

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS — RESOURCING**

*Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland)** informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.56 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its assault on local schools and the imposition of punitive measures on school budgets and shifting financial burdens from the Department of Education to individual schools.

This is a government in chaos and turmoil, and the chaos and turmoil inside this government are infecting —  
Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Once again, this is a government in chaos and turmoil, and the chaos and turmoil inside its own ranks are infecting our public school system across Western Australia. The chaos and turmoil in this government's management of the state's budget are infecting our —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The chaos and turmoil in this government's management of the state's budget are affecting and infecting schools across Western Australia; so much so that teachers and education staff feel compelled by what this government is doing to schools across Western Australia to take the action they will take on Thursday this week to defend the education system, to defend students' education —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** They will take action to defend the system, the workers, the teachers and the students from the ravages of this government, which cannot manage itself, let alone the state's education system. All of this has come about because the people of Western Australia can no longer trust the Premier of this state. He is a Premier who breaks —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Swan Hills, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** He is a Premier who breaks his word, a Premier who breaks promises and a Premier who has betrayed the trust of the people of this state. The people who are suffering most are those who work in our schools and those children who go to public schools across Western Australia. I support our education workforce in taking action to stand up to this government and to try to stop what it is doing to the education system across this state. What we saw in question time was nothing —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Murray–Wellington, I call you to order for the first time. The whole aim of this matter of public interest is to have a debate, not a shouting match to drown out the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I support the education workforce and the families across Western Australia who are taking steps to stand up to this government and what it is doing to individual schools, individual workers and individual students across Western Australia. I support them in standing up to the government's bullying and its chaotic management of the education system in Western Australia. We have a situation in this state in which one person thinks he is right, and that is the Premier; and everyone else, those tens of thousands of people in the education system, those hundreds of thousands of parents, are wrong. The Premier says he is right and everyone else is wrong, and we saw that disgraceful performance in question time in which he attacked our teaching workforce in Western Australia —

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Extract from Hansard**

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** He attacked our teaching workforce here in Western Australia and he tried to pretend that the issues they are raising about the funding and management of schools in this state are somehow related to a pay claim. They are not. This is teachers and the education workforce taking up issues to do with the funding and support for quality education across Western Australia. It is not to do with the things that the Premier implied it was; it is not to do with teachers' pay claims or suchlike, and the more the Premier tries to attack teachers and other education workforces across Western Australia, the more he shows how out of touch he is with these issues. Families across the state are expressing their anger.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Does the Leader of the Opposition support the strike?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Premier should have been in here for the start of the debate.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Premier! Thank you, member for Joondalup. I call you to order for the first time.

*Point of Order*

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The Premier has been interjecting incessantly and I am wondering whether you are applying the same standing orders to him as you apply to us.

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, please do not interject all the time.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There seems to be an approach today from the overly sensitive government benches to try and drown out everything I say. I think I am getting the message that they do not like the fact that they are being exposed for what they are doing to schools and students across this state. Those opposite do not like it and they are reacting in the only way they can—they scream and yell and make no sense. That is what they are doing.

What the Premier is doing to schools in this state is unwinding many good years of work in building up the resources and support —

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I note that during question time members of the opposition are regularly called to account for interjecting. I ask those opposite to show some courtesy in this debate.

When the Premier is in trouble, all he does is attack. I thought the attack on teachers today during question time was disgraceful. I especially raise the teacher tax that is now being placed on schools across the state by this government—\$600 per teacher and \$400 per education worker each and every year. When we add the number of teachers in our schools, 20 500; the number of support staff, 9 800; the cleaning and gardening staff, 2 300; and then apply the charge of \$600 for teachers and \$400 for education workers, it totals \$17 million that is being ripped out of schools across Western Australia. That is money that schools put into literacy programs, numeracy programs and behaviour management programs, and assisting young mums to ensure that they have the support to put their kids into school. Through its teacher tax that is being applied to the education workforce, the government is ripping \$17 million out of these programs that individual schools put into place.

We will find that schools will have great difficulty meeting the demands upon them when this teacher tax is applied to schools. This is one of the untold stories of the attacks on the education system by this Premier. The teacher tax on our schools will impact much of the good work that they put in place. All of the good work is not done by individual teachers in classrooms; much of it is done by the support staff and the other programs that are put in place around the classroom teachers. Often there are support programs for students who have difficulty with literacy, for students who excel and are perhaps not meeting their full potential in the classroom, and for kids who have difficulty with numeracy. Behaviour management is one of those issues for which schools often bring in outside resources and staff to make sure the issue is managed within the school so that the class of 25 or 29 students is not excessively disrupted by a student having difficulty behaving appropriately. That is what all those resources are used for in primary and high schools across Western Australia.

The Premier is placing this teacher tax and education worker tax on every one of our schools because he has failed, according to his analysis, to administer and operate long service leave arrangements appropriately over the past five years. Because of the government's failure to properly administer the scheme—according to its own reasoning—individual schools and children have to suffer. What do we see from the Premier? We see attacks on teachers. What do we see from the education minister? We see him describing our high schools as inefficient. Whenever I get an opportunity, I will tell the teaching staff that the education minister described them as inefficient. Hon Peter Collier, who is all powerful inside the Liberal Party, described the teachers in our high

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schools as inefficient. That is what the government has done and its answer is to rip out resources and impose a tax on schools for individual teachers and workers.

Then what do we find? How do our schools cope with this? The Premier tells schools that resources are increasing. I have a letter dated 4 September 2013 from Willetton Senior High School. That is one of the premier public schools and, the last time I heard, was the biggest public school in Western Australia with the most number of students, many of whom move to that suburb so that they can attend that premier public school. I will quote to the house what the acting principal of that school wrote to parents, because I want to demonstrate to the Premier that what he says is contrary to what everyone else in the education system and the families involved say on this issue. This is what the acting principal said subsequent to the announcement of the Premier's cuts and teacher tax —

For 2014, there has been a change in the method of calculating the operational funding for secondary schools and the total amount of funding has been reduced.

Based on our current enrolments, there will be a reduction in the number of teaching staff we are allocated. This is calculated on a total full time equivalent teacher's (FTE). We estimate our reduction will be approximately four FTE. In dollar terms this is about \$400 000.

In addition to staffing reductions, the Government has introduced a long service leave liability levy to offset the cost of staff taking long service leave. In schools, we cannot leave positions unfilled as is the case in many government departments. This liability for our school is approximately \$100 000. There are also other reductions in support funding which approximate to about \$50 000.

There is much more, but I will conclude with this line from the acting principal of Willetton Senior High School —

There is no hiding the fact that there are tough times ahead and some difficult decisions will have to be made.

That is what the principal of that high school had to say. The Premier says that all the schools are getting more resources and that everyone in schools across the state will be happy, but the principal of one of our leading public schools—the biggest public school in Western Australia—is saying that there are tough times ahead. The Premier is cutting the amount of money going to that school by \$400 000 for full-time equivalent teachers, \$100 000 for his teacher tax and other reductions of \$50 000. Are those opposite proud of what they are doing to schools across Western Australia?

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is what he said. Last week, the Premier came in here and said that some schools will go down and some will go up; Churchlands Senior High School is going up by four teaching staff. That is what the Premier said in this house. I will quote him. On 10 September 2013, the Premier said in Parliament, "Churchlands Senior High School will gain four staff." That is completely and utterly misleading, as we saw on the front page of *The West Australian* newspaper on Friday. The Churchlands Senior High School board chairman, Mark Lewer, said —

"Clearly there are four fewer teachers," he said. "For the Premier to be stating that Churchlands will benefit is misleading."

Clearly, the Premier misled the house. We should not be surprised; it happens every day! Churchlands Senior High School, another premier public school in Western Australia, which this Premier said would get four extra staff, says that it will have four fewer full-time equivalents on its teaching staff. The school says that is because the number of its students is going up significantly, yet the number of its teachers is not going up or meeting that increased number of students in any way, shape or form. The Premier came in and told the house that four extra staff are going there. The Premier should correct that record. He should correct the record of when he came in here and misled this house last week on that issue.

I explain to the Premier again that I support our teaching workforce, the education workforce and the parents in taking action against this government. They are standing up to bullying and intimidation and chaotic management of this state. The government is in chaos. The Premier's party room is in turmoil. The government does not know what it is doing on a range of issues and the children in our public schools across Western Australia are suffering because of the government's inability to manage the state's finances, to tell the truth before the state election and to have a minister who can run a government agency, as we know is obviously the case in respect of the Minister for Education. Children in our public schools and school communities across the state—as members will all know because they will be getting the emails and letters, as am I—are in turmoil, as is much of the workforce, over what the government is doing to individual schools across Western Australia. This

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motion holds the government to account for the effect, on a local basis, of what it is doing to individual schools in individual suburbs and towns across this state.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [3.12 pm]: I rise to also speak on this matter of public interest. We have before us the worst budget in regards to education that we can remember in living history.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** This is the budget on education; that is a tax!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! Premier!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is very interesting that the backbenchers are very, very veiled in their criticism, because they are receiving the same criticism that we are receiving from parents and citizens associations and parents generally. I challenge members on the backbench to tell me that they are not receiving correspondence from P&C associations and parents about the education cuts. If they have not, they are not doing their job properly, because all the schools in my area are being severely affected by these cuts.

This is a tax. The Premier in question time as usual attacked the teachers. The teachers are not engaged in industrial action for pay and conditions; this has nothing to do with the working conditions of teachers. This has to do with education services and the quality of education that we are giving to our children. That is what this is about.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warnbro and minister, please!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The Premier talked about the teachers. They are going on industrial action on Thursday because they are concerned about the quality of education that will be delivered in the public education system as a result of the cuts delivered by the Premier and Minister Collier.

The government is saying that there is mismanagement of the long service leave liability in the education system. If there is mismanagement, why is the government applying it to the education system but not to the rest of the public service?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** We are applying it to the entire public service!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** All the public service—every single one? To what —

**Mr T.R. Buswell** interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Is it to the same degree?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** You are a complete idiot!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Am I?

**Mr T.R. Buswell** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Treasurer!

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The Treasurer has used unparliamentary language and I call upon him to withdraw it. It was personal and unparliamentary.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Mr Speaker, to the extent that the —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I have said before that points of order have to be heard in silence. Do you want to speak on the point of order?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** No. I am happy to withdraw those comments.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am really not concerned about what the Treasurer wishes to call me because he is presiding over an education budget that is tearing out the quality of education delivery to our students. He may wish to call me an idiot but that does not really worry me, because he is the person who will have to defend these education cuts, which are delivering massive cuts to the quality of service to our public education system.

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**Mr C.J. Barnett:** I'll be at Armadale in the next couple of weeks.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** That is what our education system is now being exposed to; it is cuts, cuts, cuts! I heard the Premier mention Armadale. Armadale Senior High School, as a result of the Premier's long service leave liability tax, has to incur a total cost next year of around \$65 400. That is a \$65 400 cost to a high school that caters for many disadvantaged students. On top of that, of course, the government has cut out 30 per cent of the school support program resource allocation funding, which is incredibly important to students at Armadale Senior High School. I am sure the minister who sits behind the Premier, the Minister for Local Government, would agree that Armadale Senior High School can ill afford to cope with a tax of \$65 000 as a result of the government's long service leave liability tax. So the Treasurer can call me an idiot, but I tell him to come to Armadale Senior High School and defend his long service leave liability tax. The Treasurer can call me names but that is not going to change the fact that \$65 000 is what Armadale Senior High School will have to pay because of the government's decision to impose an educational tax. Kelmscott Primary School, the second longest-standing primary school in the metropolitan area, next year will incur a tax of around \$33 400 as a result of the long service leave liability. Why has it incurred this? This should not be a punishment to the school because teachers have not taken long service leave at a particular point in time. Schools should not have to pay a tax, but that is what this is. This is the so-called government of small tax and where does it tax? It taxes the most vulnerable and in the most important area, which is education. How can the government engage in cuts, cuts, cuts and also impose an educational tax? The government is increasing the cost of the delivery of services at the same time that it is delivering massive cuts. It is an absolute disgrace that the government has imposed this tax.

The Premier would have received a letter that was sent to Hon Peter Collier on 3 September 2013. The letter was cc-ed to the Premier and I will read the last paragraph. It was written by a parent of children at Westfield Park Primary School, one of the more deprived areas in my electorate, who states that she hopes the minister does not engage in political spin. The letter states —

I do not wish to hear about overall funding increases, as I am sure you and I are both aware, this is a smoke screen used by the noble elect to pull the wool over the eyes of those whom they believe will not know the difference. Perhaps our state educated children may begin to fall for this in the future, the chance being more so I believe, if you continue to consider tearing the educational rug out from under them.

This is from a parent. Premier, this is not from a teacher who is going on industrial action; this is from a concerned parent. There are many, many more of those parents who are angry and concerned about the fact that the government is ripping money away from the education system. Shame on the Treasurer! He may call me an idiot, although I thought it was very surprising that the Treasurer would engage in that comment with me. But the point is: shame on the Treasurer for presiding over a budget that is ripping the heart and soul out of our public education system!

**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka)** [3.19 pm]: I also rise to speak on this matter of public interest, which states —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its assault on local schools and the imposition of punitive measures on school budgets and shifting financial burdens from the Department of Education to individual schools.

I do so because \$1.6 million will come out of the education of children in the Mirrabooka electorate. The cut of \$17 million from the education budget to finance the long service leave levy is significant.

At the recent teachers' rally one of the placards read, "Open a school and close a prison". This is a very passionate debate. That is because this is not just a quote from Victor Hugo, but a correlation that can be shown in studies. A Save the Children International published paper noted that for every year of successful schooling that a boy undertakes, the chance that he will be involved in violent crime is reduced by 20 per cent. In the areas I represent, this focus on education is paramount to the wellbeing of the community. Public education is important to all sectors of the Western Australian community, but it is of even greater importance in areas that meet the needs of newly arrived Australians, Aboriginal Australians and all those in the community I represent who are looking to advance the opportunities for their children in what we call this lucky country. It is not a response to argue that these cuts are a precursor to the student-centred funding model. It is dishonest to parents who will suffer a \$305 cut per primary school student and a \$457 average cut per secondary school student.

Striking at the heart of this failure is the mismanagement of the long service leave provision, such that schools in the Mirrabooka area will face massive reductions in their budgets because this government will take for long service leave \$600 for each teacher full-time equivalent and \$400 for each non-teaching FTE. So, at a school such as Boyare Primary School, which had a school grant allocation of just short of \$216 000 in 2012–13, about

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\$18 000 will be taxed by the Barnett government because of the education department's long service leave levy. This is a very passionate debate. This is a debate that is close to my heart. When we see principals at P&C meetings put their heads in their hands because they feel very much at a loss at how to deliver this news to parents, it is very distressing.

In June, when representatives of the education department came before the Education and Health Standing Committee and the director was asked in a public hearing what the leave liability was for 2012–13, the committee was told that the figure was \$57 million for the current financial year. What the department's representatives failed to divulge was that they were going to make schools, parents and children pay for the department's mismanagement. Therefore, when the principal of Illawarra Primary School presents to his P&C and states that the leave liability is actually \$79 million, we are left wondering why the parents of students at this and other schools in the Mirrabooka electorate will have to fork out about \$19 000 from their important operating budgets to make up a figure that, clearly, the education department cannot even get right in its evidence to a committee of Parliament. Indeed, the chair specifically asked about long service leave entitlement. He said —

You intimated that there were savings there. Are there any savings ... in that leave entitlement issue?

Mr Axworthy said —

No, there are not.

It was duplicitous. They went before that committee and they were duplicitous. They should have answered. They never answered, and at no time did they indicate that the long service leave liability would be borne by schools. At no stage in that committee hearing were they open and honest, despite multiple questions about long service leave liability and our questions about how they would fund that. They never told us that they would do that. The distress of principals and staff is with good reason, because they have been lied to. They are committed to providing a quality education. Because of this issue, they are forced to act in a manner contrary to their principles. Contrary to what they want to do, they have to go out and protest in the best interests of their students.

Westminster Junior Primary School will lose \$15 000 and Alinjarra Primary School will lose \$18 000. All the schools in Mirrabooka are pondering why, in hard-to-staff schools, they are being penalised because those in charge do not manage their leave entitlements. All these primary schools are targeted. Balga Senior High School will suffer a \$43 000 cut for the long service leave levy. The unfairness is perpetuated by many of these schools not having people who work for long periods. They are hard-to-staff schools. Until recently, if a staff member had been temporary for two years, they were moved to other schools as soon as they became permanent. So, this unfair tax is applied across the board to hard-to-staff schools. These are schools in which people take their long service leave because they need it and they deserve it, but because the education department cannot manage it because it cannot do its job, these schools suffer and the students suffer.

**MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Treasurer)** [3.24 pm]: I want to make a couple of comments about the debate, and a number of speakers will follow. I will deal with the issues about leave liability in a second and explain perhaps to the member for Armadale when that was announced by government, because it applies to all of the general government sector. But I want to start with some comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition's basic premise is that the government is in chaos, that it is dysfunctional and that the outcome of that chaos and dysfunctionality is evidenced by the changes inherent in the new school funding model. The Leader of the Opposition's argument is very interesting. I want to read a couple of comments that I have in front of me. They state —

... clearly people have made a judgement about the Labor Party. They have made a judgement that we do not reflect their values; ... that they do not value what Labor offers them; ... that they do not trust Labor to give them a better future.

That is a person's view of the Labor Party, and the Leader of the Opposition has the gall to come into this place, waggle his finger at us and accuse us of being in chaos and dysfunctional. Who made those comments, Mr Acting Speaker? Who made them? Last Thursday in the upper house, Hon Sally Talbot, as part of her resignation speech —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** You're an idiot.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I know she is not in my friend's faction —

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza):** Member for Bassendean, I ask you to withdraw that.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** I withdraw.

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*Debate Resumed*

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Member for Bassendean, they were the comments made, as I understand it, last week in the other place about the Labor Party by —

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Not at all, my friend. But if the Leader of the Opposition wants to come in here and run an argument based on chaos and dysfunction, he should get a mirror and get another high-wattage light globe, because he will see it looking straight —

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member and minister, I am on my feet! I call you, member for Cannington.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** — back at him.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I want to make another comparison of education ministers, because a lot —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** What about Busselton Senior High School?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Busselton Senior High School is going very, very well, thank you, my friend. A brand-new principal starts this week.

The Leader of the Opposition comes in here as the font of all knowledge about matters educational.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Warnbro!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Before I go into the substance of the debate, I thought I might reflect on the Leader of the Opposition's performance as a minister; I might reflect on why it was, when I travelled around the state as opposition leader—it was not for long, I must admit; it was a fairly colourful time—people used to say to me that the education minister, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, was the worst they had ever had. Why was that? Perhaps I will compare the behaviour of the current Minister for Education who, Thursday week ago, went out onto the steps of Parliament twice to speak at rallies that we would not describe as being a friendly engagement. Hon Peter Collier was out there in the morning when the missos, or United Voice, had their rally—and good on them for inviting him along. He was out there in the afternoon when the schoolteachers were there, but they did not want to hear from him. I remember a rally outside Parliament when the Leader of the Opposition was a minister, and he hid up here in the Premier's office and looked out through the curtains. I remember that very vividly. It was about the cancellation of Rally Australia, if I recall correctly. And the Leader of the Opposition criticises the current minister! At least he is prepared to go out —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Warnbro, I call you for the third time.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The member for Warnbro can get up—there are five minutes left—and articulate his arguments to us, if he feels free.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Cannington!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I want to move on to Thursday's strike, which is supported by the Labor Party and by the Leader of the Opposition. We do not think that Thursday's strike should go ahead. It is the government's view that that is not an appropriate use of industrial action by the State School Teachers' Union. It will have a huge impact on families over the length and breadth of this state on Thursday. I can tell those who attend on Thursday that if it is possible, their salaries will be docked for the time that they leave those schools. Unlike members opposite, we do not support this industrial action; we think it is wrong. At a time when the education budget increases by \$300 million —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The terms used to describe it are “assault” and “punitive measures”. I would hate to see what would have happened if the budget had plateaued and we took money out of the education budget. I am not

sure we can find many more descriptive words in the thesaurus that would help the opposition mount its argument.

I want to go back a step and discuss some of the challenges that we have in government in and around broader financial management.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** You're making promises you can't keep.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The member for Albany makes promises he will never have to worry about keeping from that side of the chamber. Every one of his colleagues did it right through the budget speech. My friend the member for Alfred Cove kept a very long list, which got longer and longer.

There is an obligation on all areas of government to deliver services as effectively and efficiently as they can. The Leader of the Opposition may criticise the Minister for Education for making some comments around efficiencies in schools. It is our informed view that there is room to deliver efficiencies in our schools. The move to the new funding model assists with that. It is not the sole driver but it is an important part of that. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that it is easy to sit and govern from the cheap seats, promise the world and never have to deliver. Yet we have to govern and make the decisions for the good governance of the state around financial parameters. I will touch on that for a very brief second.

Before I came into the chamber, I saw a note online stating that the Queensland government had closed six schools. I am familiar, as we all are, with the huge reductions in the public service that had to happen in Queensland a year or two ago when the Newman government came to power and finally understood what happens if a government is not prepared to make hard decisions and pursue reform in government. That is what it had to do. Members opposite may laugh but when they look at what has happened in the past six years, there are only two state jurisdictions in this country that have delivered a budget surplus. We are one of them and Victoria is the other. We do not do that by taking the easy option or by retreating and governing from the cheap seats; we do that by being prepared to make sure we optimise the efficiency of the spend of our money. I will give one quick example. In the past two years—this year and last year—the actual and anticipated budget deficit in Queensland is \$8.5 billion. In this state the actual this year and anticipated surplus over those two years is \$625 million. That is a massive point of difference and it is one of the reasons we have to be prepared to accept the need for reform and to change the business model that we use in government. Whether those opposite smirk or not, there is absolutely no doubt that there are problems with the current funding model in Western Australia. They have been accurately reported on occasion by people who observe politics in this state. I think those articles have been very incisive, discussing what has happened to expense growth in education relative to student growth, where we have seen a complete disconnect.

I will work through some of the figures because it is important to understand the context in which this reform is being delivered. From a government point of view, it is part of the conversation and dialogue that we need to have with the public of Western Australia. There are issues with the current funding model. Between 2007–08 and 2013–14 the education budget went from \$2.8 billion to \$4.4 billion. That is an increase of 55 per cent. At the same time student enrolments increased by 8.8 per cent. We have a circumstance where student enrolments are growing at about nine per cent while the budget has grown across that period by about 55 per cent. By anyone's analysis, that is a disconnect between activity and spending. It is those sorts of disconnects that the new funding model will help to address by enabling us to move resources to where they are needed in the system.

I wish to make another couple of interesting points. From 2006 until 2013, within the total employee base of education, those defined as administrative and clerical, which includes teacher assistants, increased at a rate of 7.1 per cent per annum. During the same period, student growth was 1.1 per cent per annum. That is another example of a disconnect between activity and funding and student growth. It does not make sense. The unfortunate reality is that that model is quite simply not sustainable.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The formula-based model is not a sustainable model. When we look at the aggregate in the formula-based model, my recollection—I might be out by one, one way or the other—is that for every nine extra students, we generate through the formulas about one extra FTE. Again, whether we want to have a discussion about it or not, that is not a sustainable model to deliver education services into the future. I know that. Anyone who conducts an analytical non- emotive analysis of that would also form that conclusion. This is not an issue when growth in student numbers is relatively flat. It becomes an issue when we start to get significant increases in student numbers.

Let me give some examples of what has happened in student numbers over the past decade. There has been a really interesting transformation in WA that in many ways has caused a lot of the challenges that we have today. From 2003 through until 2010—I am looking at semester 1 student enrolment figures, which is a reasonable

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figure to compare—the total student population in Western Australian public schools increased by 5 476 students. That is an average annual increase of 782 students. That is a relatively static enrolment number. In the past three years the number of students has increased by 19 062. In the past three years we had 19 000 extra students in the system; for the seven years before that, we had 5 476 extra students in the system. That is an average annual growth rate of 6 354. That is one of the reasons we are faced with the challenges we have now. When we have rapid student population growth and we are employing one FTE for every nine students, we start to get immense pressure on the system, which is an impetus to look for a way to do things better. It is an impetus to do something that the Labor Party does not know about and which we talk about often called reform—R-E-F-O-R-M. It is easy to say but difficult to deliver and fundamentally important.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Would you like to come down and talk to my P&Cs?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am happy to talk to my P&Cs; they elect me. The member for Warnbro should go and talk to the ones who elect him. That is how it works in this place, although I do notice that the Premier is about to go on a bit of a jaunt down to Armadale. He will be going to the places that the member for Armadale has invited him to. I am not sure he will invite the member for Armadale. He may well invite the member for Fremantle. He has a very strong interest in the outcomes that this reform will deliver. The circumstance is that, firstly, the funding being provided this year—the money we spend on education—is \$300 million more than was spent last year. Members opposite can spend all day, every day trying to redefine a \$300 million increase as a cut, but it just does not make sense to anybody.

Secondly, in 2014, teacher numbers will be maintained at 2013 levels. There will be no cuts in the number of teachers in the system. Yes, there will be some reductions in education assistant positions. I think that issue has been well canvassed, and there is clearly a very sound argument that in some schools—not all—the number of education assistants is more than that required to effectively educate children in those schools. No child in need will be left with a reduced level of support, but there will be reductions across the system. Importantly, there will be some hard-won reductions in head office support staff out of the Department of Education that are important. Importantly, there will be a move by 2015, under this reform model, to a student-centred funding model, which will be a great outcome for the long-term future of education in this state.

Finally, the one increase in spending out of this budget that the opposition does not like talking about is another \$18.2 million to continue the rollout of the independent public schools initiative. That is another reform the opposition opposes and another reform it sniggers at, and I will be very, very interested to understand what policy position the opposition will take to the next election. Will it take a policy position that rolls back the student-centred funding model? I do not think it will. It comes into this place full of bluff and bravado, but when the rubber has to hit the road, it will nick off! That is what it will do! It will run a million miles from having to make any hard decision around this topic.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! Thank you, minister.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I bet that the opposition will run out and claim independent public schools as its own initiative. I bet that will happen.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, members on my left.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I will conclude where I started. We have an obligation across government to deliver services effectively and efficiently, and this reform is part of that. Opposition members will all sit there and point their fingers at members on this side and say they are cowering —

**Mr P. Papalia:** I'm just counting the ones who are going to lose their seat.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Yes, well the member for Warnbro tried that one last time, and he nearly got cramp in his finger!

Several members interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** That is a favourite trick in opposition; they wiggle their fingers and say, “You’re gone! You’re gone!” Guess what? They all came back! Guess who went? The former member for Joondalup—gone! The replacement in Balcatta—gone! The replacement in Belmont—gone! The member for Midland—hanging on by her fingernails! The member for Collie-Preston—back! The member for Albany—back! Opposition members can wiggle their fingers all they like! We are shaking in our boots when the member for Warnbro wiggles his finger at us! He is clearly a very powerful and influential person!

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I would love to close with the comments of the late, great Sally Talbot again, who, said —

*Point of Order*

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** There is a convention for referring to members of the other house. I thought perhaps this member should be asked to use it.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I will reflect, as I sit, on the words of Hon Sally Talbot—a member of the metalworkers left, as I understand it, who is a displaced, highly credentialed Senate candidate who I personally would have loved to have back in the Senate representing this state. I think she was a great —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Did you vote for her?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Absolutely not! I am not going to fill in all those boxes below the line—heaven forbid! I spent the whole election day trying to get my son not to vote for the Palmer United Party! It was a challenge!

Anyway, as I retire, I will reflect on the words of Hon Sally Talbot, as she described the Labor Party. Her view is especially important given that we have been accused of being chaotic. She said in the other place —

... clearly people have made a judgement about the Labor Party. They have made a judgement that we do not reflect their values; they have made a judgement that they do not value what Labor offers them; and they have made a judgement that they do not trust Labor to give them a better future.

With the Leader of the Opposition's performance this afternoon, it is little wonder people have formed that view.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Before I give the Leader of the House the call, for the record, member for Warnbro, I erred in calling you three times. That was your first call, and I apologise.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House)** [3.45 pm]: The government obviously does not support this motion. As has been explained, there are two main aspects of what is happening in relation to the allocation of funds for the public education system in Western Australia. One is about reform to better direct funding, and therefore staffing allocations and other resources to areas of need, rather than just following old formulae that do not necessarily produce the best outcomes and do not provide the highest level of assistance to students who have greater requirements and greater need. That change is occurring following the Teese report and other conclusions reached by the government. I think most people understand the rationale and support that.

The other thing that is happening is that a big effort is being made by the government to ensure that the Department of Education operates within its budgeted allocation—an allocation, as has been explained by the Premier and Treasurer, that is substantially higher in not only this year, but also every year since we have been in government. There will be an increase in the education budget of \$300 million this year up to \$4.4 billion, which is an increase of 7.3 per cent, and in total an increase of 55 per cent from \$2.8 billion when we came into government five years ago. By any analysis, that is a very substantial rate of growth. A very large amount of taxpayers' funding is being directed into the government school education system. That is in an environment, among other things, in which the state's share of goods and services tax payments has been declining substantially and progressively over the last few years. I think I am right in saying it is now less than 50c in the dollar, and that imposes a major financial pressure on the state budget as well.

A very good analysis appeared in *The West Australian* on 5 September by Gareth Parker—I encourage people to read this article if they have not already—who concluded by saying that some fiscal discipline in our public education system is long overdue. The opposition and other groups in the community have criticised the government for the growth in spending we have had across government, and for the levels of debt being incurred, in our view, for good and important projects that will have long-term benefits for the state. But the opposition cannot have it both ways, because implicitly in this motion —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** You can't have it both ways. You're saying those projects are more important than kids' education!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, the member for Kwinana does not understand —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** That's what you're saying! You're saying those projects are being funded by your education cuts; that's coming through loud and clear!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I am on my feet, member for Kwinana. Thank you.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The member for Kwinana has just demonstrated that he does not understand the difference between a capital allocation and a recurrent allocation in the budget.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** That's your logic! You just said that you have to cut funding to education because of debt!

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What we are talking about in the education budget is from recurrent funds, as opposed to capital funds, to which the member is referring. The opposition cannot have it both ways.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members for Kwinana and Cannington! Thank you.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Let us make a direct comparison with the recurrent budget. Last week, the opposition opposed the increases in land tax that this government has determined are needed to fund general government services, including the education system.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** Do I need to make this point of order about the member for Cannington's comments?

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Further to that point of order, the member for Cannington was making a broad reference to the government and its dishonesty prior to the election, not to the member on his feet.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza):** The member for Cannington said that he lied, and I ask that the comment be withdrawn.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I withdraw.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The opposition opposed the increases in land tax that are intended to fund general —

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I am sorry, Leader of the House. Member for Cannington, I call you for the second time. Member for Kwinana, you are on the border; you got an opportunity to speak.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I accept that there is pressure on schools, and that professional and well experienced people of genuine commitment to the education of students in our government school system are concerned about the difficulty of implementing the changes over the next 12 months. I do accept that and I understand that they are genuinely motivated. Equally, the government is in a very difficult position for the reasons I have mentioned—the increasing pressure on government to allocate funds to a range of areas of government including the education system. The increase in supply of 7.3 per cent in this financial year is far higher than just about for every other government agency that we have responsibility for, including the two that I have direct responsibility for and in which a lot of pressures are being exerted to find more efficiencies. There is a dilemma for governments, not only in this state but also nationally and no doubt on a more widespread basis as well. We are seeing a trend of more and more people expecting governments—and therefore taxpayers—to do more and more but have no interest in contributing anything directly themselves. I am referring to the charges that apply in government schools, which were made voluntary by the Labor government for populist and very ill-advised purposes when it came into office in 2001. That has meant that schools are putting a lot of effort into trying to collect those pretty modest charges. In a high school, from memory, at the moment the basic charge, mainly for consumable items and so on, is \$235 a year. More and more people are saying that they are not going to pay because they do not have to pay—not because they cannot afford to pay but because they consider that they do not have an obligation to do so. At one school that I am very familiar with, the collection rate is now down to about 50 per cent, even though I know that the school is putting a lot of effort into encouraging parents to pay; and that is in the context of taxpayers contributing about \$15 000 per student per year to educate those children. It is also happening despite the cash giveaway of \$410 a year for primary school students and \$820 a year for secondary school students that the recently defeated federal Labor government put in place, supposedly to assist with education expenses. It has in fact just been a cash giveaway that, unfortunately, many parents are not directing towards the education of their children or to pay these sorts of very modest contributions that I have just referred to that are required to assist in educating their own children. I think that is a matter of great disappointment, to put it mildly. Some parents in the community—certainly not all, as many are doing the right thing—need to reconsider their attitude on those issues. I am certainly not making adverse comments about those who genuinely cannot afford it, but, as I said, the cash giveaway was by the former federal government. I think the new federal government is going to end the system because it is not the best use of taxpayers' money. When those funds are made available by the federal government, I think it has a moral obligation to make them available to schools so that they will actually make a modest contribution to the education of their students.

The member for Forrestfield wants to make a few comments but I will refer to a few specific aspects. The school support programs resource allocation funding is about two per cent of total school funding. It can be as low as 0.5 per cent but it is presumably higher in some schools now. Because of budgetary pressures, the allocation has been reduced by 30 per cent. However, before it was introduced, schools received additional funds and full-time

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equivalent staff members from a variety of state and commonwealth sources, with limited flexibility and burdensome administrative requirements, so we put in place a better system. It is also important to bear in mind that schools will continue to access other central supports, including classroom management training, literacy and numeracy consultants, school psychologists and teacher development. The leave liability levy, as the Treasurer has explained, is being applied across government. It has to be funded somehow. It is certainly not a tax on teachers, as the opposition described it with simplicity. It is a requirement on schools to put some funds aside to pay the long service leave liability when teachers go on leave and have to be replaced. Unlike other areas of the public service, those positions need to be replaced. Obviously, teachers have to be in front of classes, so somehow or other that has got to be funded. There has been a huge increase in funding under this government, and an effort is being made to ensure that the funds are used efficiently and effectively by better directing funds to where they are most needed.

**MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands)** [3.55 pm]: I rise to address some of the issues I have heard referred to in this debate. I start off by referring to the Premier, who said he has put all this money—\$1.2 billion over the next four years—into education. What he is not saying is that the cost of moving year 7s into high schools will take about \$300 million of that; seven new government schools will be opened in the next year as a result of our increase in population; and much more infrastructure, including teaching staff, will be needed. That is where the \$1.2 billion is going.

It was also very insightful to listen to the Treasurer, who obviously has no idea about what is going on. He talked about a new funding model. Well, hell, it would be nice to know what that new model is! The former deputy principal over here in the back row, the member for Forrestfield, would know that schools have already developed their 2015 plans by this stage of the planning year. What does the Treasurer think principals are doing at the moment? They are sitting there scratching their heads and saying, “What the hell is going on? We don’t know how we’re going to be funded in 2015. We don’t know what the formula’s going to be.” If the Treasurer truly knows what the formula is going to be, he had better stand in this place and tell principals, because it is not okay to continue to keep all our public schools in the dark.

I heard the Premier talk about how good the independent public schools program is. It has gone! He has killed it! He has slit the throat of IPS! Do members know why? I will tell them why. It is because IPS is about flexibility. IPS relies on knowing the staffing and being able to select it. IPS relies on knowing what the budget is, not having some government come in and wipe it all out without even consulting the schools. IPS relies on curriculum innovation and on program delivery. There will be none of that. One school in my electorate will have to raise funds for counselling services. The government is cutting psychology services; it is cutting chaplaincy services. I am sure that will be news to some members on the other side of the house!

I spent 12 months writing a business plan—as have 3 500-odd other business and community leaders in this state, many of whom would support those sitting on the other side in this place—for two IPS councils I sit on. What do members think we can do with that now? We can rip it up! None of those business plans is worth the paper they are written on. Do members know why? It is because the government cut the arse out of funding to this state.

Several members interjected.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza)**: Member, that is not a phrase I will accept. I would like you to rephrase that, please.

**Ms L.L. BAKER**: The government has cut the back end out of funding in this state.

**The ACTING SPEAKER**: Is that a withdrawal?

**Ms L.L. BAKER**: That is a withdrawal, Mr Acting Speaker.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms L.L. BAKER**: Not only that, but also the government has cut funding to 20 of the 25 financial consultants whose very job it was to help IPS schools move to one-line budgets. The government has cut that. That resource has gone. Do members know about the registrars who sit in their schools? They are not trained to move to a one-line budget. Most of them only heard the term in the last 12 months. Now the government has taken away the financial support officers whose job it was to help the schools transition to a one-line budget.

The teacher tax the government has imposed on schools in my electorate will cost collectively \$200 000 a year. That is what the schools in my electorate will have to pay. That is pathetic! The police do not have to pay a long service levy. Doctors, lawyers and nobody else that the government employs has to pay this levy. Why is the

government doing this? It is doing it as a cash grab. It is clearly doing it as the Treasurer cannot manage the budget because the Premier has funded his pet projects for five years and now we are facing an education budget that is out of control. And is it the fault of principals? No, it is not; it is this government's fault. The independent public school system is dead. The Premier has killed it. He can no longer trumpet to the rest of Australia that we have the best education system in the world, because he has killed it. He has taken the training and the support mechanisms—everything—out of the heart of IPS. He should ask some of his business buddies who have been involved in the planning of IPS.

Several members interjected.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I know a whole lot about education and I know a whole lot about the Premier's involvement in it. I know that the IPS was his passion. It has gone. He has killed it. It cannot move. There is nothing left of it. This government has prevailed over cuts to a system that are making students, parents and staff reel from the impact. He has failed the children in this state.

**MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield)** [4.00 pm]: It amazes me to sit in this place and listen to the Labor Party play populist politics. I rewind to when the now Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Education and Training, as I was working in the education system at the time.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, member.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I recall the massive teacher shortages that occurred in our public schools because of poor management by the then Minister for Education and Training, the member for Rockingham. We now have the highest paid teachers in the country, who were the lowest paid teachers in the country under the then Labor government. I find it very hypocritical of members opposite to stand in this place and talk about cuts to funding when we are injecting a further \$300 million into the education budget. One of our first acts when we came to power in —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, member.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** In 2008 when we came to power —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Warnbro, I call you for the second time.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** In 2008 when we came to power, the first thing the Premier did was negotiate a new enterprise bargaining agreement with teachers and teaching staff, making them the highest paid in the country. Previously, under the Labor administration, they were the lowest paid. Labor members turned their backs on education and now they sit in this place and pretend that they care about education in Western Australia. It is a joke! This is a rationalisation of staffing in schools —

**Ms L.L. Baker:** You have no idea.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I have no idea? I think I do.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members on my left, thank you.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** We will see —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, this is your third call. I do not want to hear from you.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** We will see the staffing ratio go from 13.15 students to one teacher to 13.53 students to one teacher. From personal experience, I had lower school classes with 32 students, and it was not uncommon for upper school teachers to have classes with four, five, six or seven students. That is not sustainable. This is a rationalisation of those teaching staff across the system so that Western Australian taxpayers' dollars are best used.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Sit down, junior.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, that was uncalled for.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** I said, "Sit down, junior."

**Extract from Hansard**

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**The ACTING SPEAKER:** That is correct; that was uncalled for. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr I.M. Britza) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (18)

Ms L.L. Baker  
Dr A.D. Buti  
Mr R.H. Cook  
Ms J.M. Freeman  
Mr W.J. Johnston

Mr D.J. Kelly  
Mr F.M. Logan  
Mr M. McGowan  
Mr M.P. Murray  
Mr P. Papalia

Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Mrs M.H. Roberts  
Ms R. Saffioti  
Mr P.C. Tinley

Mr P.B. Watson  
Mr B.S. Wyatt  
Ms S.F. McGurk (*Teller*)

Noes (34)

Mr P. Abetz  
Mr F.A. Alban  
Mr C.J. Barnett  
Mr I.C. Blayney  
Mr I.M. Britza  
Mr T.R. Buswell  
Mr G.M. Castrilli  
Mr V.A. Catania  
Ms M.J. Davies

Mr J.H.D. Day  
Ms W.M. Duncan  
Ms E. Evangel  
Mr J.M. Francis  
Mrs G.J. Godfrey  
Mr B.J. Grylls  
Dr K.D. Hames  
Mrs L.M. Harvey  
Mr C.D. Hatton

Mr A.P. Jacob  
Dr G.G. Jacobs  
Mr R.F. Johnson  
Mr S.K. L'Estrange  
Mr R.S. Love  
Mr J.E. McGrath  
Mr P.T. Miles  
Ms A.R. Mitchell  
Mr N.W. Morton

Dr M.D. Nahan  
Mr D.C. Nalder  
Mr J. Norberger  
Mr A.J. Simpson  
Mr M.H. Taylor  
Mr T.K. Waldron  
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

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Pairs

Mr D.A. Templeman  
Ms J. Farrer  
Mr C.J. Tallentire

Mr W.R. Marmion  
Mr M.J. Cowper  
Mr D.T. Redman

Question thus negatived.