

INNER-CITY PRIMARY SCHOOL — HIGHGATE

**131. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Education:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's work to ensure that every Western Australian student has access to quality education facilities.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's commitment to inner-city schooling, including important improvements at Highgate Primary School?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how these improvements build on this government's commitment to deliver a new inner-city primary school?

**Dr A.D. BUTI replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Mount Lawley for his passion and commitment to quality public education in the inner city and throughout Western Australia. I can actually provide the member with some information. Yesterday, the member for Perth and I were at Highgate Primary School to make a very significant investment. That included a \$12 million investment in an innovative modular two-storey classroom complex that will cater for six classrooms, preparation areas for the teachers, staff kitchenettes and toilets for staff and students. It will be built offsite, causing little disruption to the school, and will then be brought onsite to install.

The Leader of the Opposition seems to be confused about what I am saying. It is not that difficult to understand. We build a modular unit offsite, we bring it onto the school site and then we connect it. Apart from that, we are also using part of the money to refurbish the toilets that are there at the moment. We have also reached an agreement with the City of Vincent with regard to exclusive use of the adjacent Birdwood Square for a recreational facility during school time. We have also reached an agreement with the city with regard to leasing some car bays so teachers will be able to park offsite nearby, which will free up an area that can be used for a green space, plus rejuvenate an existing green. After some power works have been attended to by the appropriate utility services, we will install two transportable units this year to help alleviate any issues, although the principal, who has been very supportive, said the school will probably need only one, but if two are needed, we will supply those two transportables.

One has to understand that inner-city infrastructure, particularly in an educational setting, is very challenging because it is a confined space. It is a very popular school. It has great student outcomes, so people want to go to that school. The density of the inner area is increasing, therefore there are enrolment pressures at Highgate. We have thought through this very carefully. We have worked with the school, the local member and the City of Vincent, and we believe we have come up with a very good interim solution because, ultimately, we have to try to ease the enrolment pressures at Highgate.

Part of that strategy is a new inner-city primary school. Last year we announced that our preferred site is the Queens Gardens car park opposite the WACA. It is an incredibly exciting project. We are looking at an investment in a primary school that will be the greatest single investment in any primary school in Western Australian history. We are seeking to invest over \$100 million—way in excess of \$100 million—on the new primary school in the inner city that will have state-of-the-art classroom facilities, an oval and sporting facilities that will be utilised by not only the students, but also the community. We will also unlock the development potential of the land that the City of Perth can utilise. At the moment, under the Chevron–Hilton agreement, it can be used only as a car park.

We know that the City of Perth wants an inner-city primary school because it is the only metropolitan council that does not have one. We know that the Lord Mayor has stated previously that he wants to work in partnership with the government. My understanding of a partnership—I probably should explain what a partnership is to members of the opposition because they do not know what a partnership is or how a functional partnership works—is that both parties work together and contribute to the project. It is not like a group project when one person does all the work and no-one else does anything; they actually try to work together. The state government will use taxpayers' money to build a state-of-the-art inner-city primary school for the people who live in the City of Perth, Churchlands and in the electorate of Roe. The member for Roe, along with the City of Perth, wants us to pay \$40 million for the privilege of building an incredible primary school that will benefit the residents of the area and allow them to use those facilities. We are to pay the City of Perth \$40 million for that plus it would get a \$27.5 million potential development lot because at the moment it cannot be used. I want to make it clear to everyone, because the opposition seems to be in the corner of the City of Perth on this one, that for the City of Perth to have the privilege of the most expensive and best —

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** This must be the longest journey I have ever heard in a question-and-answer session. Surely you must bring him back to order, Madam Speaker. He was asked about the Highgate school, not some other facility elsewhere in the City of Perth.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, I will respond to the point of order. Minister, it has been a very lengthy answer. The question was principally about Highgate Primary School. I will ask you to draw your answer to a close.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I did talk about the delivery of an inner-city primary school in the answer.

**The SPEAKER:** I am aware of that, thanks.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** For that privilege, the opposition wants us to spend more taxpayers' money than we should. The City of Perth wants a primary school. It has stated that it is a priority. It stated in last year's City of Perth social and health and wellbeing strategy that the city engaged more than 1 400 people to identify what they wanted for the Perth community in 2040, and they wanted social connection, community, safety and security, built environment, inclusivity, accessibility, vibrancy, activation and culture. What better way to do that than by having a beautiful primary school that can be used by the community? Last year, the Lord Mayor said, "A modern city is a city that doesn't get in the way. We want a primary school at East Perth. We want to help make it work. We want to be delivery partners in a primary school for the City of Perth. We're all on the same page."

I am still confident that when the City of Perth sees the offer that the state's taxpayers are offering, it will agree to what we have proposed and we can get on with building an inner-city primary school that will alleviate enrolment pressures in other schools such as Highgate.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, I think that was the longest answer we have had this year. I will concur with the Leader of the Opposition on that point.