as I am.

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Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: I refer to page 351 of the *Budget Statements* and the capital works program for new primary schools in particular. I note that the Mt Barker Primary School development is planned for the senior high school site. An allocation of \$7 million to the program has been supplemented to the tune of an extra \$800 000 because of cost overruns. With a probable continuation of such cost overruns, can the minister advise whether there are likely to be further funding increases to ultimately - I emphasise the word "ultimately" - secure the original grand plan intended for the one community, one college development?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Certainly, there is no reason that the capital costs of building schools would be any different from the cost of building anything else. As the member will be aware, \$1 billion has been allocated to build 39 new schools during this term of government. An amount of \$300 million will be expended on additional maintenance and \$300 million will be expended on school upgrades. Of course, next year seven new primary schools will be built at Hopetoun, Bertram, Canning Vale, east Butler, Neerabup, Tapping and Two Rocks. Obviously these schools are subject to cost escalations, as is any other building program. We have recognised the cost pressures of materials, as well as the cost pressures of labour supplies. For example, we often hear in the community that bricklayers are now getting \$3 a brick. I remember a time when bricklayers got 50c a brick. I say good on the bricklayers. However, it is a reflection of the fact that there are cost pressures. We have factored in these costs. We have agreed to increase the scope of the Mt Barker project to accommodate the issues that the member has raised. Mr Peter McCaffrey will comment on that issue, but we have already recognised this issue and are working towards addressing it.

Mr P. McCaffrey: When the issue of whether the \$7 million would be sufficient arose, we agreed with the community - the director general has been to the area - that we should commit another \$800 000 to ensure that phase 1 would continue as planned. To answer the member's question about what will happen in the future, we are expected to review our capital works program, along with all our budget items, on an annual basis with Treasury. We are expected to advise it of any shifts in tender prices and any other impacts on the building program. We do not know whether there will be an increase, but if there is a cost increase associated with all those elements that the minister just outlined, I expect that we will be able to address that in the same way that we have done so today.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I refer to page 351, which lists some new primary and secondary schools and some additions and maintenance improvements to various schools. Can the minister confirm whether any of the new schools or the maintenance issues involve a shift to a six-by-six teaching pattern; and, if that is the case, does that confirm that the government will be moving year 7 into secondary school?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I will get that matter clarified. I do not know where the member would get the view that the government -

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am asking a question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: This question has been asked previously in this place.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Are any of the schools providing for year 7 in a secondary school?

[10.50 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The policy of government is quite clear. We are not going to actively restructure all the existing schools to fit into what some people would argue is a more lucrative model. The whole idea of shifting year 7 into secondary school is driven by economics. The commonwealth government pays the state government a higher rate for high school students than it pays for primary school students. Some people believe that that might be the way to go, but it is not the government's policy to restructure the entire education system to facilitate that. The educational benefits of moving students from year 7 into year 8 are inconclusive. There is no compelling argument either way. Rather than restructure the whole education system, the Department of Education and Training has made a general policy decision to promote the concept of the middle school where new schools are established.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does that include year 7?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Some of those may well be under that structure.

Mr P. Albert: We will do so for only two reasons: firstly, if the pressure on primary schools is such that they cannot accommodate the growth, which was the case in Ellenbrook; and, secondly, if the community is agreeable. The initial concept at Dalyellup, for example, was that the year 7 students would be placed in the high school setting. I understand that there is not strong community support for that proposal, and so the department probably will not proceed with that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What about Vasse?

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Mr P. Albert: Dalyellup.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry, I apologise.

Mr P. Albert: The community was not supportive. The issue for year 7s is whether the students' performance or outcomes improve. A preliminary scan of our data indicates that it does not make a difference whether a child is in either a primary school or a high school. The capital costs of making such a policy shift are very substantial. We have promised to provide the minister with a report in August, but at this stage there do not seem to be any significant educational benefits associated with such a shift.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is the provision being made in some schools?

Mr P. Albert: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Or where the community -

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is fine. I am not worrying about the ideology.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The government wants to respond to communities and we are working very closely with them. I am sure that the communities find this very refreshing, as they should.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I refer to the \$2 million community awareness campaign listed in the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. I am interested to hear from the minister why the government deems it necessary to spend \$2 million on a community awareness campaign that includes promoting positive changes across the education and training portfolio, and promoting changes to the leaving school age, the outcomes-based and standards-based education system and post-compulsory schooling, and initiatives such as the It Pays to Learn Allowance. Why is it necessary to spend that money, given that the increase in the school leaving age has already been partly implemented and the minister believes that 90 per cent of the community supports the implementation of the OBE courses of study?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I wonder where the member has been for the past nine months.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would appreciate a response from the minister.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: He must have been living in a cave or on top of a mountain.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have been listening; obviously the minister has not.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am amazed that the member has asked me this question.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Why did the minister make those changes last week?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The number of times that the member, together with other members of the opposition, has stood -

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can the minister answer the question?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am giving the member an answer.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The minister is not.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: On a number of occasions the member has stood in this chamber and has made the point that the community must be informed about these things. He asked why the community was not informed about outcomes -

Hon PETER COLLIER: No. I asked why the minister was not listening to the community.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The minister should try to find one instance in *Hansard* when I have made that statement.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member and other members opposite -

Hon PETER COLLIER: I challenge the minister to find it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Members of the opposition in this chamber and the other place have gone on and on about how this government -

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does not listen.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Does not inform the community about shifts in policy.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I said the government does not listen.

The CHAIRPERSON: Will the member allow the minister to answer the question?

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Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would love to hear a response from the minister.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The fact is that the government recognises the need to inform the broader community. I do not make any secret about that. If the member knows of a way in which that can be done without spending any money, I would be happy to hear from him.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Why did the minister make those changes six months out from its implementation?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We are going through some of the biggest changes to the education system in this state's history.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What does the campaign involve?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member is quite right: we have raised the school leaving age. The member is right also that we do support outcomes-based education.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is a bit late to advise people now if year 11 students are already in compulsory schooling.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member cannot have it both ways. He cannot say day in, day out that parents do not understand what OBE is or what the new courses are -

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have not said that. I have said that the minister has not listened.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: He cannot say that parents do not understand that their children will be able to do an apprenticeship while they are in years 11 and 12, or that parents do not understand the community service obligation. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot tell me that we need to keep parents informed and at the same time tell me not to inform them. That is ridiculous.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am asking how the minister will do it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We will do it in a variety of ways.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The government has allocated \$2 million. How will it be done? It is a simple question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: There are a variety of strategies. We are still working through them.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I ask the minister to tell me what they are.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member can rest assured that a variety of strategies will be implemented.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The government has allocated \$2 million for it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We will communicate with parents on a range of issues on the changes to the education system. I believe it is my responsibility as the minister to keep parents informed.

Hon PETER COLLIER: So do I.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am glad that the member agrees that this should be funded.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The minister and the department will be aware of the importance of the minerals and resources sector to Western Australia. Is the minister also aware that only 44 students sat the geology tertiary entrance examination in 2005, and that the number of students who sat the exam was even lower in 2004, when only 35 students sat for it? The course is offered in only four government high schools and one private school. What is being done to attract more students to geoscience studies in secondary schools?

[11.00 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I thank the member for the question. The government has increased the number of science courses that are available. I will refer specifically to geology in a moment. The phase 2 courses for next year include physics, biological science, chemistry, computer science, and earth and environmental science. More science courses are being conducted than has ever been the case. This issue probably relates to the definition of the course. The earth and environmental science course is a geology-based course. The two points I make are, firstly, Western Australia is offering more science courses than it ever has and, secondly, the geology course is classified as earth and environmental science. Perhaps it would have been smarter to call it geology. We may reconsider that.

It is only a change in nomenclature, so I am not totally fazed. People argue that this is no good and it is about reducing opportunities for students; however, this is exactly where we have to go. Western Australia is a resource-based state. One of the things members may find is that because of the lack of commonwealth funding

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for high-cost courses, such as geology, the opportunities at the top level are stifled. We need to get the commonwealth government to recognise the importance of some of the high-cost courses, such as geology, to the economic development of this state. Perhaps that is the reason that students do not choose to move into geology courses. I will ask Mr Albert to make a more specific comment.

Mr P. Albert: Geology has been what is called a small candidature course since I was in the Curriculum Council; that is, since 1996. It has fluctuated between 40 and 80 students. One of the problems that arises is when the course is scaled. The course is standardised around a mark of 61 per cent and that means half of those students will, in essence, get 61 per cent or less and half will get 61 per cent or more. Parents, students and schools are very well aware of how students in a small candidature unit are disadvantaged under the existing tertiary entrance examination system. Generally, students are advised to avoid small candidature subjects, and that is the problem.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I will ask Mr David Axworthy to comment.

Mr D. Axworthy: With respect to the new course of study of earth and environmental science, we were conscious when developing this course of the very fact that the member mentioned - the low number of students who have been studying geology. An even more frightening notion is that, at the moment, not one of the undergraduates at the University of Western Australia studied geology when he or she was at school, for the very reasons outlined by Mr Albert. When we were determining this new course we worked very closely with the geology industry and representatives from the mining industry in considering how we could offer a course that married together the notion of geology, sustainability and environmental issues, so that we could talk about sustainable geology.

This course has gained wide respect from the geology industry around Western Australia, to the extent that Professor John de Laeter has been working very closely with us. Professor John de Laeter is a person to be revered in the Western Australian scientific community. The geology industry is very anxious to work closely with the Curriculum Council. At a recent meeting of its board members, which comprised all the stakeholders in the geology and mining sectors, they said they wanted to work with the Curriculum Council to provide additional geology-specific resources to enable students in Western Australia to have the very best education. Their interest is in not only those students who will continue to pursue a career in geology, but also the broader community having a wider understanding of the issues of geology and the impact it has on the Western Australian economy and community.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: On page 354 of the *Budget Statements*, under the heading "Completed Works" there is a line item "Woodvale SHS (Music)". Perhaps it should be listed under "Works in Progress". I placed a question on notice about music education, and I appreciate the answer. The national review of education gave rise to grave concern that music education is conducted in a rather ad hoc fashion from school to school in Western Australia. How many hours of music education must students receive in each year, from years 1 to 12, when is it expected that the response to the national review will be completed, and why has it taken seven months?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I will ask Chris Cook to comment. As I go around schools, music studies seem to be very popular. As the member is aware, it does play a key role in ensuring that all students have an opportunity to demonstrate the arts outcome of the Curriculum Council. It is certainly regarded as being important.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: It is an additional question to the one I put on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member asked a very specific question.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: I put it on notice and I have an answer. I am asking an additional question to explain the original answer.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can the member not read?

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: It is a question on notice that I submitted for this hearing.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I will ask Ms Cook to answer it.

Ms C. Cook: I can talk broadly about this. The first part of the member's question refers to allocation of time. All schools abide by the mandated curriculum framework and within the learning area of arts, music discipline is one of those areas that schools cover. There is no determined allocation of time, so to speak. As the minister revealed, many schools allocate a large proportion of time on various days of the week to music. It plays a key part in ensuring that those students participate in and have an opportunity to deliver the outcomes for the arts area of the curriculum framework. As the minister said, it is an extremely important part of the students'

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curriculum provision. There are many active music programs across public schools. The department is currently working with the Department of Culture and the Arts to prepare a response to the national review of school music education. I met with that officer this week and we are talking through what that response may be, but it is currently being developed. No funds have been allocated at this time, because it is contingent upon that particular discussion. When the review is completed, we will determine what the recommendations will be.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Therefore, the minister is happy that it has taken seven months to respond to a national review.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: When was it due to be responded to?

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: It was released on 21 November 2005.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I do not know what the timeframe is for the review.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: Perhaps someone should have found out, as the question was put on notice.

The CHAIRPERSON: Does the member want to put that as a further question?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am happy to take that question on notice.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: It was on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A2.]

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: I refer to the sixth dot point under “Major Achievements 2005-06” on page 342. It states -

The Aboriginal Literacy strategy, which aims to improve the literacy outcomes of students in remote community schools, entered the second year of a three-year Commonwealth funded program and provided support to 43 Remote Teaching Service schools.

How much commonwealth funding went into the Aboriginal literacy strategy, and how much was matched by the state to improve literacy in those 43 remote Aboriginal communities?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I thank the member for the question. I recognise that indigenous education is certainly a very high priority for this government. I have said in this place previously that I started out in indigenous education in 1980, teaching students from Cundeelee, Warburton and Sandstone.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: I started out a lot earlier than that. I just want an answer to the question.

[11.10 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member will get the answer, but she may need to be a little bit patient. The point that I want to make is that the child health review, the findings of which were recently released, made some interesting findings on the way that we teach indigenous students. Certainly, it recommended that perhaps all we need to do, if we want better literacy and numeracy outcomes, is recognise that for many indigenous students English is their second language. We need to be able to respond to that.

I also want to put on record that I have initiated a review of literacy and numeracy. The reason I did that is that I want better educational outcomes for all students. However, the achievement of all students in a normal distribution curve shows that, unfortunately, most of our indigenous students are at the tail end. My challenge is to move them from the tail end up towards the middle, and as far as I can towards the top end.

In relation to the specifics, there was a commonwealth contribution to that program, and a state contribution. The contribution from the commonwealth was \$1.5 million a year. It was drawn from a range of commonwealth sources, all of which include English language literacy among the target outcomes. However, the commonwealth funding is for only two years, so it is a 50-50 arrangement over a two-year period. However, the state intends to continue the program, subject to evaluation.

Hon BARBARA SCOTT: The statement says that it is a three-year program.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is why we are funding the third year.

The CHAIRPERSON: The next question is from Hon Peter Collier.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can we move to the Curriculum Council?

The CHAIRPERSON: Do any members have further questions on division 19? I will take one question from Hon Donna Faragher.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: My question relates to page 353 of the *Budget Statements* and also to the question on notice that I asked about works in progress, specifically at Atwell high school. The answer that was given to

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me was that the school will open in February 2008 for students in years 7 and 8, with the senior learning community due for completion at the end of term 1. Can I assume, then, that years 9 to 12 will not open until 2009? The minister might want to take that question on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Mr Mal Parr, who is the expert on everything to do with capital works, will respond to that question.

Mr M. Parr: It is normal that the enrolment of a secondary school would increase by one cohort a year. Assuming that the school opened with enrolments in years 7 and 8 in 2008, we expect that it would have enrolments in years 7, 8 and 9 in 2009, and subsequently grow by a cohort after that.

The CHAIRPERSON: Will Hon Peter Collier indicate which division he will be asking questions on?

Hon PETER COLLIER: The Curriculum Council, division 21.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: I have some questions on division 20.

The CHAIRPERSON: We can come back to division 20. We will deal with division 21 at this point.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I refer to the first two dot points under “Major Initiatives For 2006-07” on page 378, which state -

Finalise procedures for implementation of moderation partnerships for all providers of new courses.

Develop and implement moderation strategies for 17 new courses.

I would like some clarification regarding moderation. I have been trying to get clarification for a number of months, and I have not been able to establish it. However, when I went to the forum last Wednesday, I feel that I got some clarification from Lois Joll of the Curriculum Council. She insisted quite emphatically that the moderation, standardisation and scaling procedures that are currently in use will continue to be used in their current form and there will be no changes; they will be exactly the same. She was quite emphatic about that. I wonder whether the minister could clarify whether that is the case, because a lot of people would like to know that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Again, I will ask Mr Axworthy to respond.

Mr D. Axworthy: Yes, I will clarify that situation. The whole issue about moderation is to get comparability between different schools and different teachers within schools and across different schools. When we talk about the courses of study, we are talking about the full range of students and not just those students who previously would have taken the tertiary entrance examination. If we talk about the cohort of students who are going to do the TEE and who want the opportunity to go to university and are interested in getting a tertiary entrance ranking at the end of their course, everything that the member has said is correct. The procedure that we will use mirrors the procedure that we have always used for TEE; in other words, students will have a mark, 50 per cent of which is determined from their schoolwork and 50 per cent from an external examination. The external examination will be used to moderate and scale the courses, so we will use exactly the same procedure as we have used in the past.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I just wonder why it is a new initiative; that is all.

Mr D. Axworthy: As I said, the courses of study are not just for TEE students.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am aware of that.

Mr D. Axworthy: In fact, only about 30 per cent of the students will study a course of study. Those students who are not going on to university will not necessarily sit the external examination. Another form of moderation will exist. That is what we call the moderation up front. It is the moderation that occurs before students get to the end of their course.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will that include the partnerships?

Mr D. Axworthy: We have used the term “partnerships” at various times, yes. This is something that we have always done in the past, but it is now a much wider scheme of events. When a new course of study comes in, for the first two years we will moderate very closely to see that teachers are in fact teaching the new course and assessing the new course in the appropriate way, following the assessment procedures that we have laid down. Because we are now moving into having such a large number of new courses going into schools, it means that the moderation activity at the front end will be that much greater over the next few years.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will take your word for that. I refer to page 71 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Under the heading “Curriculum Council”, it refers to “New Expenditure Initiatives - Recurrent” and “Outcomes and Standards Education”. One of the dot points relates to the implementation of a general achievement test, or

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GAT. I would like some clarification of whether at the meeting last Sunday between the various representatives from the education sector, the Premier and the minister, it was agreed or established that schools need to submit results only at the end of the year, not halfway through. Could I have that established first? If that is the case, I think the minister will find that it would render the GAT redundant. If there are no midyear results, its use as a moderating tool is pointless. I would like some clarification of that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In fact, on 11 September 2005 I announced the introduction of the general achievement test. It was an initiative that was a direct result of the work that was done by the Robson task force; it was not an initiative that came out of any meeting.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Pardon?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It did not come out of a meeting.

[11.20 am]

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, I did not say the GAT came out of the meeting. I asked whether schools had to submit midyear results, because that would render the general achievement test redundant.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have not reached that yet. The issue about whether they submit results twice a year or just at the end of the year is still under consideration. If the member is asking me whether a firm decision has been made on that, no such decision has been made. I will be happy to hand over to Mr Axworthy for some additional comments.

Mr D. Axworthy: I will just explain about the general achievement test. The funding we have received for two years is to conduct a full investigation into the potential use of the general achievement test, or some such similar test, for gaining moderation or comparability of results.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does that mean for individual students?

Mr D. Axworthy: Ultimately we want to look at whether it is useful for individual students. This week, students in all the new courses of study - that is, students in year 12 who are studying aviation; students in year 11 who are studying English, aviation, media and engineering; and some additional students in year 10 taking up some of the options in one of those four courses - have sat the general achievement test. We will compare the results of that with the information that we will be getting at the end of the first semester on student scores, and assess the usefulness of that test as a potential moderation activity. This year, there will be no scaling, movement or statistical moderation of any individual student's scores. That is a guarantee. This is a research project, at the end of which we will evaluate how useful this instrument is, or whether there is a use for an instrument but not necessarily this one, and where it will fit in the future.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is the minister aware that there are some question marks over the accuracy of the GAT?

Mr D. Axworthy: Certainly. The GAT was chosen because it was a ready-made instrument that had been used in Victoria for a particular purpose. Part of the research project was to see how useful that could be in our context in Western Australia. Before giving a commitment to introduce this test into our fully fledged assessment regime, we felt it was necessary to assess it.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: I refer to page 363 of the *Budget Statements*. The first dot point under "Significant Issues and Trends" states -

New mining ventures incorporating family housing are likely to see an increase in demand for student boarding services.

The third dot point states -

The increase in the school leaving age will mean that boarding services working in partnership with educational services, particularly senior high schools, will play an important role in meeting the education needs of country students needing to stay on at school or in vocational training until age 17.

In view of the 30 per cent increase in student enrolments at the Esperance Residential College in 2005 - the numbers went from 85 to 120 - does the minister agree that there is an urgent need for the proposed \$11.5 million upgrade of that facility, along with improved conditions for current students, to increase the capacity of the school from 80 to 144? Has that long-awaited building upgrade been prioritised?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The upgrade of the Esperance Residential College was considered in the light of other requests for capital works. I do not know what impact the increase in the school leaving age and the 2 200 students coming back into the system has had on residential facilities. I will ask Mr Hopkins to make a comment on that. My office has not received very much correspondence about the impact of the increased

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numbers of students on the demand for residential facilities. That demand may well peak in 2008, when students will have to remain at school until the age of 17. We will certainly have to look at that. The longer term impact of the 2 200 students remaining in the system who would not have done so had it not been for the legislative change to the school leaving age is hard to ascertain. I will ask Mr Hopkins to make a comment.

Mr J. Hopkins: The Country High School Hostels Authority has been monitoring the situation at Esperance for a number of years, and it implemented a master planning process last year. It has fully costed a number of options for the development of the Esperance Residential College, as the member indicated, up to a capacity of 144. That is the planning. The current enrolment there is just under 100 students. It did start a bit higher this year, but numbers have dropped away during the course of the year. We are very aware that the new residential development at Hopetoun is likely to increase the demand for the boarding service at Esperance. We are monitoring that right through this year, and there will be a submission for funding from next year's budget.

The CHAIRPERSON: I am aware that we have only a couple of minutes left for these divisions. Members should be aware that they can place questions on notice, so they should not panic. We might take a short break between the end of this session at 11.30 and the start of the next session, which is the Department of Environment.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just confirm that I can submit some questions on notice?

The CHAIRPERSON: The member should provide them at the end of the session.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: They have to be tabled today.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I refer to page 375 of the *Budget Statements*. The third dot point under "Major Initiatives For 2006-07" reads -

Publishing and distributing a CD ROM for distribution to all teachers containing the Curriculum Framework Progress Maps (Outcomes and Standards Framework for the Department of Education and Training version) and the Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guides K-12, including further within phase sequencing of content for particular outcomes in all learning areas and the national statements of learning.

I assume that that CD will contain all details of the 17 courses of study due for implementation next year. If so, particularly given the changes that were made last Sunday, when will that CD be distributed to teachers?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Before asking Mr Axworthy to comment, I will make a comment myself. Teachers received printed versions of the curriculum framework progress maps and the curriculum guides in 2005. Work has been done on the development of the CD-ROM. We are going down this path because we recognise that providing that information electronically will enable it to be used in a greater variety of ways than will the printed version. We wanted to provide a resource that would give teachers greater flexibility in its application. I will ask Mr Axworthy to comment on the specifics.

[11.30 am]

Mr D. Axworthy: Certainly that particular dot point and the expenditure related to it is primarily about K-10 materials.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It reads K-12.

Mr D. Axworthy: Yes, but it is primarily about K-10, because of the in-phase guides and curriculum materials. We will produce an electronic CD version of what teachers have already seen. Additionally, we will provide our year 11 and 12 teachers with electronic copies and CDs of the courses of study and the support materials. We have already provided electronic copies of all the sample exams that came out in May.

Hon PETER COLLIER: When will they be available?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No-one is holding us to a date; they will get them in time.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I hope so; the minister has six months.

Mr D. Axworthy: They will receive them progressively.

The CHAIRPERSON: I thank members and advisers. That is the end of this session.

Meeting suspended from 11.31 to 11.36 am