

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2015–16 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
TUESDAY, 23 JUNE 2015**

**SESSION ONE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 9.30 am

Hon PETER COLLIER
Minister for Education, examined:

Ms SHARYN O'NEILL
Director General, examined:

Mr JOHN LEAF
Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration, examined:

Mr DAVID AXWORTHY
Deputy Director General, Schools, examined:

Mr LINDSAY HALE
Executive Director, State Wide Services, examined:

Mr STEPHEN BAXTER
Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery, examined:

Mr CLIFF GILLAM
Executive Director, Workforce, examined:

Mr PETER TITMANIS
Executive Director, Innovation, Performance and Research, examined:

Mr JOHN FISCHER
Executive Director, Infrastructure, examined:

Mr BRETT ROACH
Deputy Chief Finance Officer, examined:

The CHAIR: Good morning and welcome. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The 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 witness's 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 the Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia and the committee values your assistance with this.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Does anyone wish to make an opening statement? If not, I am sure that there are plenty of questions. I will start with Hon Sue Ellery and go from there.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thanks very much, Chair. Good morning everybody. I refer to “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” on page 260 of budget paper No 2. That sets out under the outcome “A public school system which provides access to a quality education throughout Western Australia”, the literacy and numeracy line item lists the performance in national tests at years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and sets out percentage figures that are set in each budget as a target and then the measurements are reported in the following years. Can you advise how you set those targets, because they sometimes change from year to year?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Certainly. I will ask the director general with regard to the specific targets, suffice to say that what we have done, particularly over the past 12 months, is to shift, as you would be aware, more funding into the early years for those foundation skills, particularly for preschool through kindergarten through years 1 to 3 in an effort to provide more foundation skills in those very early years. That goes in concert with the Aboriginal kindergarten initiative—KindiLink—which I announced last year to provide early intervention again so that those foundation skills are established at a very early age. Specific to the actual figures, I will ask the director general to comment.

Ms O'Neill: The targets for each year are usually based on a few years' performance and sometimes that is caught up in a timing issue because we do not always have the year prior NAPLAN to be able to set the target, so it goes back a couple of years in terms of overall performance. There is also the change in the NAPLAN tests themselves. When NAPLAN introduced persuasive writing for the first time, we knew that was going to be a first time test so we had a look at the lack of data for persuasive writing given that it had not been tested before. They are aspirational targets based on some history. The targets for 2015–16 are based on the higher of the 2013–14 actual and the 2014–15 estimated actual and rounded up by a single per cent.

Hon SUE ELLERY: So, they are targets that you set yourselves; they are not targets that are set nationally. These are the targets that Western Australia sets for Western Australia?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I compare the 2013–14 actual with the 2014–15 estimated actual, there are 12 measures, so three in each of the respective four year groups. Of those 12, when you compare the 2013–14 actual to the 2014–15 actual, there was a decrease below the set target in 10 out of the 12, which is not very good. What is the explanation for that?

Ms O'Neill: In relation to the testing, some of the targets set in the actual outcome achieved had marginal change up and down as there is in any other year. Obviously, we want to keep improving each year and the targets are set and the work is outlined in schools to be able to achieve that. Some of it is not statistically significant and we would expect to see these minor changes, as we have every other year, up and down. Overall in terms of our performance as a state, since 2008, Western Australia is the state that has improved the fastest in the growth trajectory from where we started to where we are now, but clearly we want these results to improve.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I emphasise that I agree entirely. Again, keeping it in perspective, in terms of comparative figures, Western Australia has improved more than any other state in terms of the NAPLAN results, and that is testament to the efforts of teachers throughout the state. There are always areas that need improvement, particularly, as I said, in those early years—I want to keep on emphasising this—and that is why we have made significant inroads in the last few years in particular to place that emphasis on early intervention with compulsory preprimary school and the development of the 16 child and parent centres to provide wraparound services and support for the children, in addition to the early intervention for literacy and numeracy support. As I said, one of the areas where NAPLAN results, quite frankly, have been embarrassing is with Aboriginal

students. That is why I was absolutely adamant when we took over this portfolio, but even before that, that we needed to do more for Aboriginal students. The advent of the 37 new KindiLink programs throughout Western Australia will provide enormous foundation support for Aboriginal students right throughout the state—not just in the metropolitan area, but in the remote areas of the state—to ensure that those early foundation skills are provided for. Yes, you can always improve in terms of NAPLAN. I think it is a good indicator of the progress of a state and, having said that, as I said, we also need to be aware of the fact that as far as Western Australia is concerned, we have had a more significant increase than any other state. The director general has something to add.

[9.40 am]

Ms O'Neill: If I could just add by way of background, although the budget papers represent these particular percentages, also across Australia much greater emphasis is given to the mean scores of states. On the mean score variance for 2014, in 14 of the 20 assessments our mean scores have improved. Nationally, there are different takes on the data. There is this one here that you have referred to, there are mean scores, and there is the number of students at or above the national minimum standard. As the minister said, Aboriginal students obviously are a focus, but we are working, particularly in low SES schools, to provide further assistance, and the schools are working particularly with students on ensuring that we have more students above the national minimum standard.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you. I appreciate that explanation about the measures that are used across Australia. That is why I asked the question—to confirm that in fact these are targets that you set yourself. The fact that 10 out of the 12 targets between 2013–14 and 2014–15 showed a decrease is something that we should be concerned about here in Western Australia. Although I acknowledge the point made by the minister that our performance in respect of Indigenous children is embarrassing, this is all Western Australian children—10 out of 12 targets decreased. It seems to me that it raises a question: what else was happening in schools over that period? A cynical person might say that there were cuts across the board, the highest ever in a generation, and that is not a good result as a consequence of that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: But the realist would also say that our schools were the highest resourced schools of any schools of any state in the nation and that funding has gone up by 69 per cent since 2008.

Hon SUE ELLERY: And yet 10 out of 12 targets show a decrease. That is the point I am trying to make. We can track the cohort of students from year 3 back in 2009–10, using the same budget figures. I appreciate the minister will not have all of those budget figures in front of him, so I ask him to trust me, but he can go back, and I am sure he will go back and look at the same figures for the budgets from those years. When we try to track that cohort of year 3s in 2009–10 through to year 9, it appears to me that there is minimal improvement in reading and numeracy in year 3. The year 5 cohort, for example, in 2009–10, had gone backwards by the time they got to year 9. The year 7s in 2009–10 all went backwards when they were in year 9 in 2011–12. What is the explanation for that? Despite the minister's view that he puts constantly about how Western Australian teachers are the highest paid and how the government has injected more funds into the system, it seems that NAPLAN, to the extent that it constitutes a snapshot on a single day, is not showing a dramatic increase. In fact, across that cohort, those students who were in year 3 in 2009–10 were not doing very well at all.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are talking here about very minor variations. It occurs every single year, so there is no great disparity.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Downwards though, not upwards.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Well, it is a variance. As I said, some figures were up; some figures are down. I am very comfortable with the fact that, number one—since you have brought it up—our

schools are extremely well resourced. I have no problem with that whatsoever. The variance is quite minor. I will ask the director general to make some comments.

Ms O'Neill: Because your question tracks back over some time, I would make the point that since 2008, in terms of the public school means, the notable improvements of more than 10 scale points on a number of the assessments have occurred in year 3 reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation; year 5 reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy; year 7 reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation; and year 9 reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy. Between 2011 and 2014, when persuasive writing was introduced, it has been reasonably consistent, although year 7 persuasive writing declined slightly. Between 2013 and 2014, the means are pretty stable for most of the assessments. There were some marginal improvements between 2008 and 2014 in the proportion of students above the national minimum standard in 14 of the 16 assessments, and there were some marginal declines in year 3 numeracy. The point I make, and you are quite right, is that these are aspirational targets we set for ourselves. They do include our disabled students, of which that group is growing. Their performances are included in that data, and some of those students are performing well above where we would expect, and others are not. Their cohort gains, which is the connection which, in part, you are making, between years 3 to 5, years 5 to 7, and years 7 to 9, were all above the Australian averages, except for grammar and punctuation in the year 7 to 9 cohort, which was 0.2 of a scale point below. There is certainly room for improvement and cause for concern in some pockets of the population. There always has been, and that does not mean that we do not keep focussing on that, but at the same time there is plenty of evidence of at least either maintenance of standard or improvement of standard when we look at the public school means across the assessments.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I also take this opportunity to congratulate Victoria Park Primary School, which was the highest improved school in the nation in NAPLAN results, and Dalmain Primary School in Kingsley, which was in the top five as well. So we have two schools in Western Australia in the top five improved schools throughout Australia.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will make one final point on this issue, if that is all right, and then I will move on. Given that we had a 10 out of 12 decrease across years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in reading, writing and numeracy between 2013–14 and 2014–15, what is your anticipation for what we will see when we are sitting here this time next year talking about these results?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would like to think that there will be improvements in all areas; that is the ultimate aim. Every single time a teacher goes into a classroom, his or her aim is to improve the learning ability, the learning quality and the learning standard of his or her students. The government sets the bar very high, and I do not have a problem whatsoever with having those standards high—particularly given the fact that, as I said before, we are putting such significant emphasis on early intervention more than ever in Western Australia. I would anticipate that there will be improvement. We will see that gradual improvement through results in the years ahead, through the raft of initiatives I mentioned earlier. Early intervention is essential. The disparity between secondary and primary that existed for so long has now been removed. There is now heavy emphasis from the government on early intervention in a number of areas, and I would anticipate that that will have a positive impact.

Ms O'Neill: In addition, if I could just point out that over the past couple of months, we have had Professor Loudon working in our schools and he will provide us with an overview shortly of those schools that are making particularly significant gains in literacy outcomes, so that we can learn from those schools again what factors have come to bear in those schools and share those learnings with other schools. We are always trying to find through our own strategies—the minister has named some of those, such as teacher development schools, consultants and others—and also from a research background what other learning we could have. Your question was about what we expect to find: our expectation is always for improvement. The reality is that with any national testing—

behind me is Mr Titmanis who was in part the designer of the national testing program—we will see variance; we will see difference from year to year. I have been director general for nine years and in every one of those years we could report marginal and sometimes not even statistical significant changes. But where they are significant, we want to know what went well, so we can spread that good learning, and where there were problems, like with the introduction of persuasive writing, which was a brand-new way for a lot of kids to be assessed in their writing, what we need to do to improve the standard.

[9.50 am]

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Thank you and welcome. Recently, minister, you announced a new build of the Yanchep secondary school—a new school. I think it was about \$57 million for stage 1, which is extremely welcome by the Yanchep and Two Rocks communities. But as you would be aware, Yanchep District High School has aged significantly; it is quite an old school. Are you able to outline what works the department is either undertaking or will undertake in the lead-up to the new school being available in 2019 to improve the educational environment at Yanchep District High?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes. Yanchep is in desperate need of some work and has had some significant work. Regarding the specifics, I will get the director general or perhaps Mr Fischer to comment about that. What I will say is Yanchep came down to a value judgement about whether we do inject a significant amount of money here and now into the building itself as a district high and/or build a whole new school. We came down on the latter; that is to build—you are quite correct, it is \$57 million for a brand-new school, which has been very well received by the community. Having said that, that does not remove the issue that exists with some of the buildings at Yanchep and there has been an injection of over \$1 million over the last year or so, with regard to Yanchep. As I said, I will get Mr Fischer to comment on that. In addition to that, just in the last month or so, we have provided further financial stimulus for improving the ICT throughout the school and some spit and polishes—some improvements. That is not going to satisfy some of the members of the school community; I appreciate that. Having said that, we need to be mindful of the fact that the school will not exist in the same form as it does at the moment when the new school is open. Regarding what has actually occurred at Yanchep over the last 12 months or so, I will ask Mr Fischer to comment.

Mr Fischer: Yes, thank you. Some work has been addressing the fabric of the school—recarpeting and painting of rooms. There has also been a focus on some of the infrastructure support to schools. There is a program to connect the school to deep sewerage and that will then allow the front of the school to be transformed into a car park, so that will improve some of the capacity of the school. For access to the adjacent oval, there is a new footpath being installed for that. In terms of the specialist facilities for the secondary schools, we are looking at some improvements to the design and tech areas, both in terms of the dust extraction system and also to the way that that design and technical area is structured, putting in additional covers et cetera.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Re the ICT, there have been smart boards provided and additional laptops for secondary, to the tune of \$100 000. That has been in the last month, I think.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I am sure they would be very welcome. I actually met up with some of the students over the weekend who were very happy with the paintwork and the new carpets in particular. They said it gave the school a new look. If I can move on to a couple of other areas —

The CHAIR: I just have one on that one. I am just interested, though, in terms of the ongoing planning the department does on capital works, how did we allow Yanchep to get to the state it was? I think everyone welcomes the fact that there is going to be a new high school, but I think even you, minister, when you went on the tour, would accept that the state it had got to was unacceptable. How do we not make that decision earlier about replacing the school, before it got to

a point where it is at the state now, where you are putting money into some cosmetics, but still not addressing all of the concerns of the local parent group? How do we get to that point? How do we not have better planning to make the decision earlier?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Valid point. I did not get to look at much of Yanchep when I went there; I am going back next week to have a more thorough look. I did have a considerable amount of angst that was directed toward the old school that was articulated to me, both verbally from parents et cetera and also in a written form. It was apparent that we did need to have a new school. With that in mind, of course, it has to be taken in terms of the overall infrastructure build of the department, which happens year in and year out. I am not sure of the number of demountables that are at Yanchep at the moment; it is quite considerable. How many?

Mr Leaf: Sixteen.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There are 16 demountables there at the moment, which in itself is not overly —

The CHAIR: And many of those have been there for a considerable time.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The one I did see, I reckon has been there for at least the 16 years! Probably one of the ones I did see. As I said, what is taken into account is the overall planning throughout Western Australia, in terms of the population, as you would be aware, et cetera in the area. It is later than we would have preferred. We did originally intend to have it a little later. I certainly made the decision this year that it would come into this year's budget, which would come in earlier than anticipated.

The CHAIR: Always wise to head off quickly at the pass, is my view!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Well, it is true. In terms of the actual long-term decision, perhaps —

The CHAIR: I have been visiting that school as a local member for the whole time I have been a member, and I have watched it cope with the numbers up there. But, over the last six or eight years, it has been clear that the growth in population has been going to be leading to a point where both you get the overcrowding, and I have watched the facilities deteriorate. I am trying to work out what internal planning goes on in the agency to ensure that we are getting the timely provision of those schools, because I think there is general agreement now that we are probably a year or two too late in terms of providing that school. So, how do we make sure that we are getting that timely provision?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, good point. The thing is, as you would be well aware, that the massive growth population growth in other areas is extraordinary and that has to be taken into consideration as well. Having said that, as I said, as you would be aware, we originally committed to \$10 million to Yanchep to improve the facilities there, but that was not going to solve the problem; the problem was we needed a new high school.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have got a new high school. It has been considered year in and year out. It was pushed back a few years later. We brought it forward in this year's budget because of the severity of the situation. I do not know if Mr Leaf has got anything else to add to that.

Mr Leaf: I suppose the situation will always be one where the department has a 10-year asset investment plan that we spend a lot of energy and time to put together. Clearly, that results in a set of priorities provided to the minister, and that goes forward as part of our budget submission each year. I think it is fair to say that there is never enough money to spend on the upgrade and renovation of 800 schools throughout the state. But, generally speaking, the department's capital works budget has grown every year that I have been involved in putting it together. Maintenance has also increased every year that I have been in the department. In this 2015–16 year, there is an additional \$16 million that has been put into a maintenance program to cover our schools

throughout the state. I do not have any more information on Yanchep in particular, unless the minister would like Mr Fischer to explain some more detail around how our asset investment and our maintenance program works year in, year out.

The CHAIR: Maybe just because of the time, maybe you could focus on: when did you first identify the need to do something at Yanchep, and was it then budgetary constraints? When we have been borrowing \$50 billion in the general government sector, I would have thought that health and education would be the two priorities before anything else gets funded by government. If, as the department, you identified that you needed a new school at Yanchep four years ago, was there then the fact that the minister was unable to convince his cabinet colleagues? Was that the reason it did not proceed? When did the department first identify the need to upgrade Yanchep or to replace Yanchep?

Hon PETER COLLIER: To build a new Yanchep, you mean?

The CHAIR: Yes. To build a new Yanchep.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am not sure of the exact year that —

The CHAIR: When did you first put it in your asset investment plan?

Mr Fischer: The strategy for Yanchep has changed recently. As the minister mentioned, the strategy was to put in additional specialist facilities at the district high school. That would have been a logical strategy with the earlier identified growth rates. As we know, the growth in that northern corridor is one of the fastest growing areas in Perth, and so we changed our view.

The CHAIR: And it has been for the whole time I have been a member of Parliament. It is not new.

Mr Fischer: The growth has been really occurring in the southern part in the Butler–Alkimos area. The Yanchep area has always been a question about when it would be sufficient in its own right to have a high school. That was the question that we were struggling with, then three years ago we identified that we would be able to maintain a district high, with additional specialist facilities. But with the new growth predictions we suggested, or we thought, there was a better way to do that, and that is why we went for a strategy of a high school located in that area.

[10.00 am]

The CHAIR: So three years ago, you identified the need for something to happen at the high school?

Mr Fischer: And that was identified in the budget at that stage when funding was provided for an upgrade.

The CHAIR: Right. The growth of Yanchep is not new. The land sales, the shopping centre and all of the other developments that have occurred in Yanchep were all there three years ago, so why did you not identify the need for a new high school three years ago?

Hon PETER COLLIER: At that stage, the intent was that there was a \$10 million upgrade, so they were going to cope with the population increase —

The CHAIR: What I am trying to get to is how does it work that we can get it so wrong three years ago that in three years' time, before you have even done the upgrade, you have suddenly realised that you actually needed to build a new high school when everyone else was sitting there three years ago saying, "Actually, what's needed is a new high school"?

Hon PETER COLLIER: As I think Mr Fischer has said, there are other pressure points like Alkimos and Butler et cetera. At that stage, Yanchep was not seen with such intensity or with such urgency as those other pressure points. Now we have got to a situation where we could continue to put a bandaid on a broken arm at Yanchep, and that is just to keep adding on to it or making some improvements; that is not the case. We have made a commitment to \$57 million to build them a brand-new school. At the same time, we are making improvements to the current structure, but,

ultimately, of course, you will not need such significant upgrades to the existing school once the new school is built.

The CHAIR: Hon Liz Behjat on this issue?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: On capital works, yes.

The CHAIR: On capital works or on Yanchep?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Well, not on Yanchep, but capital works in north metro.

The CHAIR: No. We are doing Yanchep, so I will go back to Hon Peter Katsambanis and I will come to you later.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I have finished on Yanchep.

The CHAIR: Did you have another question? Otherwise I will go to —

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I have other questions—I have plenty of other questions—so it is up to you whether you want to give me the call right now or come back later.

The CHAIR: I will go to Hon Rick Mazza.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I refer to page 270 of budget paper No 2 and the user contributions and charges that are recouped from agricultural colleges and farm schools; it is a bit over \$5 million a year. Can you tell me what the nature of those contributions and charges are?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will just direct that to Mr Baxter. He will give you some specifics on that point.

Mr Baxter: At this point, I cannot give you a breakdown of that money, but on the contributions and charges, students are charged a fee for residence at the colleges. From memory, last year I think that was some \$3.5 million. So that is the lion's share of the contributions and charges that go to the agricultural colleges. The charges for secondary provision would also form a part of that.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Right. Could we have a breakdown on those, Chair?

[Supplementary Information No A1.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: Also, can you tell me the location and number of agricultural colleges and farm schools in the state?

Hon PETER COLLIER: They are in the annual report. We can easily get them for you. They are Narrogin, Cunderdin, Denmark, Morawa and Harvey—that is the colleges of agriculture. Is that what you wanted?

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes. In today's paper, there has been reported a budget crisis in the agriculture department's budget. There is a lot of discussion around closing down laboratories and research centres. Will that affect those agricultural colleges' viability or not?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would hope not. We put a lot of investment into that. When did I open Harvey? Was that last year? There is a magnificent new college at Harvey—unbelievable—and the new residential centre, because the emphasis is very much on those agricultural colleges. Those colleges are state funded, and that is from our budget, not from the Department of Agriculture and Food. So, no, it will not impact at all.

Hon RICK MAZZA: So there are no plans in there —

Hon PETER COLLIER: As I said, if you want to have a look at them, they are all good, I have got to say. The reason I enjoyed opening up Harvey was that I committed to it when we were in opposition, so to actually go back then and open it was terrific; it is a magnificent new college.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Just on Harvey, as a matter of interest, what has happened to the old Harvey agricultural school site? Has that been sold? Has it been leased for something else?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am not sure if it has been sold or not. Mr Fischer might answer that.

Mr Fischer: The site has not been sold yet. I think some of it is being leased out to other groups at the moment, but it will eventually be disposed of for Education's purposes.

Hon RICK MAZZA: At that old college, are there any asbestos issues with those buildings in that particular development?

Mr Fischer: I think with every old building pre-1980, there will be asbestos and there certainly would be asbestos there, yes.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Can you provide the current monetary value of the boarding away from home allowance, the agricultural special subsidy and assistance for isolated children offered to the agricultural college in Denmark?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes. Mr Baxter can provide that information.

Mr Baxter: The boarding away from home allowance is \$2 105.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Right. That is per student, I take it?

Mr Baxter: That is per student.

Hon RICK MAZZA: It is being offered in Denmark; is that being offered also to other agricultural colleges throughout the state?

Mr Baxter: It is available to all students. The boarding away from home allowance is a state allowance comprising funding direct from government and also royalties for regions funding.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That does not include the federal grant as well. What is the federal grant?

Mr Baxter: The assistance for isolated children. That ranges from about \$7 800 to \$9 000, but students do need to be eligible for that. That federal allowance is provided for students who are a particular distance from provision of secondary education.

Hon RICK MAZZA: What would the number of students be at the agricultural colleges we have in this state?

Mr Baxter: This year, it is a record number. We have 603 students at our agricultural colleges. That is beyond boarding capacity, but a number of the colleges also enrol day students. The royalties for regions funding has increased the capacity in some of our colleges, but they really are full.

Hon RICK MAZZA: So the 600-odd students you mentioned are all boarding students?

Mr Baxter: No; 603, and not all of them are boarding students. There are probably about 50 day students in that group.

Hon RICK MAZZA: And about 550 are boarding?

Mr Baxter: The vast majority are boarders.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Those are the only questions I have on that so far, Chair.

The CHAIR: I have Hon Alanna Clohesy, but are you indicating you want to give your question to Hon Sue Ellery?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: For the time being.

The CHAIR: Right.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you. If I can ask about students at severe educational risk, I tried to look for some reference to it in the budget papers. The best I can give you—but do not bother turning to it because it really is not going to help you—is page 258. At the first dot point under “Student Success and Achievement”, it talks about engagement, so I am going to hang it off that. The definition of students at severe educational risk is those students who have been attending

school less than 60 per cent of the time. When I have asked parliamentary questions over the last two years and compare the figures from 2013 with 2014 in the educational regions of the Kimberley, north metro, Pilbara and south west, there is an increase in the number of students who are attending school less than 60 per cent. Can you give me an explanation of why that would be the case?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry; I have found the figures now.

Hon SUE ELLERY: In parliamentary questions I have asked between 2013 and 2014, the regions of the Kimberley, north metro, the Pilbara and the south west have all seen an increase in the number of students meeting the definition of being at severe educational risk because they attend school less than 60 per cent. That must be of some concern to you. What are you able to attribute that to?

[10.10 am]

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will tell you from my perspective why that is. I will also ask the director general to make comments. We are now facing an extraordinarily increasingly complex society. That may sound very simplistic, but it is not. I will deal with two issues: first of all, the Aboriginal issue, which is a significant component of the non-attenders, but also mainstream students that are divorced from education. The notion of mainstream schooling to a lot of these students is unpalatable. That is why you have seen the advent of an expansion of the CARE schools and why I have made some changes to behaviour management and the learning academy just recently, to cope with the fact that more and more students are not attuned to mainstream schooling for a raft of social issues. The product of that of course is that what we provide, in terms of general pedagogy, is much more diverse now than it ever has been. The notion of learning on a day-to-day basis is a component of it but the pastoral care—the underlying support mechanisms—are just as significant now in our education system. That is why you have seen a massive increase in the number of chaplains, in the number of school psychologists and in general behaviour management, to cope with that, dare I say it, disengagement from more and more students. That in itself is a prime reason why students are disengaged from school. They have great difficulty with the fact that school to them, in an authoritarian environment, is not acceptable. That is why, as I said, we have provided a raft of different social mechanisms to assist in that process.

In terms of Aboriginal education, which contributes a significant number of students who do not attend school on a regular basis —

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I just interrupt you for a moment. I would accept that about the Kimberley and the Pilbara, perhaps even parts of the south west, but it is north metropolitan as well, so it is not just about Indigenous kids. It is important, but it is not just about that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No; I have just given an explanation of the non-Indigenous kids. I am talking about generally in our education system. If you go into our classrooms on a day-to-day basis, you will constantly hear issues about students. It is not the usual suspects; it is not students you would assume are going to come from a seriously dysfunctional family. They are students that are simply not attuned to mainstream schooling. That is why contemporary education has got to provide much more than just chalk and talk. It has to provide much more in terms of curriculum opportunities than ever before, and we do. That is why we made changes at the senior secondary level. At the senior secondary level we now have a plethora of different options that students can go to that they have not had before, and in terms of the changes that we made at the WACE level. They are not Aboriginal students; they are normal mainstream students that just cannot cope with the notion of authoritarian schooling. That is why, as I said, I made changes. One of the first things I did with the director general was say, “I want to change these behaviour centres” because the behaviour centres, quite frankly, while they were performing a role, were dealing with a minute proportion of students—500 students on average per year; \$15 million for 500 kids. That was ridiculous. You cannot just tell a kid to stand outside the classroom or go to the time-out room—

those days are long gone. These kids, more often than not, will just bolt. You have to provide some alternative framework in terms of learning. That is not mainstream. That is why, as I said, I have expanded the role of behaviour centres to engagement centres. They will now specifically deal with students that are recalcitrant, in terms of being away from school for a long period of time or a medium period of time, are genuinely disengaged, perhaps going through an episode, for want of a better term, either personally or with their family. Rather than force them into an environment which is counterproductive to that child's behaviour and development, they will have a tailored program for each individual child which makes a day at school meaningful. That is what we have done from that perspective.

In addition to that, the CARE schools, of which I am a very strong supporter—we have significantly increased funding there—deal with those disengaged kids. Places like Corridors, Alta-1 and Port community school et cetera deal with students that would normally not go to school. If you go to those environments, which have significantly increased opportunities, those kids there are genuinely engaged in training, in meaningful pathways which will be productive for them. It takes them out of juvenile justice or takes them off the streets on a day-to-day basis to provide an opportunity for that child to prosper. My goal is to provide more of those. As an educator but also as a realist, we need more of them. We need more of these centres, for want of a better term, to provide for these students. It works two ways: it provides a valuable opportunity for the child him or herself rather than miss school on a day-to-day basis and literally just moving into a culture of despair and a culture of recalcitrance. Secondly, it provides a much better opportunity for that child's teachers and his or her peers. The school environment then is much more positive than having someone forced into an environment which they cannot cope with, disrupt the class, disrupt the community, and then basically just leave. That is what we are doing as far as the government is concerned. We have done an enormous amount to assist those students that fall into this cohort of students that you referred to. They just do not want to go to school.

Short of putting them in handcuffs and forcing them into the classroom, what we are doing is providing more opportunities. I would like to see more of these centres to assist our mainstream schools. When I made the announcement with regard to the learning academy at Midland, I flouted the notion—that is only a pilot—of two more, one in the northern suburbs and one in the southern suburbs, and further expansion of the CARE school model, whether it be through the department, through the state or through the CARE school program. That will require more hubs as opposed to new CARE schools. We now have 11 CARE schools throughout Western Australia. Alta-1, for example, has about eight hubs and they are going into the country regions as well. A lot of the country areas are not immune from these sorts of students. The CARE schools will ultimately provide more opportunities in the country. We need to face reality. The notion of every child going to school and getting average or above average results for NAPLAN, just providing a good pathway into senior secondary and having a seamless transition into employment are long, long gone. As I said, we are in an increasingly complex society. We have to acknowledge that. That is why the framework of education now has shifted.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can pursue it a little bit further. I might be wrong, but my understanding is the north metro region is the biggest in terms of numbers of enrolled students. It is of concern to me that that is one of the areas where the number of those students attending less than 60 per cent of the time continues to grow. I think CARE schools and engagement centres—it was a good announcement; I support them and we need to have more of them. However, that is at the really pointy end when the students have already disengaged. If we are seeing an increase in the number of students not attending schools, surely we should be doing more—call it early intervention, call it whatever you want—more of the pastoral care, more of the work done for example by the participation officers at school to stop students getting to the pointy end, to stop students becoming so disengaged that that is the case. I accept your point that we are living in an increasingly complex world but it is astonishing to me that ordinary suburban kids, we should lower our expectations and

say because they are living in a more complex world, we have to accept that there is more and more of them who are not going to accept the authoritarian nature of attending school. I accept that we live in a complex world but I think that is asking us to lower our expectations and surely we can do better than that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I can assure you we are not lowering our expectations. It would be marvellous to have every single child in a mainstream school coming out with a certificate II and then a qualification, either an apprenticeship, or going to university or getting a job in a bank or whatever it might be, and living a wholesome life and not getting involved in substance abuse, whatever it be, but that is not the case. That is one cohort of students. To assume that that is all we are doing would be naive in the extreme.

In terms of pastoral care, our schools are funded and provided for better now than ever before. One of the great success stories of this government is the chaplaincy program. I remember quite vividly having a discussion with the CEO from YouthCARE when I was in opposition and I said I was mindful of the fact that chaplains play such a vital role with pastoral care in support; a role that a deputy, a youth leader or a school psychologist or whatever it might be cannot provide—that is support that will go in and listen one on one with the child or one on one with the parent. I remember saying to him at that stage, “My goal is to put a chaplain in every school that wants one.” I said to him that that is what I am going to achieve, and we have done it. Every school that has applied for a chaplain —

[10.20 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: Albeit with a little hiccup in the middle.

Hon PETER COLLIER: But that is because the federal government reduced the funding; it was nothing to do with us. Have a look at the track record; look at the scoreboard. Way back, there were 238 chaplains in schools when we started and there are 500 now. That is clear evidence of a government that is committed to pastoral care and support, and that is just the start of it. The whole notion of the one-line budget is to ensure that schools have much more flexibility to determine where those resources go. They are not being mandated from above to say that their funding must go here, there or whatever. Schools now are making choices that are receptive to their cohort of students.

In addition to that we have increased the number of school psychologists. There were 60; I do not know whether it has increased any more than that from the time that we started. We committed to 50 and it has gone up by 60. The school psychologists make a significant contribution in the more complex emotional needs of students, teachers and parents. In terms of the mainstream, we are not for a moment—I want to clarify this because I understand the point you made—suggesting that that is the be-all and end-all; it is not.

I also add weight to the notion of the child and parent centres. Sixteen child and parent centres provide wraparound services and early intervention for children to provide those foundation skills. They are wonderful programs and we extended it by five, because the feds, once again, bailed. We have taken responsibility for those five: four are in the Kimberley and Pilbara and one is in Swan. We have taken responsibility for those. They are foundation support mechanisms that are absolutely essential. In addition to that, as I said, I will keep on going with KindiLink. The whole point of KindiLink, which I am very, very committed to, is to work with Aboriginal people to engage with parents to show the parents just how significant education is and to embrace them, and that is why the KindiLink program will provide an opportunity for parenting skills to assist in that cohort, which is seismic in terms of the make-up of students who miss school. If you put all that together, those students who are disengaged plus the other programs I just mentioned, that is a comprehensive wraparound commitment to assisting students and ensuring that they attend school.

The CHAIR: Can I just remind members if we can try to keep both the questions short and the answers concise, it would be appreciated by everybody. I accept that there were some long questions and long answers, but if we can keep them as concise as possible.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Would you have the most current figures on you today—if you do not, can you take this on notice—on how many children's whereabouts are currently unknown by the department?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will just see if we have that here.

Ms O'Neill: For February 2015 we have compulsory age students on whereabouts unknown as 927.

Hon MARK LEWIS: At the bottom of page 264 is the Carnarvon Community College. Is this new funding in this budget for the out years?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I just have to see if it is new. It is new money.

Hon MARK LEWIS: This year in the budget for the out years?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is for the primary school. It is for the primary component, it is not for the secondary.

Hon MARK LEWIS: That probably goes to my next question, because that money will not fully complete the amalgamation of the Carnarvon Community College.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Unfortunately, not. I would love to say, yes, but it is not. It is definitely a work in progress. I am going to Carnarvon in a couple of weeks, so I will let you know.

Hon MARK LEWIS: Good, thank you.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Earlier we were speaking about Yanchep high school and the need for a new school there. Contrary to popular belief, not everybody in the western suburbs wants to send their kids to private school. We know that Shenton College and Churchlands are just bursting at the seams and with Perth Mod now being completely merit select, what are we doing about addressing the needs for students in those areas who want to attend an independent public school?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is that the western suburbs?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The Shenton College and Churchlands areas and Perth city itself.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Ask the Premier.

The CHAIR: Do you want to get that on *Hansard*, "ask the Premier", minister?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is not actually a joking matter, it is an issue. Believe it or not, it is probably the biggest issue that I have to deal with in terms of infrastructure at the moment. I will keep it really short. The simple fact is that we are burgeoning at the seams there and we need a new secondary school. We have just committed \$38 million to improve capacity at Churchlands and similarly we have just had a new year 7 building built at Shenton et cetera, but you cannot close four schools and open one with no impact, and that is what we have done there. There have been a number of options, although there are parlous few real options in the western suburbs due to the very limited space. I looked at the possibility of the old Churchlands teachers college, which is vested with UWA —

The CHAIR: It is ECU?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, at Claremont.

The CHAIR: At Claremont; you said Churchlands.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry, it is the Claremont teachers college down on Princess Road. But they were not interested. Secondly, that is the wrong area—that is not where the pressure point is. The pressure point is up near City Beach and Churchlands. We are looking at City Beach at the moment. The problem with City Beach of course is that the international school has that. We are

looking at a few options at the moment, but until we make that decision, I cannot say much more. But we have to deal with it as a matter of urgency. We need 1 417 spaces by 2020, so it is urgent. That is a whole new school just in itself.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: At page 260 in the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators, under outcomes—we were talking about some of these statistics before, but not literacy and numeracy—looking at the secondary graduation rate, the 2013 actual is 70.5 per cent of the proportion of the year 8 cohort achieving secondary graduation in year 12 and it is rising to a budget target in 2015–16 of 81 per cent. And the apparent retention rate of the proportion of the year 8 cohort studying year 12 in 2013–14 goes from 79.3 per cent to 91 per cent. Why are we expecting to see such a massive increase in those figures?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will ask the director general to comment, but I anticipate that this will be her response—she can stop me midstream if it is not. It is with regard to changes to the WACE. There have been significant changes to WACE this year, which provide much more in the way of opportunity for all students. The issue that existed in the past with WACE was that we had gone through a number of different manifestations of TAE, TEE, WACE et cetera and now we are up to the ATAR. WACE includes the ATAR now and those stages which just did not work. What happened with the stages, of course, was that a number of students were taking stage 2 who bailed out and went to stage 1, which is basically the equivalent of year 9 in a lot of instances. There were a lot of students who just simply walked away. The new WACE provides a very clear definition between a student who wants to do an ATAR or general pathway and a minimum literacy–numeracy standard.

There is much more clarity now behind student choice at the senior secondary level than we have had before and it is nation leading, certainly in terms of both the certificate II for the general pathway—that is a minimum qualification—and an ATAR and a minimum literacy–numeracy. While the rigour may have increased, it has provided much more flexibility for students in terms of the subject choices that they can choose. As a result of that, I would anticipate that there would be much more uptake and a higher graduation rate of students because of the new options, but I may be contradicted by the director general.

[10.30 am]

Ms O'Neill: No; that is right.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There you go.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Minister, can I take you back to page 258 and the significant issues impacting the agency, where we have talk about structural changes and structural reforms. I wondered whether the department is planning any structural changes to the way that district high schools operate—the delivery of education at district high schools. Are you planning any structural changes to the way district highs operate?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not that I am aware of, but I might ask the director general to make comment.

Ms O'Neill: District high schools play, as you would be aware, a significant role in the local community. We have been asked questions from parents about transition points and the interest in trying to minimise to students the numbers of transition points. We have also been asked the question from some parents about access to senior high schools that might be proximate to where people live. So, we have had discussions at local level with parents where they have asked about options for schooling and certainly we have had discussions internally about not district high schools in particular, but schooling provision. We do this every year. We have a look in regional areas about is there reasonable access for students to a broad range of curriculum choices—specialisations, for example. That is our ongoing review work, but we do not have any plan in place

to change the way district high schools operate. We are certainly hopeful to improve the way they operate, like we are with all schools, but nothing specific.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So you are not planning to change. Does that mean that the result of your internal review is that you are satisfied on all fronts?

Ms O'Neill: It is not a formal internal review. We do, as we do every year, look at what is being provided. Where I am not satisfied with the way all schools operate, we undertake improvement planning all of the time, so they can all improve. Are we satisfied that all parents and students get the best curriculum choice at every local school? A few parents would tell us that they are not satisfied. Some parents want to get a broader range of curriculum choice and, indeed, they are asking us the question about how they can access a broader choice, and in some regional areas that is the case.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just say that in some instances—no disrespect to the schools themselves—reality checks are often needed in all schools. All schools expect to have a broad range of curriculum—that is, if they want to choose a subject, they should be able to do that subject—and that occurs not just in district highs; that occurred in Shenton, for example, where you might have two students choose accounting and so therefore the parent expects that accounting will be delivered. Of course, that is impractical. It is the same in the district highs; there would be fewer options, but with district highs, we do try to provide a breath of options through either side or other means in addition to the formal delivery in the classroom.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Have you done any sort of consultation with parents? You are sort of talking anecdotally about two kids wanting to do accounting and therefore it raises expectations, but have you done any consultation with parents to collect something more substantial than anecdotal data?

Hon PETER COLLIER: In district highs?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not that I am aware of.

Ms O'Neill: As I said, there is no formal review; it is just part of our ongoing operation, so there has been no formal consultation with parents; rather parents have come to us and asked those questions. There has not been a formal review, so on your question about whether I am satisfied on the basis of the review, there is not a review; it is just our ongoing practice of having a look at schools and what they are providing and responding to parents' concerns about lack of access to a broad range of curriculum.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So there is no proposal to change substantially the way that district highs operate or to merge district highs where there is a senior high nearby?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not unless there is a significant decline or a noticeable decline in student numbers. Certainly, nothing has been brought to my attention. The department works on those things on a day-to-day basis.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is that the case anywhere in the state—that there has been a significant decline and perhaps that is giving rise to —

Hon PETER COLLIER: We did close three primary schools and that was based upon the fact —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am talking really about district highs; I am focused on district highs.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not that I am aware of.

Ms O'Neill: A couple of years ago, minister, there was the Merredin situation where the school was not closed, but I do not think they provide the 8 to 10 any longer; they become primary schools. The parents were happy for students to travel the shortish distance into Merredin because of that broader range of curriculum services and, indeed, student services.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I point out that Merredin College, which it is now, is a roaring success as a result of that move. You did have a situation where you had primary schools and the high school itself were haemorrhaging, and people were just not going; they were leaving in droves. What happened was we combined Merredin to be a full K–12 now and, as I said, it has had roaring success. Now you go there and the school is vibrant, it is dynamic and there are a lot more kids at that school. Brendon Grylls and I opened the expanded residential college there about three years ago and by the end of the year it was full. That is testament to the fact that the impression there was that the school was more dynamic, it did have more to offer, and as a direct result now Merredin College is going from strength to strength.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Are there district highs operating around Merredin that may have a question mark over them because Merredin is steaming ahead?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not that I am aware of.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: No changes planned?

Ms O'Neill: Around Merredin?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes.

Ms O'Neill: Not that I am aware of. We go through this process continuously about new student numbers and access to curriculum, and I do not recall that there is any particular school around Merredin that we are having a close look at.

The CHAIR: Kellerberrin maybe?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: What is the situation in Kellerberrin?

Ms O'Neill: I have just been reminded that there is a PTA issue around Kellerberrin that relates to access on buses.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Access to the school on buses?

Ms O'Neill: The issue is usually whether it is a paid seat on a bus or whether it is given complimentary, and that is determined by your enrolment at a respective school.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That happens quite regularly around the state; I would say it is happening at a few other pressure points as well.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So that is purely and simply an access issue. Is it anything to do with subject choice?

Mr Baxter: With our district high schools across the state, I think the enrolments range from 87 kindergarten through to year 10, and in some instances year 12, so you can imagine the size of the cohort through to approximately 900 students. Kellerberrin provides years K–10. It is a small district high school. Merredin is about 35 kilometres away, I think. Some parents have chosen to seek a complimentary seat on the PTA. The PTA policy around transport assistance for students is that where a student cannot access an appropriate year level education at the nearest school, they are entitled as an eligible passenger to be on the PTA. For years 7 to 10, where Kellerberrin is the closest school with an appropriate year level, that is the school the PTA regularly would take the students to. However, if there are spare seats on a bus, parents can apply for a complimentary seat, and that is the situation in Kellerberrin where some of the parents have chosen to have their students attend Merredin College from year 7. As a consequence, of course, the numbers have declined at Kellerberrin District High School. That is a parent choice that is being made in that instance and that is a situation we see in other locations across the state. Some of the small district high schools around Manjimup would be another example where parents are exercising choice and determining that they would prefer to have their children at Manjimup Senior High School from year 7 onwards.

[10.40 am]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Going back to Kellerberrin, what is the effect on the planning for Kellerberrin District High School?

Mr Baxter: We have a number of small district high schools across the state. We also have a number of primary schools with what we call secondary tops. Shark Bay School is an example of that. It is a primary school but it runs a curriculum program from kindergarten through to year 12, with some outstanding results over the past few years. I think it has had 100 per cent attainment for its students in year 11 in going into year 12. They access most of their education through the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education with close mentoring and support at the school level. Some of the district high schools, I suspect, will follow that approach. District high schools that do offer years 11 and 12 are provided with additional funding beyond the student-centred funding model through a targeted initiative described as local access, so the students can remain in years 11 and 12 at the district high school. Approximately \$8 000 per student is provided. That is on a formula where it goes from one student is about \$8 000 up to 60, where it cuts out at that point; it is considered that the school has sufficient —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Are there any students at Kellerberrin District High School who are exercising that option?

Mr Baxter: I do not believe that Kellerberrin District High School goes to years 11 and 12. I think it ceases at year 10.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes, but you are saying that they have an option to stay there with funding of \$8 000 a student to do year 11 and 12 courses.

Mr Baxter: The case is that the school, and many schools work through their school boards, will determine whether or not they would seek to provide year 11 and 12. The change occurred when we had the increase in the school leaving age where traditionally, as I am sure you are well aware, district high schools provided for kindergarten through to year 10 students. With the increase in the school leaving age, there were a number of locations—Meekatharra would be a good example—where students really did not have access even through transport assistance to a senior high school; the district high school, for those students who chose to remain within the town, began to provide year 11 and 12. They are more the cases. A place like Kellerberrin generally would not have, because fairly close senior high school programs are available at Merredin.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is the future of Kellerberrin District High in question because of the migration to the senior high?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I cannot say that, but certainly not at the moment. As I said, if it gets to the point where there is a significant shift of students, we will always look at it, but it is certainly not; the future of Kellerberrin at this stage is not in question.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Would you be able to provide me, perhaps on notice, with the student numbers from 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 to date at Kellerberrin?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No A2.]

Hon PETER COLLIER: The director general wants to make a comment.

Ms O'Neill: Yes, we can provide the enrolments over the past few years. Just to clarify, it is not necessarily the case just because parents would like their child to remain and study at year 11 and 12 in a district high school that that permission is granted. District high schools are designated to deliver K–10, so a decision would have to be taken for us to be able to do that. With respect to the future of Kellerberrin, I will just go back to how I started originally answering the question. That is why it is year in and year out a continuous process, because parents exercise this choice all the time and are looking often at reducing the number of transition points and greater curriculum access. So, it is a continuous process where year in, year out we look at the enrolments, the projections and

what is happening in the local area, so there is no plan around Kellerberrin at this point except that, like all other schools, we will continue to monitor their enrolments.

The CHAIR: Has Hon Sally Talbot concluded her questions?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I can segue onto a slightly connected question.

The CHAIR: I think if people invite me to move on, I will move on.

Hon ADELE FARINA: My question relates to total appropriations. I am interested to know how much funding has been allocated to Eaton Community College. Minister, as you will be aware, Eaton Community College was built on what is now considered to be the failed open learning design. There were four or five schools in the south west built on that model, which have all had to be retrofitted with dividing walls. Eaton Community College was built as a middle school. It then got approval to go on to year 11 and 12 with a commitment for stage 2 facilities to be delivered in order to facilitate years 11 and 12. To date, 16 years later, stage 2 still has not been delivered. It might not be 16 years but, it is a substantial period of time later, stage 2 still has not been delivered. I would like know what the government's funding commitment is to delivering stage 2 facilities to Eaton Community College. It has only one purpose-built science lab, which when you are catering for year 11 and 12 students is inadequate. The home economics facilities are inadequate. Woodwork and metalwork are taught from the same facility, so it is inadequate for both because it is trying to do too many things at the one time. There is no staff room in which all the teachers can meet. There is no student services purpose-built facility. The list goes on.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you know when it was built—around what year?

Hon ADELE FARINA: I cannot remember, but it was when Labor was in government.

Hon PETER COLLIER: So it was the early 2000s?

Hon ADELE FARINA: Possibly.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I may need to take a bit of that on notice. I just comment in a very general sense that the open learning area that the geniuses at the time built, I do not know why they did it.

Hon ADELE FARINA: They were not geniuses!

Hon PETER COLLIER: They built these schools with absolutely no dividers at all. We just made a commitment to Kinross up in the northern suburbs, which is of a similar ilk. That was built in 2002, so it may have been about the same time.

The CHAIR: Another plan by the previous Minister for Education that closed Scarborough, minister!

Hon PETER COLLIER: The government was not making the decision. You had a situation where they were just like barns, quite frankly. It is not open learning. Open learning is where you have a concertina door and if you want to share learning with another teacher, you can do so. These things were basically like putting four classes in a gymnasium and creates enormous problems with social relations between students and teachers and a whole raft of things. It was the same thing. At this place to have their morning tea, they had an urn in the library, while the kids were out in the playground bashing each other up. That is why we made that commitment in Kinross. It is true! I went there and could not believe it.

Mr Leaf: It was built in 2003.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There you go; it was built in 2003. Interestingly enough, I was not aware that Eaton had that lack of facility. You are talking in terms of senior secondary facilities.

Hon ADELE FARINA: It is an enormous problem. The school reception is located in the public library. The library is a public and school library, 70 per cent funded by the shire and 30 per cent by

the department. That is another issue of concern. The local authority has indicated that they intend on building their own purpose-built shire library, so there is concern within the school community that they will withdraw their 70 per cent of resources from the joint library and that students will be left with a library that does not have facilities that the students need to be able to access. Also, the shire funds the librarian, so they will not even be able to keep the library open. I was wondering where the Department of Education is in relation to those negotiations with the local authority.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If the shared facilities are not working, that is disappointing. Normally when we have shared facilities, they work very well. I have to be honest that I am not that familiar with these issues that you have just raised with regard to Eaton. I will see whether Mr Fischer can add to it.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Can you take them as questions on notice?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will look into it for you and we will follow up, certainly with regard to the shared facilities and the lack of specialist facilities at the senior secondary level.

Hon ADELE FARINA: And the library.

Hon PETER COLLIER: They have actually had infrastructure improvements to overcome the open plan.

[10.50 am]

Hon ADELE FARINA: Yes, as part of the BER, they received some funding to put in some dividing walls; however, because of the construction of the ceiling they were not able to go all the way up to the ceiling, so the walls are about one foot short from the ceiling and so there are still problems at the school —

Hon PETER COLLIER: It just gets worse and worse!

Hon ADELE FARINA: —that need to be dealt with and need to be addressed. But having a school reception area in a public library is just disgraceful.

The CHAIR: Do any of your officers want to provide any other information? If not, I will take that as —

Hon PETER COLLIER: We will take that one on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

The CHAIR: Did you have any other questions, member? If not, I will move —

Hon ADELE FARINA: I have lots of questions, but I am happy to wait my turn until you come around again.

The CHAIR: I move to Hon Martin Aldridge.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I have a few questions around the asset investment program and capital works. Before I ask those, on the DHS issue, when we were talking about the closure of primary schools last year, there were some clearly defined thresholds. I think, from memory, it was 15 you put on watch, and 10 “your future is uncertain”.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, it was 15 or below.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Fifteen or below?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Are there similar thresholds for district high schools?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not that I am aware of—we certainly have not got one. I think that was established through cabinet, so there has been no similar figure on district highs. Again, the department will always monitor a district high to determine its viability. That will be an ongoing process.

Ms O'Neill: To add to that, over quite a few years district high schools have not been reclassified in terms of the staffing they got under the previous model we had, in recognition of the fairly rapid in some areas changes in demographics of the students. We do like to have a look at a projection over a good solid amount of time, so there have not been reclassifications of district high schools for that reason. They vary greatly in size, I think we mentioned earlier in terms of enrolment, so the threshold has not been set quite in the same way as it was for the small schools while we still work through what is happening in those schools with regard to access and curriculum choice.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: In relation to capital works, looking at “New Works” on page 264, there are a couple of line items for quite substantial sums of money in the out years for new primary schools—“New Primary Schools (2017)” and “New Primary Schools (2018–2021)”. Obviously, they have been put in the budget papers like that because it is not yet known where those primary schools are; is that correct?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes—2017 has been announced, but not beyond that.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: So, the 2018–21 figure of the \$206 million is to be determined?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes. It is usually four primaries per year.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: So it is a notional number for four primary schools?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I have made this point in previous estimates hearings, but with respect to the new works and asset improvement that is required at regional schools, they are not generally well reflected in the budget papers, with a couple of examples in Carnarvon and Kalgoorlie. I am sure we probably are not seeing the same growth pressures in regional schools that we are seeing in the corridors of the metropolitan area, but there are some significant needs out there. Is there any planning or any work being done? I think in previous sessions we have talked about building condition audits—I think that is what they were called—to look at some of these issues in regional schools, and you talked about Merredin community college and what a great example that is. There are probably a few other places in the state where that could or should be replicated.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes. I will just give my home town a plug: what they did in Kalgoorlie—you have mentioned Kal—was split the school into two, as you know. It is now eastern goldfields community college, which is now years 7 through 10; and then years 11 and 12 is the Eastern Goldfields College. What has happened there is pretty similar to Merredin, for want of a better example, in the fact that the decision that was made was very good and very productive for senior secondary, and it has enhanced the learning for those students, but it has cannibalised the middle school to a large degree. That is why royalties has now paid for a new stage 1 of eastern goldfields community college, which will be open in a couple of years. We will see how things go, but ideally that will then develop into a senior high school again in a similar vein to Merredin, so you will have less transition points. We have our issues in Carnarvon that we are dealing with. With regard to enhancing infrastructure in the regions, I have a significant number of examples here done through the regional schools plan provided from R for R, which has significantly enhanced a lot of those schools.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: That was largely to manage the transition of year 7s into high school, was it not?

Mr Fischer: The regional schools plan was prior to the year 7s. There were 13 projects —

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, that is a separate project.

The CHAIR: Can I just clarify? When you talked about the eastern goldfields community high, are you talking about, as it appears in the budget papers, Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes; that is the years 7 through 10.

The CHAIR: It is the same?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Broome Senior High School, \$10 million; Carnarvon Community College, stage 1, \$7 million; Collie Senior High School, \$3 million; Denmark Senior High School, \$7 million; Derby District High School, \$15 million; Esperance Primary School, \$10 million; Hedland Senior High School, \$6 million; Karratha Senior High School, \$9.5 million; Katanning Senior High School, \$2 million; Merredin College, \$6 million; Narrogin Senior High School, \$7 million; Northam Senior High School, \$10 million; and Pinjarra Senior High School, \$7 million; and there is project management of \$1 million. A lot of the emphasis in those areas is particularly in areas of science and home economics, because they require specialist facilities, particularly with the national curriculum. Now science is one of the core areas of learning, and you do need those specialist facilities. Science is imperative, and home economics—as I said, you obviously need specialist attention; you are not going to do it out on a bonfire in the backyard.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Obviously that is a good list of works that have been completed, I think, but there is not much in terms of the new works, and that concerns me. From doing the rounds of schools out there I have seen that some of the conditions of those schools are average at best—and I think, rightly or wrongly, parents do make decisions around the future of their children's education around what they see and the standard of the facilities at those schools. I think the facilities in Moora at Central Midlands Senior High School are a good example of a school that has not seen a lot of love for a lot of years. I would hope there would be some way forward for schools like Central Midlands Senior High School, which is a large regional centre in my electorate, to be able to get funding in future years.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I take that on board. The projects have commenced, and there are 21 schools, in terms of district highs, that have been earmarked for improvements in this financial year to the tune of \$5.5 million. But that is not going to satisfy your concerns, because you are going to need a lot more than \$5.5 million to resolve some of the issues you have identified. I do not know what happened to the architectural designs in the 1970s, but they need to be shot because that is where a lot of these problems arise. A lot of the buildings that were built in the late 60s and early 70s were deficient—those flat-roof things, lots of asbestos —

The CHAIR: Permanent demountables, I call them.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is what they look like—exactly. They just look like a built-in demountable. They have very narrow hallways and staircases and there is a lack of facilities, and as a result of that we are now having to pick up the pieces. That will require a significant capital injection. Suffice to say, I have made several attempts to this point in addressing that issue, but, mindful of the state's financial circumstances, we have not been successful.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: With the College of Agriculture facilities, you talked about Harvey—the old facility—and there is also, I think, a facility at Gnowangerup that the department still owns.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, we own it but we do not operate it.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: So, why are we leasing those assets rather than disposing of them? Is there some future use for which the department wants to hold onto them?

[11.00 am]

Hon PETER COLLIER: That particular property is part of the Aboriginal settlement.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Which one?

Hon PETER COLLIER: The training centre at Gnowangerup. It is part of the negotiation with the Aboriginal settlement.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Why are we leasing Harvey rather than disposing of it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am not sure, perhaps Mr Fischer —

Mr Fischer: It is just a strategy until we are able to extradite into the new Harvey centre. We are still using some of the facilities there. We will get at it as soon as we can. There is no intention to hang onto that for any extended period.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: The lease is to allow for the transition into the sites?

Mr Fischer: It is an arrangement to make sure the property is maintained while we are not operating a school there, until we can dispose of them.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are always a bit cautious about selling schools. We might need them in the future.

The CHAIR: Lessons well learnt.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Some people are, some people are not.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Can I ask some questions on assets in relation to residential colleges?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes. It is a different division; that is all. This is just DOE. We can answer as best we can. We should be able to answer your question, but if there is anything, we might just take it on notice.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: There are a couple of issues to do with residential colleges. One is the Katanning Residential College. I think we have asked about this in previous estimates. Any plans? What are we going to do with the Katanning site?

Hon PETER COLLIER: The residential colleges are such a diverse problem because in some areas, as you would be aware, they are pushed to the limit. In other areas, they are in significant decline. With regard to Katanning, I will just ask the director general to see if she has got anything on the most recent figures et cetera.

Ms O'Neill: I do not have my financial officer here because that division is not being presented today, but we have a caretaker still on-site. The school uses part of the facility. It is under discussion across broader government agencies about what use might be made of that facility into the future.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Is it formally in the process of—what does the Department of Lands call it—the clearing house?

The CHAIR: If it is not nailed down, we sell it.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: They described to us a process where government agencies wanting to dispose of an asset enter into a formal process where other government agencies consider its use.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It may be considered.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Fire sale.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I do not think it is in there at the moment, but I can get back to you on that if you like and get you an update on the current status.

[Supplementary Information No A4.]

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Could you also take on notice our residential college enrolments?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have probably got those, I think you will find, in Merredin and a few of the other places.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It might be easier to take it on notice just because there might be quite a few numbers to record.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have got them all.

The CHAIR: Are you able to table it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: There are 594 at the moment.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Yes, but can I have it by residential college and the comparison of capacity as well?

The CHAIR: I am going to give Hon Dave Grills and I think Hon Sue Ellery had a follow-up question, so I will just go to those. During the break, maybe we can organise to give it to the staff and we will table it.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have got it.

The CHAIR: So we will table it and take it as a tabled document.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: With residential colleges—again, this might not be one that the director general can answer—quite often it gets put to me that the residential colleges have difficulty retaining staff. I am not sure what the industrial arrangements are with staff working in residential colleges or what the attrition rates are and whether that is reflected in the concern by the department. They put to me that it is difficult, given the amount of money they can offer to the staff working in residential colleges, to retain good staff and recruiting staff is an ongoing challenge for residential colleges.

Ms O'Neill: Yes, they work under an award, so the remuneration is tied up in that award. It is different in different colleges. In some colleges it is pretty static. The person has been there a while and at others it has been harder to maintain the manager role. They are not highly paid positions. The positions have been sized. Obviously, they meet all the public sector comparator and public sector requirements, but it is something that we are interested in, alongside agricultural colleges, for example. As has been suggested and proposed—the stat authority and the department merge—that is an issue that we will have a close look at. It is variable in different colleges. It is an onerous task. The children are there in the care of those people. We have terrific people there but, like you, I have been asked the question about whether the remuneration is set appropriately. That is something that we will have a look at, particularly as they come together as part of our department.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: What stage are we at in terms of bringing together the authority and the department?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That legislation is being drafted at the moment. That has still got to go to cabinet but, ideally, we would like to certainly move towards that by the end of this year.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: But at the moment, the director general is the chief executive officer of the authority, so in some respects that process is well underway in terms of synchronising the two agencies.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: On page 261 with regard to the asset investment program, Esperance Senior High School was previously identified as one of the public schools with the largest maintenance needs by estimated cost in the state 2013 building condition assessment of the Department of Finance's Building Management and Works. Will there be any allocations for maintenance work at Esperance Senior High School over the forward estimates?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have just allocated an additional \$15 million for maintenance, but I am not sure if Esperance will be captured in that sum. Mr Fischer might —

Mr Fischer: There is \$15.6 million for specific maintenance being allocated for 2015–16. We are just working through the program of schools that would be part of that program, and, obviously,

those schools that are registered with high BCA needs and high priority would be identified as those likely to receive funds.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Does that mean that Esperance will make an appearance on that list?

Mr Fischer: I do not have the details of Esperance in front of me. I am not quite sure what the priority ratings were for Esperance. I know there were some big numbers, but I am not quite sure where the needs were and what that priority was, so I cannot answer the detail.

The CHAIR: Is it possible to take on notice whether Esperance—in fact, maybe you can provide the list of which schools are going to get maintenance from that \$15 million. Is that something that is likely to be concluded shortly?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We may not be able to do that in the time frame. How long have we got?

The CHAIR: Ten days. Maybe you can give us an indication of where you see Esperance as a priority.

[Supplementary Information No A5.]

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Thank you very much for that, Chair. On page 264, down the bottom, there is new works with regard to remote community schools. Can you give me some idea of what community schools are likely —

Hon PETER COLLIER: Remotes?

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Remotes, yes; sorry. What remote community schools are likely to be on that in perhaps the same way?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is all the lands schools.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Eastern goldfields?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Okay; thank you.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The lands schools from the eastern goldfields—not in the eastern goldfields, but the lands schools.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Yes, Warakurna and places like that.

The CHAIR: The remote Aboriginal communities.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I jump back to the exchange that was occurring before in response to, I think, the question by Hon Liz Behjat about the pressing need in the north west metro corridor. You said at the time, minister, that at City Beach we are building now. Is there any allocation in these budget papers for either planning money for that or building money for that? If you are aiming to have something in 2020, where is the money for it?

[11.10 am]

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, there is none. We did allocate \$38 million to improve Churchlands and we have done a new build at Shenton. That was for the 7s, fundamentally, but there is nothing in the budget. That is why it is urgent.

Hon SUE ELLERY: So what are you actually going to be able to achieve in the next financial year in respect of progressing City Beach?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are precariously close to making a decision, and I do not use that word loosely, because every time we think we have a solution, there is something else, and we get an Exocet missile coming across the bow and we cannot do it. There are all sorts of land purchase problems that we have encountered. There are parlous few opportunities to build a senior high school in the western suburbs, but we are pretty close, so if we do, we will have to make a commitment within a very short space of time.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is outside what is in the current budget papers?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

The CHAIR: You have allocations for new primary schools; I think you said 1 470 places, which is the equivalent of a reasonable sized high school. Why would you not have an allocation for a new western suburbs high school in the budget papers?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I guess until we make a determination, we still have not committed —

The CHAIR: But we need it! I think you have accepted that. I cannot work out why we would make allocations for new primary schools in the budget, but not have an allocation for a new high school.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Well, we still do not have the land. Land is a key imperative of any commitments or allocations.

The CHAIR: You will need money to purchase it.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We do.

The CHAIR: Just on Churchlands, just to follow up on my own question, of that \$38 million, is any allocated to do roadworks around Churchlands Senior High School? I would have thought that given you are adding that number of extra students, it is already a chaotic traffic mess around the high school; there is really only one road in and one road out to the high school, because two are houses and one is a major road. How much is actually for roadworks and what traffic modelling has been done on the school being able to manage the increased intake that you are building for?

Hon PETER COLLIER: From my understanding—I will ask Mr Fischer to comment specifically about it—that has been taken into consideration. The issue with regard to the parking, the traffic, was taken into consideration. Re: specific figures, I am not sure whether Mr Fischer can add to that?

Mr Fischer: The funding provides really for the on-site parking only; it does not provide for any additional traffic management around the public open roads at this stage.

The CHAIR: So have you done any traffic modelling on whether that will cope with the increased student numbers?

Mr Fischer: I am not aware if there has been any traffic modelling to that extent, no.

The CHAIR: How can you not have done traffic modelling? It is clearly going to be an issue at that school. It already is.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The whole point of the new build is just to deal with the increase up for the next few years. The ultimate aim, of course, is to remove a lot of the pressure on Churchlands with the new western suburbs senior high school.

The CHAIR: I understand that, but you are going to have a lot of extra students going to Churchlands over the next couple of years with that build; they have to get to the school somehow.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, and I know the principal has talked about staggered starting and finishing times, which is one of the options they are looking at in the next couple of years, and I think that is something they will probably have to do. It is a problem that we would rather not have.

The CHAIR: Tell that to the parents who have a kid in year 7 and a kid in year 11, if they have different start times.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is what I said; all those things need to be taken into consideration. It is a problem that I wish we did not have, but we have.

The CHAIR: Can you take on notice what work you have done on traffic management?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Okay.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

The CHAIR: We will have a break now and come back about 20 past.

Proceedings suspended from 11.13 to 11.22 am

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I would like to go back to significant issues impacting the agency, particularly around behaviour centres, which we briefly touched on before. How many public schools in WA have isolation rooms?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is not the behaviour centre; do you mean behaviour management?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Behaviour management, yes, sorry.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There are 28 rooms, but only five where students have an approved plan to use.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Okay. Could I get a list of those schools that have the isolation rooms?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, we will take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A7.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I also have, associated with that, some description of the physical features of those rooms? I understand that the isolation rooms vary in how they are constructed and what their walls are made of, so the kind of features of each of the rooms.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, that can be part of that response, if you like.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Also as part of that response, an indication of the schools in which there are plans authorised for students to be put into those rooms.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Of the five?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Of the five, yes, and any discussion on the use of the other rooms. Are there any plans in progress for students?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am not quite sure what you mean. Unless we get a request from the school —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I imagine that when the request is made from the school to the department, there is some discussion so it takes some time for the plan to be approved. Could you give an indication of where we are at with the development of other plans?

Hon PETER COLLIER: So, if any of the other 23 schools have applied?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Assuming that the five students are not all in two schools or one school.

Ms O'Neill: If we could clarify, is your question whether we are considering more applications at the moment?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is correct.

Ms O'Neill: We will answer that as part of the total—if any applications have been put to us. It will be where parents, together with the school, have made applications to be able to isolate students in that way.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is correct.

The CHAIR: That will all be part of A7.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How much does it cost to construct an isolation unit?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It varies from school to school.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Are there plans for the construction of any new isolation rooms in addition to the ones that I have already asked for on notice?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not that I am aware of. We have had no applications or requests.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So what is on the list is it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Will there be an isolation room in the new Midland engagement centre or specialised school?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, that is not the intent of the new learning academy.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What is the oldest isolation room? How long has it been around?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Since the early 1990s.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: When was the latest development policy or change to policy in the use of these rooms?

Mr Hale: We would probably need to take that on notice to confirm, but I think I am right in saying that it would be a subset of our most recent behaviour management in schools policy, which is currently under review. That would suggest to me that it was probably last reviewed two or three years ago.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I get a copy of the current policy, noting that you say it is currently under review?

Mr Hale: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What is the review process for that policy?

Ms O'Neill: All our policies get reviewed on an ongoing or cyclical basis depending on need. We would look at new contemporary research. We usually talk to stakeholders and principals in relation to the behaviour management policy. We would talk to the behaviour centre people. It is an interim policy review. If it is something that has particular reference to a group of students, we would then discuss it with stakeholders as well.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: By “stakeholders”, do you mean parents of the children who currently have plans?

Ms O'Neill: Depending on the policy —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I am talking specifically about this one.

Ms O'Neill: This will not have a stand-alone policy of its own; it will be part of a broader behaviour management approach and policy. With a review of behaviour management, we would talk to principals and psychologists. Particular medical groups might be involved. Sometimes there might be family representative groups. It depends on each policy. With regard to behaviour, it would be the people who would be considered experts in this field.

[11.30 am]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I see. So the use of an isolation room is not a stand-alone policy; it is part of the broader behaviour management policy?

Ms O'Neill: That is right. We would have other components of that policy in terms of exclusion, suspension, isolation and physical restraint, for example. When you see the policy—when we provide it—it is a broad policy about behaviour management that will have subsections in it.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: About the use of isolation rooms?

Ms O'Neill: About a range of things, including that.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can you give me an example of the type of evidence that informs the use of isolation rooms and their use—how they are used and what sort of outcomes are expected? I am happy for you to take that on notice. A list of evidence that is used in terms of —

Ms O'Neill: As I keep saying, it is part of a broader policy. We would look at the contemporary research. For example, our school psychologists would provide that to us. Normally with reviews, we would go and see if any research and evidence base has changed since the last review to make sure it reflects contemporary practice. Literature search might be part of that evidence. Our own people—psychs et cetera—are considered experts in the field. They would have access to evidence. There would just be internal evidence about usage and issues that have arisen. That gets fed into a policy review committee. That is represented by all internal parties to the department as well as some principals and others.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I am talking specifically about evidence that supports the use of isolation rooms. While I understand it is a broad process in policy development around behaviour management, specifically what evidence is the department looking at in relation to isolation rooms?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We would have to take that on notice.

Ms O'Neill: We would need to provide that.

[Supplementary Information No A8.]

The CHAIR: There was a suggestion earlier that you might take something on notice and then we continued the conversation. I think it related to a policy.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The current policy.

Ms O'Neill: We agreed to that.

The CHAIR: I will include that in A8. When you get the transcript, if you can review that and make sure you pick up all the things you agreed to in that ongoing exchange.

Ms O'Neill: Chair, you can assume that we have agreed to a pretty comprehensive briefing on the various aspects of isolation rooms, picking up the specific questions you have asked.

The CHAIR: And the policy.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: And the latest research, not copies of the research but a lit review, if you like.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just emphasise with regard to the isolation rooms that they are used very, very, very sparingly, like hardly ever. They are only ever used with the consent of the parent in terms of ensuring the safety of the child plus his or her peers and the teachers. It is not like they are used in overwhelming numbers or occurrences for a child who speaks out of turn or something like that. We are talking here about most hardened cases in situations where pretty much every other option has been used.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How many times in the last 12 months have they been used?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I think we have to take that one on notice too.

Ms O'Neill: Minister, we would need to go to the schools and ask for their specific data for those five students; that would not be centrally collected.

[Supplementary Information No A9.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: There is no reporting mechanism back about how often they are used and the length of time in which they are used?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would not have thought so. It is similar to most of the other behaviour management, of which there is a plethora of different behaviour management issues that exist in the schools.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Although an isolation room is really quite unique and, as you say, when it is used, it is used in a very serious circumstance. So, I would have thought that there would have been some central mechanism by which, when these extreme cases are used, there is some way that the department is made aware of the use of them, the circumstances around the use of them, and the way in which the issue was resolved, particularly to identify systemic issues as they relate to isolation rooms.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would not have thought so.

Ms O'Neill: If I can clarify, minister, that every occasion and the circumstances are agreements that have been established with the parents. To be able to establish such a room there is involvement of our regional executive director, so the agreement that is established is around the kinds of situations and circumstances; but currently there is not a mechanism where they would need to report to us centrally on every occasion that that is used.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: But they are reported to the regional executive director?

Ms O'Neill: The circumstances for the establishment of the room and the agreement with the parent is negotiated in that way, but I am not aware that every occasion that it is used is reported to the regional executive director. That is why we would need to go back to the school, because the agreement and the authorisation is given—our principals who have to operate such settings on the rare occasions they do, we believe are well placed to make that decision.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So what are the mechanisms to ensure that they are not being misused?

Mr Axworthy: If I could read an extract from our procedures, as we said before, protective isolation is covered in the general student behaviour management policy, but within it there is a specific section that highlights the procedures that need to be followed before protective isolation can be considered, and certainly this is on the public record and publicly available. If I can read you an extract, it will give you an indication. As an entry point it says —

Guidelines

Principals may implement the use of protective isolation to maintain the participation of students with extreme, maladaptive behaviour.

It —

... must only be used with the written consent of the —

regional executive director, which we have talked about —

Principals must only implement protective isolation when it is part of a wider documented plan for students whose behaviour places themselves or others at risk of harm. As such, it is an intervention of limited duration used for harm minimisation and to re-establish behavioural control.

...

Protective isolation must be carefully and collaboratively planned with consultation and input from school staff, parents, inter-agency partners involved in the behaviour management of the student and a psychologist with acknowledged expertise in behaviour management.

It then lists a number of behaviours that principals must do, which includes obtaining full written consent for the strategy and the location of any protective isolation from parents and to develop interagency partners and the district people in having a plan. So, in a sense—and, hence, only five of these are in operation—it is something that is brought in when there is a particular student who has severe maladaptive behaviours and where they could do either themselves damage if they were

not protectively isolated or could do damage to others. It is not a light thing that we enter into, hence its rarity.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you for that. Could I get a copy of that procedures manual, please?

Mr Axworthy: Absolutely, yes.

[Supplementary Information No A10.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: In the consultation with the parents, or the authorisation from the parents, is there a template or a standard way of gaining parents' consent in the use of those?

Mr Axworthy: Not so much a template, but what is essential is that it is informed, written consent and it is active consent rather than passive consent. It is not of the kind that if you do not respond by such-and-such a date, we will assume it is all right; it is active. The reason there is not a template in the sense of procedures, but each of these cases is so different and contextually different—and the background of the parents and the knowledge base of the parents will be so different—that we would want to ensure that the consent that is given is true consent and informed consent.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: When a child is placed in an isolation room and the principal has made the decision to place the child in the isolation room, the child is placed in the isolation room, the principal makes the decision that the child is no longer a threat to themselves or other people, what feedback is given to the parents once that episode has concluded or in the middle of an episode, for example?

[11.40 am]

Mr Axworthy: Usually that is written into the behaviour plan that goes with this, because alongside the use of the isolation room would be all of the other strategies that would be being used to try to bring down—so, for example, to lower the base level of emotional response and to help the child predict their own behavioural patterns and opt out of a situation that may make them more emotionally labile. So the whole set of strategies for self-control, calming and all those things would be written into the plan, as would the indication that if an event happens and we have to protectively isolate, this is how we will contact you and this is what we will do as a result of that situation.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Who checks that the plan has been implemented appropriately according to the plan, and if there is variation from the plan, why there was variation in any episode?

Mr Axworthy: In the first instance, it would be clearly the principal's responsibility to ensure that that was happening. In these situations, because there is an onus on the school to notify parents about a child being removed and placed in protective isolation, and those other partners—the interagency partners—that are usually involved in situations like this, the plan is being monitored quite closely by a number of different people. But primarily the principal is responsible for having created the plan and has to have sign-off from the regional executive director for that plan.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: But there is no systematic monitoring of how the plan is being applied in any circumstance?

Mr Axworthy: By the parents, certainly. I was going to say there is a requirement on any of these plans that they be reviewed regularly, and in this case monthly would be the norm, and certainly termly would be the extreme end of case conferences.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Of the five children who currently have a plan, what is the ratio of those who have a diagnosed impairment to those who do not?

Mr Axworthy: Given that we are talking about five cases here, I would need to take that on notice to look at their particular case history. But virtually every child, if they did not have a known

diagnosis, would be in the process of gaining a diagnosis, because of their maladaptive behaviour, and the involvement, which is a necessity, of a psychologist trained in behaviour management and behavioural issues.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It would be good to take on notice, if we could, the ratio of those children who have a diagnosis and those who do not.

Mr Axworthy: Certainly.

[Supplementary Information No A11.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I think that is all that I have on that issue.

The CHAIR: I have got Hon Sue Ellery, Hon Peter Katsambanis, Hon Sally Talbot, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, Hon Adele Farina and Hon Liz Behjat. Is anyone else seeking the call? All right. I will go to Hon Sue Ellery and then to Hon Peter Katsambanis.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I want to ask about staffing and the impact of the change to the public sector regulations. The reference is page 258 and “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, but just because it refers to funding and staffing; it is not going to help you answer the question, I suspect. I am particularly interested in how many employees you think will need to be registered for redeployment. I did note the discussion of this matter in the estimates in the Legislative Assembly, where the director general advised that letters were likely to be sent to employees within the next few weeks notifying them of their status if they were to be registrable. That was two weeks ago. What progress has been made since then?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are just finalising that at the moment, so it should be within the week.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What sort of numbers are we talking about?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is 592.

Hon SUE ELLERY: So 592 people will get letters advising them that they are registrable. Is that correct?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Is the minister able to tell me—the minister might need to take the actual number on notice—that that 592 is made up of X number of education assistants and X number of other classifications of staff?

Hon PETER COLLIER: This is headcount numbers: central and regional officers, four; education assistants, 338; school administrators, 25; school support officers, 64; and teachers, 131. That brings it to a total of 562, not 592. Sorry. I make that correction.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I turn to page 264 and the asset investment program in new works. Some of the schools that are listed there have been identified as the ones that are going to be subject to a PPP. I want to understand what the allocation next to those schools actually means, because the statements that the minister has made so far are that the successful consortium will finance the design, building et cetera and then run the facilities contract. What is that money that is allocated next to those schools actually for?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will ask Mr John Fischer to give the response.

Mr Fischer: The funding identified in the AIP reflects the capital costs of those schools if we deliver them under traditional means. Until a decision is made to award the PPP arrangement, that is the current way the funding is shown for the schools. So if the PPP arrangement progresses, there will be changes to the way the funding is shown in the budget papers.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What would happen to that money? As I understand it—you can correct me if I am wrong—the minister has said he is likely to make an announcement of the successful consortium in August.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is four or five weeks away. So within the life of the 2015–16 budget, there will be an amount of \$200 million that has been notionally allocated against those schools. But let us say a PPP proceeds; that is \$200 million sitting within the life of this financial year. What are you going to do with that \$200 million?

Mr Fischer: That is a decision for Treasury to make. In terms of the accounting process for identifying the money now, this is how it is described now. Until someone actually signs a contract that agrees to deliver those works under a PPP arrangement, this is the accounting measure for the dollars.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It needs to be identified in the budget, because it is committed to those schools.

Hon SUE ELLERY: On page 263, again two of the schools listed under “Works in Progress” are Ellenbrook North Senior High and Harrisdale. Those two schools are under the PPP program.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is correct.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Is that just another accounting measure—that is, we have to put the money there because it has to go somewhere —

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: — and that money also becomes floating, if I can call it that?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am sure Treasury will find a good cause for it.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am sure they will, too. But it would seem to me strange if the department did not have a view about what it could do with that amount of money for capital works.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I know what I would like to do with it!

The CHAIR: In terms of the net financial liabilities of the agency, even though you will record it as a finance lease in the budget papers, you will still have to carry the net present value of the lease as a financial liability at that point. So you may not spend the money on capital assets, but it is still going to be recorded in the total figures of your agency and the government. Is that right?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is correct.

[11.50 am]

Mr Leaf: Under a public–private partnership, the nature of the capital investment changes in the way the accounting procedures work and the arrangement; and we have to bear in mind that should the public–private partnership go ahead, it has to pass the value-for-money evaluation that is still underway as we speak. When and if we should enter into this arrangement, it is a 25-year cash flow that spreads the design, the construction, the maintenance and the facilities management over a period of time. There will be significant cash flow implications depending on when funds are released, depending on the successful tender that, if it comes to pass, is chosen. The reason that the budget estimates, as John Fischer has explained, state the existing investment criteria is that at this point in time no decision has been made, other than the fact that those schools will be built, and if the PPP for some reason was not successful, then we would invest according to what is in the estimates right now. So the funds will not disappear; they will just take on a different structure that will have to be determined when the results of a decision are known. It is impossible to represent this in any other way than it is currently represented.

The CHAIR: Has the member finished on the PPP; because I am not?

Hon SUE ELLERY: On that, yes.

The CHAIR: In terms of you doing your net present value assessment, do we expect that the final figure that will be recorded in your liabilities will be higher or lower than the \$57 million. I ask that because you are going to have interest payments and the like included in that and I would imagine it will end up being higher; will it not?

Mr Leaf: We have experts working with us on this particular proposal. One of the big four chartered accounting firms is actually working with us to determine precisely what the disclosure requirements will be in the future. At this point in time, that is not something that I have available that I can provide an answer right now upon. This, as you would know, is the education department's first public-private partnership. It is somewhat different to the PPP that was recently done for the stadium or some hospital contracts. It will have its own unique features, and our professional advisers in Treasury and the Department of Education are still working through the answer to that particular question.

The CHAIR: But will that assessment be made public? That is probably a question for the minister. And why not, if it will not?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have no idea at this stage; I will assume so. I cannot imagine why that would not be the case, unless it is commercial-in-confidence.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might just draw your attention perhaps to earlier statements that you have made in answer to questions from me in this, when you have in fact given a commitment that you would release the comparator and the business case once —

Hon PETER COLLIER: That was a little different to this, though.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes; I am just drawing your attention to those. You have said you will release that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, that is correct.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What would be different in your mind?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Anything that is not commercial-in-confidence will be released.

Hon SUE ELLERY: But you as one of the partners, government, get to determine, when you sign the contract, what actually constitutes "confidence".

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are not going to be hiding from anything. We are going down this path because we think it is a path that needs to be gone down. It potentially could be a more efficient means of building schools. We are not doing it to make life difficult for ourselves. If there is any information that should be made available, it will be made available, and unless it is commercial-in-confidence, we will provide that information.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I guess, if I can just make the point, given that it is one contract for eight schools, it is not like there is anybody else kind of floating around. It is not like you have done two sets of different negotiations, for example. It seems to me that would be more reason to make more available rather than less, so the default position will be release more rather than less.

Hon PETER COLLIER: As I said, it is certainly not my intent to be clandestine about this process. The end to the process will be to be as transparent and open as possible so that if we have a better, more efficient way of delivering the construction of schools—if we can do that—we will do that and we will do that in a very open fashion.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask a couple of other questions on the PPP? When you are doing your assessment, will you do it on a basis of comparing a school using the business-as-usual model—for want of a better term—or will you compare it on the way in which the private sector may use that school? For instance, there will be a cafeteria. They may use that cafeteria for other purposes other than school purposes, which you as a department could do but you obviously do not at the moment.

There will be school ovals, school facilities, the leasing, the hiring out of those, the classrooms generating money streams beyond what is available and what you currently do as a department. When you do your assessment, will you be doing it on a basis of business as usual, or are you going to be doing it on the basis of if you were to do those things as a department, what the price would be to the government?

Hon PETER COLLIER: But can I also point out that a number of schools already do have those shared facilities.

The CHAIR: That is why I am asking what do you use—that was going to be my next question—and what do you consider as business as usual when comparing that?

Mr Leaf: Mr Fischer might be able to add, but the public sector comparator does precisely what you describe, which is it assumes that the government will deliver the infrastructure, the facilities, maintenance and management and all other aspects as if it is was a traditional way of delivering a school; and that we would do the design and the build through BMW. We would then maintain according to our usual maintenance standards, and that builds up what is called the public sector comparator. That PSC is then used to compare the private sector bids. When they put in their bids, it is a comprehensive document that goes into detail as to how they have priced it and what they are proposing to achieve around those key expenditure components of how they intend to manage their relationship with the department according to specific scope and contract requirements. I am not sure if that answers your question.

The CHAIR: No, it does not.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I give an example? In a public school now, and lots of them do it, out-of-school care is the most common example. They will contract with an NGO or a company to provide out-of-school care, and that is income that comes into the school. Is that the kind of example of what you would compare? I ask that because in the expression of interest material that you sent out to the consortiums, you said, “You’ve got the opportunity to use school facilities and to identify where you might want to generate income that will go to the consortium, not back to the school.” Are you comparing the like with the like?

Mr Fischer: The short answer is yes, we are comparing like with like. In terms of the shared facilities, ovals and those sorts of things, they are taken out of the public sector comparator, so we are not assuming that the project company is doing anything more than what we would do. In terms of commercial opportunities, they are all identified separately, so we are again comparing like with like. If the project company identifies some unique opportunity that they might consider as a way to generate money, they just identify it separately and the government then considers whether that provides additional value for money. But in terms of the base case, which is I think the question you are asking, if we are managing a school as we would manage it, that is what we are comparing the bidder’s proposal with.

The CHAIR: But my point is if you take school ovals out and the private sector identifies a way of creating money out of that, then it very much becomes about what do you put into the contract. What I am trying to get to is a list of the assumptions you are making in terms of the school’s use of their facilities on a business-as-usual model. What are the assumptions you make? I ask that because my next question is: will they be reflected in the contract? For instance, I assume the school will have rights to the gymnasium in high schools between school hours. How much later into the evening will the contracts require the schools to have use of the gymnasium free of charge, or will there be a point where they have to start paying for it, and each school will use their facilities in different ways in conjunction with their community? If you suddenly say that at 3.30 pm the gym becomes the private sector, and they can then lease it out to private groups for yoga or whatever else activities, and then, if the school wants it, they have got to purchase that time, that is not like for like compared to the way it currently operates. It becomes very important that the contract also reflects the assumptions that you make.

[12 noon]

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right, and this again is not going to satisfy the questioner. Suffice to say that the quality of the delivery of education is paramount in any negotiation or any contract that is agreed to—that is, education delivery in every single aspect, in terms of overall pedagogy, in terms of academic delivery, in terms of pastoral care delivery, in terms of recreational delivery.

The CHAIR: Minister, can you guarantee that the contracts will allow for the schools to have access to those premises at any time of the day that they require without making additional payments to the private sector to use that school?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is the comparator that we are talking about.

The CHAIR: No it is not; that is not what they said it is. They have said that they have excluded some of those aspects.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There will have to be a level of negotiation, which will take place with the builders at the moment.

The CHAIR: Which is it, minister? What is your position as a government on what is the basic level of access that the school will have to those PPP schools? What is going to be written into the contract as a guarantee to the parents of Western Australia that they will have at those PPP schools?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will refer to Mr Fischer.

Mr Fischer: Can I say up-front that we are in the deliberative process about the exact details of the contract now, and we are doing that assessment, so I will speak in general terms, if you are happy with that. In terms of the access the school currently has to facilities, there will be no difference between what a school currently has and what a school would have under a PPP arrangement. The way that is expressed in the contract is that there is provision for an identified number of hours when the school has, essentially out of normal school hours, access to its facilities for all sorts of things a school would normally do in terms of after-hours training or access to gyms or access to ovals. All those sorts of things are made available to the school. What the arrangement does provide, and it recognises the reality of use of facilities outside of normal hours, is the opportunity for shared community use of facilities. That only happens in conjunction with the Department of Education, the principal and the project company. If they wanted to enter into some sort of commercial arrangement, whether it is hire of the gym or whatever, the school can manage that in its own hours, but if there is some opportunity to have the community use those facilities outside that, and the project company can arrange that, and what the arrangement does recognise is that there is a cost to using facilities outside of normal hours, and if the community is wanting to do that, then they would be having to reflect that in the agreement.

The CHAIR: That raises two questions, and maybe you cannot provide it now, but what I would ask of the minister is that you give a commitment that the full range of assumptions and the full contractual requirements in terms of what the schools have access to are made public at the time. You made reference to the stadium. We are still being told that we cannot find out what the annual payments are for the stadium. We are told that we cannot find out what the use of the 500 square metres, or whatever it is, of commercial land is to the stadium, because it is all commercial-in-confidence. I get very nervous when ministers say commercial-in-confidence. Will we get a guarantee from you today, minister, that you will fully release all of the details about what the schools will have access to, and that you will guarantee that that will be as much as every school currently has access to? You mentioned earlier Churchlands Senior High School. If they start to go to split shifts, they are going to need access to their school facilities for longer times than they currently do.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I do not mind providing that information after the negotiation has taken place.

The CHAIR: But will you guarantee that today, that that will be made public?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Of course I can. I have said that; I have made that quite clear. I think we are jumping at shadows here. Schools now make negotiations for shared facilities; it is no different. So you cannot say —

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If I can just respond. You do; you have a situation where schools negotiate over the use of their gymnasium, the use of their ovals, the use of—all sorts of facilities—their performing arts facilities. They do that day in, day out.

The CHAIR: Who controls that decision, minister?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is the principal, and that is what I am saying, so we are dealing here with —

The CHAIR: Exactly. Will the principal have complete control over access to the school facilities under your model?

Hon PETER COLLIER: After the negotiation is finished, as I say, I have no problems making that public. I am sorry, I keep on saying that this is not done to hinder the progress of education in Western Australia. Education in these facilities will remain the key priority. The key priority will always be the education of the children. After the negotiation has been concluded, I have no problems whatsoever. Suffice to say, as I said, that is being done, and it is being done on a day-to-day basis in dozens upon dozens of our schools. There is absolutely no intent to reduce student access to any of the facilities. I would not allow it.

The CHAIR: Once the contract is written, there is no flexibility in the future, though, is there?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It depends on the actual contract. But I have given my response. That is what I said: there is no intent to reduce access to facilities.

The CHAIR: Are you able to provide the assumptions on which you are operating the public sector comparator now in terms of the current uses of schools? You must be having some assumptions on which you base that. Is that something you can provide now?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would imagine that it is still part of the process.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I refer to the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators shown on page 260 of budget paper No 2. I have a series of questions on these, but I did notice when I was looking at it again this morning that in relation to both the secondary graduation rate and the apparent retention rate, there was quite a significant increase in both those rates between two years ago and last year, if you like. What were the drivers of that, and is it actually sustainable, given the significant increase in both of those?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I did answer a similar question to this a little earlier to —

Hon SUE ELLERY: That was a dorothy.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, it was not a dorothy; I can assure you it was not at all.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: It is certainly not, I can tell you. I am not sure about the sustainability of it.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I do not have dorothy dixers, but can I just say at the outset that it is a good question. With regard, first of all, to the graduation rate, the assumption there of course is that, as I said earlier, the new WACE will provide much more opportunity for students that would normally fall between the cracks at the senior secondary level, which they do; they just do not have opportunities at the moment. The new WACE will provide much more of an incentive for students in terms of options at the senior secondary level. I might ask the director general to comment—I did comment on this earlier, so I apologise if I did not go into much detail then—with regard to the

retention rates. I would imagine it would reflect the changes to the school leaving age and the fact that it has been on the increase for several years now, since 2008. It has been increasing, and I would imagine that that would impact on retention to 2015, because it is quite significant. Director general, I do not know if you have got anything to say about that.

Ms O'Neill: Because of the requirement under the new WACE to have a VET certificate II or higher, and complete four or more ATAR to get the WACE from 2016, by virtue of those requirements, and the renewed attention on those for parents of children and for schools, we do anticipate seeing better results in regards to those two factors. There are a range of things that we are doing to assist with that—a focus on STEM education and keeping the students involved in participating in those courses. We have got school-based ATAR aspiration and challenge clubs. We continue to recognise the academic achievement of students. I am meeting with principals at the start of each year and their school leadership teams for those schools where the two rates—the graduation and the attainment rate in particular—are not up to where we would want them to be. We are designing different and improved career planning opportunities for students. All of those strategies that sit behind the new WACE and the move to have students leave school with a better outcome drive up graduation and also the retention rate.

[12.10 pm]

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just emphasise that one of the most compelling figures that I have come across since I have been Minister for Education and involved in education was with regard to when I made the changes to WACE about three years ago now, as the member would be well aware because he was there. When SCSA, or Allan Blagaich, led the group to look into the changes, almost 5 000 of our public school students were leaving school with nothing—absolutely nothing. That is why we made the change to ensure that there was more provision for qualification at the secondary level, so cert II or an ATAR or a combination of both minimum literacy and numeracy standard, and that will ultimately lead to more students graduating with a WACE. Up to this point, the WACE, quite frankly, was redundant. You could go out with a WACE and have absolutely nothing and have limited literacy and numeracy skills and say to an employer, “This is what I’ve got; I want a job” et cetera but they would have nothing. From 2016, there will be some rigour behind the WACE, which has not existed before.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I am actually glad that the WACE changes have driven some of this, because I do have a little bit of ownership around that whole idea and the principles that the minister enunciated. In relation to all these outcomes—the retention outcomes, the graduation outcomes and also the literacy and numeracy—do you break these figures down by gender, either the budgeted figures or the actual figures or both? I do not expect you to be able to outline all of them today, but do you break them down and, if so, can you provide them on notice?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have got them, but I am not sure if we have got them readily available.

Ms O'Neill: We have a broad overview—I was looking at it earlier—about girls in particular and their performance on the national assessment. Females substantially outperform males in all areas of literacy across all test years. That is a consistent message that we get. Marginally higher means are reported for numeracy for males in all years. The percentage at above the minimum national standard in numeracy for males and females is pretty similar. We do a breakdown of gender for NAPLAN results. I do not recall that we have a breakdown of results for ATAR, but most likely SCSA do.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Do you have the gender breakdowns for the participation, graduation and retention rates?

Ms O'Neill: I do not believe that we have that with us.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Would you be able to provide them on notice?

Ms O'Neill: Yes, we can.

[Supplementary Information No A12.]

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Anecdotally, there is a perception that in relation to participation, graduation and retention rates, females have a higher rate than males. I am not necessarily sure if that perception is generally accurate, so I would appreciate it if you commented on the accuracy of that perception. Secondly, if there is an issue in relation to retention rates and graduations rates for males, are there any specific strategies in place to deal with that?

Ms O'Neill: Because the variance between schools is obvious, as in there will be variance in cohorts between schools, the strategies for any gender differentiation are conducted more at the school level. Anecdotally, there is a suggestion that overall girls in years 11 and 12 perform perhaps at a higher level, but you only have to look at the Beazley Medal recipients to know that it is mixed. It is very hard to draw any absolutes from the data, like it is in any gender performance right throughout schooling, because it depends on each individual child and their particular background, interests and aspirations. Anecdotally, I have heard similar things to what you have made comment about. But, as I said, I do not have with me an overview of whether that is backed up by evidence.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: So when we get that information, it might help and guide us.

In relation to male teachers—again, it is more anecdotal—there seems to be pretty strong evidence that male teachers provide great role models, particularly for young males in schools. How have we gone with attracting more male teachers, especially at the primary school level?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Appalling. It is really bad. There has been a seismic shift in the last generation in particular, and particularly in primary schools. There was a whole host of reasons as to why that might be the case. When I go around to the various schools, you are lucky to get one or two males in the classroom at the primary school level. Around 13 per cent of classroom teachers are male, with the rest being female. That is in the classroom. We did start—I am sorry that this has not gone as far as it could have at this stage and I do intend to ramp it up more—a males in the classroom program whereby newly graduated male teachers go out to secondary schools, particularly to year 10 when they are making course selection, chat to the boys who are doing those course selections and encourage teaching as a profession. I have been to a couple of those and encouraged teaching as a profession. There are a couple of issues, of course. Money was previously an issue, but now money is not so much of an issue, particularly given the downturn in the mining sector and because our teachers are paid so well now, so of course that should not be such an inhibitor. Other issues associated with perception, I think, have certainly played their part with males in primary schools. Unfortunate as it is, it is the reality of the situation. Those factors combined have seen a deterioration, so it is very, very common for a child to go right through primary school and never have a male role model as a teacher. Some would suggest that that is not such an issue. I think it is a bit of an issue to a degree, particularly where you have got a significant number of split families. I would prefer to see more males in our classrooms, particularly at the primary school level.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I agree with you; I think it is an issue and it is something we should work towards because it is a great career. Has there been any work done in attracting people who perhaps have had another career—especially in relation to changes in the mix of employment in Western Australia and a slight shift in the job market—who are in their 20s, 30s or 40s, or their 50s for that matter?

Hon PETER COLLIER: There is an organisation called Teach for Australia which is doing exactly that, and I have met with them on several occasions. They are very successful in attracting people from other professions into teaching. That is but one. It requires a six-week in-residence intensive program covering one-quarter of a teacher education course, including two weeks' professional experience in a disadvantaged school. It is a two-year placement in a disadvantaged

secondary school with a teaching load of 80 per cent and a time release of 0.2 FTE for study and professional development. It is doing really well. We have got 13 associates and five schools participating in Teach for Australia in Western Australia. There are two associates at Atwell College; two at Balga Senior High School; two at Ballajura Community College; two at Cannington Community College; and five at Southern River College. It is working. I have been really impressed. I have met with them on several occasions.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: You have actually predicted my follow-up question, so you have answered that already. Do you have a breakdown on how many of those 13 are female and how many are male?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have seen photographs of them all. I have not got that information, but I can provide it.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: If you could provide that information, I would appreciate it.

[Supplementary Information No A13.]

[12.20 pm]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I have a very quick question about the trade training centres. There are two references to trade training centres on pages 263 and 264. Could you just take us through what each of those columns entails? The first one is \$17 709 000 on page 263.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry; I am just having difficulty hearing.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is trade training centres. Halfway down the page, you will see the figure in the first column is \$17.7 million. Can you just talk us through those figures and tell us what the money is for?

Hon PETER COLLIER: What that funding is? Yes. Mr Baxter can respond to that.

Mr Baxter: With the \$17.7 million for five trades skills centres, you are asking where the trades skills centres will be located?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Are they new trade training centres?

Mr Baxter: The distinction is the trade training centres were under the former federal government and the current federal government has a program out and the facilities are known as trades skills centres. I think we have 35 trade training centres.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So what are we talking about here, then? What does this budget item refer to?

Mr Baxter: The \$17.7 million refers to the five trades skills centres. Those trades skills centres are located at Mandurah; the Peron Trades Skills Centre, which is Gilmore College and a number of others in a consortium; Halls Creek Trades Skills Centre; the Great Southern Trades Skills Centre, located at Katanning but servicing students from Gnowangerup, Kojonup and Wagin; and the Kullarri Trades Skills Centre, which is located at One Arm Point, but will also be providing service to nearby schools.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So what is the interrelationship between the trade training centres and the trades skills centres?

Mr Baxter: Essentially, they are the same. They have been badged by different federal governments.

Hon SUE ELLERY: One is Labor; one is Liberal.

Mr Baxter: The badging is different. The application of those facilities in schools will be very similar.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will go to the next item on the next page about 10 lines down—\$74.5 million for trade training centres. What is that for?

Mr Baxter: The commonwealth government approved \$127.4 million for rounds 1 to 4 to equip the 35 trade training centres, and they are pretty much nearing completion, so I can only anticipate—I will have to come back to you on this—that this \$74 million is a part of that initial round of trade training centres.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can I ask then on notice for a breakdown of the information relating to both those entries? As I understand it, page 264 relates to trade training centres.

The CHAIR: If you just state what you want, we will make that supplementary information A14.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: On page 264, in relation to trade training centres, can I have a breakdown of where that money has been expended, because there is no money? This is next financial year. I want to know where that money was expended.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is completed works there. It brings us back to the whole point why the feds should just give us the money and let us do it, quite frankly, because when you have a change of government, you have got this situation where you change the title.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That may well be. In relation to page 263—sorry; I am just aware we are running out of time—could I have the information broken down by those five sites about where that expenditure is going to occur? We are talking only about to the end of 2016, so we are talking only about the end of the next financial year. Could I have that breakdown? Have I got any time left, Mr Chair?

The CHAIR: No, that is it.

[Supplementary Information No A14.]

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: I just want to ask about AIEOs. In the second paragraph on page 258 of budget paper No 2 under “Student Success and Achievement”, there is a statement —

Despite enormous goodwill, effort and investment over many years, outcomes for Aboriginal students remain disproportionately and unacceptably low.

Can you confirm the number of AIEOs by FTE and headcount for this and the last financial year?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We can certainly do that, but I would like to point out that in a number of instances, there has been funding available for AIEOs, and no positions have been filled. Sorry; do you want it for this year?

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: This year and the last financial year.

Hon PETER COLLIER: At 21 May, it was 376.22 FTE.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: That was for this year?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is for this year, and we have not got last year, but we can provide that.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: Thank you. What savings has the government recorded from the cuts to the AIEOs over the last two years, and what measures have been put in place to monitor the outcomes for those students?

Hon PETER COLLIER: There were 95 positions. We will get the exact figure.

[Supplementary Information No A15.]

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: Have there been any other measures put in place to measure the outcomes for those students, given the overall reduction in numbers?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, we have done an enormous amount in the Aboriginal space, including significantly increasing Aboriginal funding as a result of the student-centred funding

model. There are 37 schools in the KindiLink program—which has been very, very well received—and the child and parent centres. We have more than adequately provided additional resources for Aboriginal students over the last two years in particular.

Hon ADELE FARINA: My question is in relation to two schools. The first one is Bunbury Senior High school. How much funding is in the budget for that school to upgrade its canteen facilities, which are in a deplorable state? How much funding has been allocated in the budget to deal with the concrete cancer at the school?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will ask Mr Fischer to respond. I do not think there has been any. I take on board your comments. I have been to that school on several occasions, and the canteen will continue to be a part of any budget consideration, but I do not think it is this year. The canteen in its current form is unacceptable.

Mr Fischer: The program for doing upgrades has not been announced yet. That is for 2015–16. It will be presented to the minister in the next months.

Hon ADELE FARINA: The other question is in relation to Dardanup Primary School. They have appalling IT access at that school. They have got smart boards but they cannot download any program or material onto their smart boards. The students cannot access the internet to do any research work while at the school; there are only a couple of locations at certain times of the day that work. Despite there being NBN towers close to the school, it is an ongoing problem at the school. I was just wondering what was being done to address the problem.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Bandwidth is an issue with a couple of schools in that area, as I understand it, and they are —

The CHAIR: Just that area?

Hon PETER COLLIER: In this area, in particular. Principals are meeting with the department, as I understand it. We are working with Telstra at the moment to try and overcome that particular bandwidth issue.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Okay. The other question is: an extra \$100 000 was provided to the school this year because it has got under 200 students and the student-centred funding model does not work, as the school has under 200 students and, as a result of that, they were able to retain one additional teacher; will that funding be continued in the forward years, because the school has obviously got concerns? They have already got, I think, five split classes, and they are struggling.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It will be reviewed at the end of the year. We will have a look at the numbers.

Hon ADELE FARINA: That is not much comfort.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I know. But it will be reviewed at the end of the year.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I suspect this has got something to do with student-centred funding model stuff, but I am looking through all of these budget papers and there are people with criticisms in relation to cuts in funding for students with disabilities. Some schools have expressed concerns in this area. I cannot actually see anything that gives me comfort in the budget papers that I can point to to go there are no cuts in those areas. How is all that working?

[12.30 pm]

Hon PETER COLLIER: The one issue that—I have spoken about this with the director general—has been articulated to me is issues with perceived cuts in funding —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: And there have not been any cuts in funding.

Hon ADELE FARINA: No. It is the assessment levels that they are being given. The assessment levels are —

Hon PETER COLLIER: Well I will ask the director general to comment. There are about 90 different categories on the spectrum, which have been identified. That has not changed. That has been cut down to—now there are seven broad categories that have been identified, but funding per se has not decreased; it has increased in disability. But I will ask the director general to comment.

Ms O'Neill: We did put an additional \$20 million into the model for educational adjustment for schools to be able to make further adjustments for students. Some of this is complicated inasmuch as there has always been—ever since most of us have been doing these jobs, and for a long time before—ongoing review of students with disabilities and the amount of money that is needed because the amount of money is provided to the school so that they can make adjustments to the environment and to the teaching for that student. Sometimes as a student gets older, the amount of funding needed to adjust for that student changes. So there is an ongoing review process. Every year, we have people who come forward and say, “Last year we might have got this and this year it is different”. That is not uncommon. Overall, there are more children getting a bit more and there are some students who have been adjusted and are getting a different amount to what they got previously. But you cannot draw an “only” direct line between the new model and that there are a range of reasons why that might happen, including the broad banding. Overall, there is more money in the model for disability, but you may have reported to you—as I have—individuals that want us to have a look again at their situation because there has been some change. Schools have the opportunity to—there is an appeal system and there is also a budget review process and people go through that process.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Was that not disclosed for a period of time because they could not cope with the demand for reviews?

Ms O'Neill: The reason why we were not looking at the review for a period of time is that because we have changed the whole system, we had to go back and almost review everyone. So we did not have the capacity for a couple of months to re-review something that we had just reviewed, given that we were dealing with everyone, whereas each year it is normally a recurring group of students. There was a period of time where there was a backlog and we put additional staff on so that we could clear that backlog.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just say at the outset now that the student-centred funding model—this is the first year of the student-centred funding model and it has been implemented almost flawlessly. It has been very, very well-received. It has had a bit of a glitch for very, very few—just a tiny, minuscule handful of schools that have got some issues. I visit dozens and dozens of schools week in and week out. I met with another eight or 10 principals and Chairs again yesterday and it has been really well received. At last principals know what money they are getting. Now, this year, of course there will be some glitches in the system. That is inevitable given the fact that the system up to this point was so fraught with problems: lack of transparency, lack of equity in terms of the funding. Now our money—our \$4.8 billion, the most money of any state in the nation in terms of per student levels—is going to where the student is, whether that child has a disability, is an Aboriginal child, has English as a second language, lives in the regions, or lives in a low socioeconomic area, they will get a base level of funding and that criteria. The money is going to where the child is. As I said, it has been very well received. Schools will get their budgets for 2016 very shortly—towards the end of the third term. They will get that funding and then it will be seamless. At this point, we have got 800 schools. Thirteen schools out of that 800 sought a review—13 out of 800. To me, that is a success.

The CHAIR: Okay. I think I will —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Mr Chair, it would not be a budget estimates hearing if I did not mention the Ashdale cluster. My son is graduating from year 12 this year, so it might be my last time. Out of

the four years he was at Ashdale Primary School, three of those years he had a male primary school teacher.

The CHAIR: Thank the Ashdale Primary School then.

I will draw that to a conclusion. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you in writing in the next couple of days through the minister, together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have any un-asked questions, I ask them to submit these to the committee clerk at the close of the hearing. On behalf of the committee, thank you all for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 12.35 pm
