

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION — BUDGET

187. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Premier:

Given that the director general of the Department of Education, Ms Sharyn O'Neill, told a meeting of school principals in early February not to expect that these will be the only cuts, is it the case that the Premier has more cuts planned to school budgets in May?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

The schools budget will increase in May. We face a very difficult budget period, with a loss of GST revenue, the Australian dollar staying stubbornly high, and the iron ore prices. It is very difficult to budget in Western Australia. There will be a tightening of the belt right across government. However, as we have said for the last 12 months, there will be a levelling off of teacher numbers in 2014 and then future growth will return. As I said a moment ago, year 7s are going into high school, there will be over \$500 million of capital works for schools this year, the new student-based funding system will come into place in 2015 and there is the new curriculum. It is a busy, demanding year for education, but these are the changes that need to take place in our education system. We can put that against a balance of independent public schools and our record of introducing universal kindergarten and preprimary school during the Court government years, which are yet to be matched by any state in Australia. This government has a proven track record in schools. It may seem a small thing, but under this government, there was a teacher in front of every class on day one in government schools. How did the Leader of the Opposition go when he was Minister for Education and Training?