

The final issue is cost. The soil moisture map that appeared in the *Countryman* last week showed that on 1 June this year, the soil moisture content in most of the wheatbelt was far below what it was on 1 June last year. That will be a significant issue in regional Western Australia. I know for a fact that farmers are hoping beyond hope that a big rainfall system will come through this weekend, and also on 29 June. However, I suspect that even if that does occur, a lot of farmers have already decided not to plant a wheat crop. The impact of that across regional councils will be significant. If an additional cost is then imposed upon regional councils as a result of the introduction of this proportional preferential voting system, it will make people very angry. Wheat farmers generally hedge their crop. I understand that this year, wheat farmers have hedged their crop to the tune of roughly \$150 million. That is based on the presumption that they will be able to grow enough wheat to put into the pool to cover that hedge. The amount of wheat that they put into the pool to cover that hedge is usually only a small proportion of what they grow; it is usually only about 1 000 tonnes. If wheat farmers do not get rain in the new few weeks, the first cost that those farmers will need to meet will be the hedge cost. They will then need to face the cost of not planting a crop. To give an example, one of the farmers in Mullewa has planted 40 000 acres of wheat. It will have cost him well over \$1 million to plant that crop. He is a major landholder, and he pays a helluva lot of rates to that local government. A lot of farmers in the Chapman Valley, around Geraldton in the northern and north eastern wheatbelt, will be very short of money.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** That is a serious situation.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** Wilson Tuckey has already written to the Minister for Agriculture and Food about putting in place some precursor for exceptional circumstances funding. Bear in mind that farmers need to have two dry years before they are eligible for exceptional circumstances funding. However, exceptional circumstances funding will not save a lot of these farmers. I am reluctant to say that, but a lot of farmers had a bad year last year, and they are at the end of their tether. When I say at the end of their tether, I mean at the end of their tether. Often in these kinds of situations, another bad year is the last straw that causes people to finally crack. If the drought continues and we do not get significant rain by the end of June, a responsible government would say, "We are a bit concerned that this new voting system may impose an increased cost on regional councils, so we will delay it for a year." That would be very well received, Deputy Premier. I ask the Deputy Premier to take that on board. We oppose the legislation. It is not very smart politics to impose a Labor Party policy on this sphere of government, when 93.5 per cent of councils are opposed to that policy.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (23)

Dr J.M. Edwards	Mr J.A. McGinty	Mr P. Papalia	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr M. McGowan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr J.C. Kobelke	Ms S.M. McHale	Ms J.A. Radisich	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr R.C. Kucera	Mr A.D. McRae	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr F.M. Logan	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mrs J. Hughes ( <i>Teller</i> )
Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr T.G. Stephens	

Noes (18)

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr P.D. Omodei	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr M.J. Birney	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr D.T. Redman	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr T.R. Buswell	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr A.J. Simpson	Mr T.R. Sprigg ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr G. Snook	
Dr E. Constable	Mr J.E. McGrath	Dr S.C. Thomas	

Pairs

Mr S.R. Hill	Mr G.A. Woodhams
Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr P.W. Andrews	Ms K. Hodson-Thomas
Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr C.J. Barnett

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF TEACHING AMENDMENT BILL 2007

### *Declaration as Urgent - Motion*

On motion by **Mr M. McGowan (Minister for Education and Training)**, resolved -

That the bill be considered an urgent bill.

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 13 June.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Darling Range)** [9.53 pm]: The opposition supports the Western Australian College of Teaching Amendment Bill 2007. As indicated earlier, we were happy to support it being considered an urgent bill. The purpose of this bill is, in essence, to facilitate the election of members to the board of the Western Australian College of Teaching. The Western Australian College of Teaching was established through an act of this Parliament, which was finally enacted in 2004, some three years ago. It is important that the intention of the act be put into effect; namely, to allow members of the teaching profession in Western Australia to elect representatives to the board as opposed to having members appointed on the nomination of the Minister for Education and Training. The central purpose of this bill is, first, to rectify two problems that have been identified in the legislation, which went through this house in 2003 and through the Legislative Council in 2004, and, second, to change the arrangements for casual vacancies in membership of the board of the College of Teaching.

The first problem that was identified in the act is a conflict between section 9(9) and schedule 1, which relates to the maximum term of membership of the board. It was the intention of the act that the maximum period of membership be three years, which is indicated in schedule 1. The inclusion of section 9(9) in the act was as a result of an amendment moved by me as the then shadow Minister for Education and Training back in 2003. I will not go through the debate that occurred at that time, but, in essence, some debate occurred about whether members of the board should serve a maximum of three terms and whether each term should be for a maximum of three years. The opposition moved amendments on both counts. The first amendment - namely, for members of the board to serve a maximum of three terms - was not accepted by the then Minister for Education and Training, who is now the Premier. However, he accepted the second amendment, which, in essence, was intended to reflect what was contained within schedule 1.

It is worth putting on the record that in a letter to the board of the Western Australian Collage of Teaching, the current Minister for Education and Training attributed the responsibility for the amendment and therefore the inconsistency to the opposition and specifically to me as the former shadow Minister for Education and Training. I am happy to take responsibility for that. However, what the minister did not point out in that letter but should have done was that the amendment was accepted by the then Minister for Education and Training, who is now the Premier. With all the advice available to him at the time, he did not pick up that there was a degree of conflict. I am glad that the current minister pointed out both aspects - namely, that the amendment was moved by the opposition but that it was also accepted by the then minister - in the media release that he put out on this bill last week. I think that he realised that he was perhaps being a little too smart by half in trying to attribute all responsibility for the conflict to the opposition.

Section 9(9) states that a term of membership will be for three years, whereas schedule 1 indicates a maximum term of three years, which is really what was intended. Another option that would be open to the government to correct this problem would be to specify in section 9(9) that the period of office will be for a maximum of three years or for a period not exceeding three years, which would bring it into line with schedule 1. However, I guess that both approaches would have the same effect. Therefore, the opposition is prepared to support what the government is seeking to achieve.

The second problem that was identified relates to the fact that the act does not provide a clear power to the board of the College of Teaching to delegate responsibility for conducting elections to the Electoral Commissioner. It was clearly intended that the Electoral Commissioner of Western Australia would be given the delegated responsibility for conducting the election of representatives of the teaching profession to the board. However, as that was not clearly specified in the earlier bill debated in this Parliament, it is not clearly contained within the current act. The problem has been rectified and the opposition is happy to support that aspect of this bill.

The third significant change that is proposed by this bill is to provide a different election mechanism when a casual vacancy arises, particularly when a period of less than 12 months remains for a resigned or ceasing member's term of office on the board. The intention is that rather than going through the expense and rigmarole of conducting an election when the term that remains is one year or less, the minister will appoint an appropriate representative. The opposition is happy to support that, but would like more information on the criteria that will be used, and it will briefly go through that in the consideration in detail stage.

I know that there is a significant degree of frustration within the teaching profession that teachers have not as yet been able to successfully elect their representatives to the board. The process that started in the second half of last year had to be aborted because of the problems that were identified. I can certainly understand the frustration that exists amongst many members of the teaching profession. The opposition is very keen to facilitate this legislation going through both houses of Parliament as quickly as possible so that the problems can be rectified.

I make the observation that there appears to have been a significant degree of inaction over the past three years, particularly in the period of the previous Minister for Education and Training, in finalising the arrangements to enable the elections to occur. The legislation passed through the Legislative Council in 2004 and the act was proclaimed in that year. We are now three years down the track and it is somewhat incredible that it has taken this long to identify those issues that need to be rectified. Nevertheless, the opposition is keen to facilitate the process of elections of representatives of the teaching profession to the board. Therefore, it supports this bill and will be happy to facilitate its passage through both houses of Parliament as quickly as possible.

**DR E. CONSTABLE (Churchlands)** [10.03 pm]: I, too, support the Western Australian College of Teaching Amendment Bill 2007. It is interesting to go back over the past 10 years, because this legislation has been 10 years in the making. It is a pity that it has taken so long to formalise the election of the 10 teacher representatives from the government, Catholic and independent sectors. I will spend a moment going over that history, because it has not been told in this house.

This legislation had its beginning in a deputation I received in my electorate office in 1997 from a number of people from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia. The deputation asked me whether I would put forward a private member's bill for the registration of teachers. I said that I would not do that, but suggested that I add a division to the School Education Bill, which was before the Parliament at that time, because it meant that there would be a debate and it would force the minister to get to his feet and make a commitment. The strategy was that I would have this division drafted, which I did, and it was very bulky on the back of the notice paper - it was an entire division that should have been in a bill - and we would get a commitment from the government. The outcome of that debate was that the then Minister for Education gave a commitment that he would look into it. An interesting series of meetings, seminars and forums were held to discuss whether teachers should be registered. The result was that both major parties gave a commitment that whichever party won the 2001 election would introduce legislation to register teachers. True to his word, in 2004 the Minister for Education did just that.

It is a great pity that it has taken so long to get to the point at which, finally, the board will be in place. I am very supportive of this legislation and it is worth members reminding themselves why it is before the Parliament. The teachers' union representatives came to see me because they wanted to raise the standing of the profession. At that time, they understood that something in the order of 147 professions and trades were registered, but teachers were not. They felt it would be very important for their profession if teachers were registered. Not only that, it would provide for the setting of standards and the maintenance of standards in the teaching profession. Most importantly, the registration of teachers is about the protection of children. We should keep those three things in mind.

I am very supportive of this legislation. I will certainly be very pleased when it is finally in place. It strikes me, in looking at this bill again, that 19 is a large number of people to have on any board. To me it would be cumbersome. I have not sat on a board that size, but about a dozen people on a school board or non-government organisation, several of which boards I have been on over the years, is about right. Nineteen members is hugely cumbersome. This evening I very quickly looked at the number of people on other boards. I found that the Medical Board of Western Australia comprises 13 members; the Dental Board of Western Australia, six; the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Western Australia, five, plus five deputies; and the Psychologists Board of Western Australia, six psychologists and two others - a legal practitioner and one consumer representative. I thought the Nurses Board of Western Australia would probably be the closest in numbers. I understand from the Minister for Health that 29 000 nurses are registered and the Minister for Education and Training told me that there are 42 000 teachers. The Nurses Board has 13 members. I thought that this legislation should have set up a board of perhaps 12 or 13, not a cumbersome board of 19. Getting 19 people who represent different groups to agree around a board table would not be easy all the time; it might be some of the time. Perhaps the size of the board is something to think about in the future.

I support the legislation completely and hope that it has an easy and quick passage through both houses of this Parliament.

**MR T.R. SPRIGG (Murdoch)** [10.08 pm]: I would like to make a few observations on the Western Australian College of Teaching Amendment Bill 2007. As the member for Darling Range said, the opposition will support the legislation. I am a former teacher and when I was teaching, nothing like the Western Australia College of Teaching existed. We used the union to lobby for our pay increases - which were not forthcoming, hence I gave up teaching.

Like the member for Churchlands, I have an issue with a 19-member board. Now that we have the democratic process up and running, perhaps I will throw down a challenge to the board that it consider rationalising its numbers. I recognise that the board members will represent various segments of the education sector, but the numbers could be rationalised.

It has been mentioned that the proposed election already should have been held as WACOT was established in September 2004. An attempt was made last year to do that, but there was a school of thought that the then

Minister for Education and Training was not happy to have an election because people from PLATO, or People Lobbying Against Teaching Outcomes, would nominate for positions. Of course, that would have been unpalatable to the then minister. Those times are now behind us. The outcomes-based education debate has run its race. The election of the WACOT board must be held as soon as possible.

I have a concern about WACOT's membership. I understand that, as we speak, one-third of the 42 000 teachers are not financial members of WACOT. This will break a few mores because a teacher cannot teach in the state of Western Australia unless he or she is a member of WACOT. However, I sympathise with them. I have spoken to several teachers who said that they had not paid their \$70 annual membership fee because they do not know what WACOT is doing for them. It seems to have lost its way. That prompted me to have a look at WACOT's mission statement to find out what it stood for and what it intended to do. The statement reads -

The College was established by law on the 15 September 2004 as an independent professional body representing all members of the WA teaching profession. The college was established to enhance the status of the teaching profession by facilitating the professional growth and development of teachers throughout their careers and operating a regulatory system.

Those are terrific goals, and no-one would have a problem with them. The statement continues -

In supporting Western Australian teachers, the College will establish and promote professional standards and values, provide and foster leadership, conduct research, exercise disciplinary powers in relation to registration, confer and collaborate with employers and universities in relation to the standards of teaching education courses, promote and encourage continuous education, and enhance the status of the profession.

The purpose of the College is to maintain the highest standards of teaching in Western Australian schools and to raise the status of teaching.

Unfortunately, WACOT has lost its way somewhat. It does not have a democratically elected board. That will now happen, which is the reason the opposition will support this legislation. It is my fervent wish that WACOT can get back to striving to obtain and provide the services for which it was established, and that the 14 000 teachers who have not paid their annual membership fees do so. That will allow WACOT to go forward and provide the services for which it was originally established.

**MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin - Deputy Leader of the National Party)** [10.12 pm]: I rise to express the Nationals' support for the Western Australian College of Teaching Amendment Bill 2007, as we supported the passage of the original bill some years ago. The changes need to be made, and the reasons for them have been well covered tonight, so I will not go over them further, other than to say that it has taken a long time. I share the concerns about the size of the board. From my experience, I know that it is a large number of people to be on the board. However, the board needs to be given some time to see whether it works. I hope the minister will monitor the situation and, if there are problems, make changes down the track if necessary.

The member for Murdoch has talked about the role of WACOT in raising the status of teachers. When the registration of teachers was first discussed by the Parliament, I thought it was a really good idea. I have always felt that we undervalue the role of our teachers. The more I do this job, the more I learn about early learning and the way we teach our young children, and the more we talk about issues and problems in society, the more I feel that we underestimate the great role that teachers play in the community. Generally, the community also underestimates the role of teachers. Teachers frequently come in for a lot of undue criticism. WACOT has a real responsibility, now that the board will be in place, to add to the credibility of the teaching profession. It affects every person in this state.

I endorse the comments of the member for Churchlands about the protection of children and issues with teachers and children. Sometimes we can take our eyes off the ball. This is all about education and the wellbeing of our children. With those few comments, the Nationals will support this bill.

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham - Minister for Education and Training)** [10.14 pm]: I commence my brief remarks on the Western Australian College of Teaching Amendment Bill 2007 by thanking members opposite for their cooperation, their comments and their assistance in ensuring that this necessary legislation passes through this house. Following from a conversation I had with the shadow Minister for Education and Training today, I believe that it will pass through the other place in the next week or so. That is good news for the progress of this body.

I was watching an important program on television last night, called *The Rich List*, from which I pick up most of my general knowledge. I picked up an important piece of information about the most respected professions in Australia. I noted that teachers are rated seventh in the respect levels, while politicians are at number 29. In between us and teachers, there were psychics! We probably need a body of this nature to help us out.

**Mr J.C. Kobelke:** What was the ranking of politicians who used to be teachers?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We could probably use the Leader of the House better in the teaching workforce!

I digress, but that does show that there is a great deal of respect for the teaching workforce in the broader community. As a profession, it is one of the more respected in the country.

This bill amends the original Western Australian College of Teaching legislation to fix some anomalies. It will mean that the original intention of having an election for the 10 members of the board can be realised. We expect that it will take place before the end of the year, so that the organisation can be fully and properly operational and accountable to its membership - the teaching profession of Western Australia. Between 42 000 and 43 000 teachers are registered. It is the largest profession in the state, exceeding any number of other professions put together. Teachers are an enormous group in the community that we need to take care of in many ways, and we need put some effort into their status, morale and workforce planning. This is one of the initiatives we took to the election of 2001 and realised over a period. It was done for the morale and professional status of teachers. Considering that many other occupations have professional bodies, I find it incredible that the teaching profession did not have a professional body until the creation of WACOT. Therefore, bringing this body into full operation is an appropriate thing to do.

The reasons that this legislation has come forward were documented in my second reading speech, and the member for Darling Range also referred to them. There were some anomalies in the original legislation that needed to be repaired. I will not get into the blame game about it, but I appreciate the fact that the member for Darling Range has indicated the opposition's keenness to get the problems fixed. The Parliament is not perfect; like every other institution in the world, it is fallible. A mistake was made in the drafting of the legislation by the Parliament, but we are now fixing it. Parliamentary counsel pointed out that there are also some difficulties with the regulations that also need to be repaired. Obviously, the people who draft the regulations are not infallible either.

If this legislation passes through the upper house next week, I am keen for it to be operational by the end of the year, so that the Western Australian College of Teaching can get on and do its job with full confidence. I encourage all teachers to not only become members, which is a requirement, but also pay their dues, because by doing so they are able to receive the benefits of membership, and the organisation will have a firm financial base to provide those benefits to the teaching workforce into the future. When these bodies are set up, they often require a period to get themselves up to full operational capacity; that is, to do the things that are expected of them by the membership. I have met many teachers during my six months as minister, and many of them have asked me what WACOT is doing. I say to them that because it has been around for only a very short period, they should give it a go to do what we set it up to do. I conclude my remarks. I look forward to the bill's speedy passage through this house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *Consideration in Detail*

**Clauses 1 to 5 put and passed.**

**Clause 6: Schedule 1 amended -**

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Clause 6 is quite a long clause. Lines 19 to 22 on page 5 refer to the process of appointing a member to the board when the vacancy is for less than 12 months. It says, amongst other things -

The person appointed . . . is to be a person the Minister considers to be representative of the registered teachers mentioned . . . as the case may require.

I would like the minister to outline the sort of criteria or principles that he would expect to be used by the minister of the day in making such an appointment in those circumstances. For example, if an election is held for representatives from the government school education sector and seven representatives are elected to the board, if one of those representatives resigns prematurely for whatever reason, a vacancy is obviously created. I understand the general contention is that in most circumstances the next person to have scored a number of votes in the previous election - that is, having come eighth - would normally be appointed by the minister. On the other hand, that would not necessarily apply. I would like the minister to outline the principles that would be used and the criteria that would apply in making an appointment in these circumstances.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I thank the member for Darling Range for his question. This is the replacement clause for someone who retires, resigns or leaves for whatever reason within a year of the following election. Instead of requiring an election, which would be an expensive and time-consuming process, it gives the minister the capacity to select someone to fill the position, which might be for only a couple of months. Seven out of 10 of the positions are from public schools, two are from the Catholic sector and one is from the independent sector, so naturally there is a defining factor as to what group the person is selected from. Ordinarily, the next person on the list would be selected. However, discretion is needed because, for instance, only one person might have run

from the independent sector and therefore there would be no-one to select. The minister must have discretion to select someone. It could be a practising teacher. The teacher who ran for the election may have left the profession and be doing something else. The member can see all the permutations by which there needs to be some discretion. There is not some conspiracy to try to stack things and I am not looking for an opportunity to do something dastardly. I expect to take the recommendations that were brought to me as to who would be the most representative person to fill the spot of the person who left. I would be subject to enormous scrutiny because, as the member can imagine, elements of the teaching workforce would be watching it very, very closely.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I wish to clarify that the minister indicated that he would be seeking recommendations from particular groups for those vacancies. Can he clarify that that is what he meant?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I said, there is the example in which there might have been only one or two candidates, which means that no other person ran. As I said, we would look to the next person on the list who got the most votes and missed out on election. If that person was not available or was unsuitable for myriad reasons, which I cannot really define but I can imagine all sorts of reasons that a person would be subsequently rendered unsuitable, we would seek the advice of the sector. If it was an independent school, there is an independent schools body or if it was a Catholic school, there is a Catholic schools body. We would seek their advice as to who they thought was appropriate. I understand that it is not purely democratic, but I think it is the best, and the least expensive, way of resolving a difficult situation in the lead-up to a subsequent election. I expect that the teachers would probably not want to fork out thousands of dollars of their money to elect somebody for what could be a couple of months.

**Clause put and passed.**

**Title put and passed.**

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.

*Third Reading*

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Mr M. McGowan (Minister for Education and Training)**, and transmitted to the Council.

*House adjourned at 10.28 pm*

---

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

#### MINISTERIAL OFFICES, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES - STAFF ENGAGED IN COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, SPEECHWRITING OR MEDIA

2059. Mr T.R. Buswell to the Minister for Education and Training; South West

- (1) For each department and agency under the Minister's control, including the Minister's Office, will the Minister please advise of the following -
- (a) how many employees (head count) are engaged in communications, marketing, speechwriting or media (including public, corporate and media relations);
  - (b) what is the salary band for each of these employees; and
  - (c) what is the job title for each of these employees?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

#### Ministerial Office

- (1) (a) 2 FTE
- (b) (i) Level 5 \$ 60,638 - \$67,017
  - (ii) MAI \$ 83,138
  - (c) (i) Communications and Research Officer
  - (ii) Media Advisor

#### Department of Education Services

- (1) (a)-(c) The Department of Education Services has no position undertaking these duties.

#### Curriculum Council

- (1) (a) The Curriculum Council communications team has 1.8 FTEs.
- (b) 1 x Level 8 (0.5 FTE) (\$46,565 to 50,577)
  - 1 x Level 7 (0.3 FTE) (\$24,668 to \$26,439)
  - 1 x Level 6 (0.6 FTE) (\$42,300 to \$46,882)
  - 1 x Level 4 (0.4 FTE) (\$21,800 to \$23,043)
  - (c) Manager, information and communications (1)
  - Corporate communications officers (2)
  - Communications and content coordination officer (1)

#### Department of Education and Training

- (1) (a) 31 FTE
- (b)&(c) Department of Education and Training
- Level 7 Principal Media Consultant
  - Level 6 Senior Media Officer (x2)
  - Level 5 Strategic Communications/Events Officer (x2)
  - Level 5 Marketing and Publications Officer
  - Level 4 Media Officer
  - Level 3 Assistant Media Officer
- TAFE Colleges
- Level 8 Director, Student and College Communications (internal)
  - Level 8 Director, Marketing and Career Information
  - Level 7 Manager, Client Communications
  - Level 6 Manager, Communications
  - Level 6 Marketing Manager
  - Level 6 Corporate Communications Consultant
  - Level 6 Manager, Marketing Services
  - Level 5 Communications Coordinator (x3)
  - Level 5 Senior Marketing Coordinator (x2)
  - Level 5 Marketing Consultant