

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Division 29: Education, \$3 910 116 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Dr E. Constable, Minister for Education.

Ms S. O'Neill, Director General.

Mr J. Leaf, Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration.

Mr J. Thom, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms M. Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr C. Gillam, Executive Director, Workforce.

Mr B. Roach, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Corporate and Management Account.

Mr C. Pettit, Executive Director, Regional and Remote Schools.

Mr D. Ansell, Acting Executive Director, Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning.

Mr A. Thompson, Acting Executive Director, Schools Support Programs.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published by 9.00 am tomorrow.

The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. This is the prime focus of the committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program, or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairman to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by Friday, 11 June 2010, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and accordingly I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by Friday, 11 June 2010.

It will also greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the program statement volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, item, program and amount in preface to their question.

I will ask the minister to introduce her advisers. I understand that the minister also wants to hand out a correction to the *Budget Statements*.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: I believe that the minister has some amendments that she wants to be distributed.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: For the information of members, I would like to correct an administrative error in the Department of Education's budget papers. The error has been corrected by a corrigendum on the Department of Treasury and Finance's "ourstatebudget" website. A copy of the corrigendum is included in the information that is being provided now. These words are on the website. An error has been identified on page 359 of budget paper No 2, which was tabled by the Treasurer on 20 May 2010. The tables on that page relating to primary education and secondary education understate income and overstate the net cost of services. This occurred due to an administrative oversight. The total cost of services, employees and efficiency indicator rows in these tables are correct. All other references to the Department of Education's total cost of services, net cost of services, appropriation and income in the *Budget Statements* are also correct. This matter also has no impact on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2010-11 Bill 2010. I understand that the error occurred during the final stages of completing the Department of Education's 2010-11 budget papers. The error was identified on

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

20 May 2010 by education staff. The error was directly attributable to the new Department of Treasury and Finance accounting treatment of extraordinary items—capital grants. This new accounting treatment excludes the total value of commonwealth and other capital grants used to fund capital expenditure from total income. In both the services and key efficiency indicator tables, the Department of Treasury and Finance inadvertently picked up the extraordinary items—revenue for capital works value in the less income row instead of adjusted total income. Preparation of the 2010–11 budget papers was more complex than past years due to the Department of Education de-merger.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Minister, when did it become known that the error had been made?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: On 20 May.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Was there any reason for not informing the Parliament that incorrect information was shown in the *Budget Statements*? That would certainly have forewarned members of the estimates committee in preparation for the hearing. I find it quite remarkable because if the errors were known on 20 May, the Parliament could have been informed via a brief ministerial statement.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Indeed, it is the minister’s obligation to the Legislative Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN: Just let us do one thing at a time. The member for Midland can ask the next question. Minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I remind the member for Mandurah that the appropriation bills are the province of the Treasurer and it is for him to correct them. That is why I am correcting it today.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I recall that there would have been ample time during the sitting of Parliament to alert members that an error had been identified.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I raised this matter with the Treasurer and he advised me to present this at today’s estimates committee hearing.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is something we will clearly take up with the Premier, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Midland have another question on that issue?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, but I have other questions to ask.

The CHAIRMAN: Right, well the member for Midland can kick off.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I want to cut straight to the chase. During last week’s sitting of the Assembly the Leader of the Opposition asked the Minister for Education about cuts to the education budget, and she replied that all would be revealed this week. I notice that on page 356 of the *Budget Statements* there is reference to the “Recashflow of the 2009–10 3% Efficiency Dividend Shortfall”. That has been pushed out to the out years. There are other references in the *Budget Statements* to the impact on the department of, and what has occurred with, the three per cent efficiency dividend from last year. I ask the minister to outline all of those cuts, as she undertook to do during last week’s sitting of the Assembly. I would like her to pay specific attention to any proposed cuts that she has in mind for metropolitan district and regional district education offices.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for her question. A number of savings were made for 2009–10, being: \$13.425 million on central office administration operations; \$7.931 million on education and training support programs; \$15.185 million on learning and training allowance programs; there were no savings made on statewide schooling provision reform, which was another category in last year’s budget; and \$2.182 million on student community service programs.

[9.10 am]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I want to know what the impact of the cuts will be on this year’s budget, so what areas have been cut this year, and I specifically ask the minister about district education offices.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member may remember that a Liberal Party election commitment was that there would be a reorganisation of district offices. That is a very complex matter and is continuing in our planning. We cannot just decide that we are going to change a few boundaries and change those districts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So it is a cost-cutting measure. It is already widely talked about. I am told that a decision has been made.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not know who told the member that a decision has been made. A decision has not been made. It is an ongoing area of work that relates to a whole range of things, such as how services are

provided to schools and a whole lot of staffing issues. The decision has not been made. I do not know who told the member this.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will it be a budget cut or not? Will that area be cut?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I anticipate there will be no budget cut with the realignment of districts. There will be a more efficient provision of services to schools and support to schools than we have seen in the past.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Okay. Can the minister outline where the cuts are, which is what she undertook to do last week when she said that all would be revealed? So far she has revealed nothing new, so where are the cuts in this year's budget and where is the impact of the three per cent budget cut?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In last year's budget the three per cent efficiency dividend cuts were set out in those categories that I outlined a moment ago.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Which was more transparent—yes?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In this year's budget, I understand, across the whole of government and all agencies that three per cent is absorbed into the general figures and accounts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Clearly, the minister's department has had to make some cuts because of that. Where are those cuts?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are continuing to look for efficiencies in the department, but there are no cuts, except that we are reviewing contracts and we are reviewing projects. It is a continual process of review to find efficiencies in our budget. It must always be remembered when looking at the education budget that 75 per cent of the budget is salaries and another 15 per cent is direct costs to schools, so we are looking at cuts out of 10 per cent of this budget, which are very, very difficult to find, as we have seen over the past year. The department is going through and has been through a very rigorous process of looking for value and efficiencies in the budget. We will continue to look for those as we go on, but they have not been set out.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I put it to the minister that she is not being accountable to this committee and that her department clearly has identified areas that need to be cut. The minister has to make significant cuts because of the three per cent. We found last year that there was a list of things, but there were more unidentified ones. We found out from Ms O'Neill at an upper house committee that the plans for district high schools were known at the time of last year's budget. The minister never fessed up to those then. What is the minister not fessing up to now? The minister has provided no more information than she did in the other chamber last week when she gave everyone the expectation that she was actually going to be open and transparent at this hearing.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We continue to look for inefficiencies in this department. That is a process from day to day and from week to week.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Where are the jobs being lost? What offices will be —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We know we have a target with the three per cent. We know that is very difficult to achieve because of the way that education is and because of the massive percentage of the budget that is taken up by salaries and direct costs to schools. We are looking for efficiencies all the time and value for the services that we provide. I cannot give the member a list of where we are going to make cuts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister cannot give me anything. She has not been able to give me one thing that she is cutting.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to make a comment on this.

Ms S. O'Neill: Before the budget this year we will continue, as the minister has outlined, to undertake strategies to review contracts that we have in place and to review projects that we have in place. We will always, as we do from year to year, consider appropriate staffing levels. Obviously, we will be required to reconsider our priorities, but we do that each year to ensure that we bring in the budget in accordance with what we have been provided; so that is an ongoing process. If and when we identify strategies along the way that we might choose to use to ensure that the budget is brought in, then we will be discussing those with the minister.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I appreciate the sophistry, but the minister has said that she is reviewing contracts and strategies that she has in place. Could she outline to the chamber what contracts she is reviewing and what strategies she is reviewing?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The director general.

Ms S. O'Neill: We are unable to specifically identify the contracts and the projects, because we are undertaking a process now. We will look at all of our contracts.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How can the minister be undertaking a process of reviewing contracts and strategies when she does not know what contracts and strategies she is reviewing? This is like something out of *Yes Minister*. This is ridiculous. I do not know what we are wasting our time here doing, and we are only five minutes into it.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Midland, I know that you are not happy with the answer, but the answer has been given to you, and I am going to move on to the member for Mandurah.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mr Chairman, in the same vein I will ask a more direct question. Is it the minister's intention to close the Peel district office in Sutton Street, Mandurah and absorb it into a super region? Will the minister be making an announcement about that later this year?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member for Mandurah will be aware, as I said a moment ago, that a Liberal Party commitment before the last election was to reduce the number of districts. The decisions about which district offices might be closed or how that reconfiguration might occur has not been finalised. When it is finalised I will be taking it to cabinet because it was an election commitment. I cannot give the member an answer to that question because we are still looking at that, but I expect that in the next two or three months those final decisions will be made.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Through supplementary information will the minister provide to this committee a list of all district offices in Western Australia, the current staffing levels of those offices and the positions held?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think we might be able to give that to the member now rather than by way of supplementary information.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If the minister could provide me with that now. While the minister is searching for that information I will ask another question. The reason we are pursuing this area is that district offices play a critical role in the overall administration of the schools within the districts. My district of Peel in particular has been particularly vulnerable with the changing of boundaries. At one stage a number of years ago I had four district directors who were responsible for schools in clusters. If I wanted to talk about a particular high school, I was required to go to one of the four. This was highly inefficient. We currently have one district director who is responsible for Peel schools. If the minister is going to cut that district office, I will fight her to the end because, quite frankly, Peel is the last place one would cut a district office. It is a highly vulnerable region because of its schools and its catchment. If the minister is intending to close the Peel district office—I am sure there are other members in this place who are concerned about future threats to their district offices—then the minister really needs to come clean and tell us if they are on the chopping block.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think it is worth pointing out to the member that there is no Peel district. There is Fremantle–Peel district, as one district.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There is a Peel district office at 20 Sutton Street.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is a local office, but it is the Fremantle–Peel district.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, and I want to know whether the minister is going to cut it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are looking at reconfiguration of districts. The member asked for the information about FTEs and the districts. I can give those to the member now.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Just so that we do not waste time, I would be happy if the minister —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I can give them to the member now, Chairman.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If it is a long list —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I would like to answer his question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If it is a long list, I do not want the minister to waste time going through the list.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, it is up to you.

[9.20 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I would like to give that information now, since we are talking about districts. As at April 2010 the FTE figures are Albany, 22.56; Bunbury, 27.7; Canning, 77.8; Esperance, 22.88; Fremantle–Peel, 104.15; Goldfields, 29.57; Kimberley, 32.5; Mid West, 39.4; Midlands, 28.7; Narrogin, 20.5; West Coast, 98.37; Pilbara District, 29.77; Swan District, 90.11; and Warren–Blackwood, 23.13. I think that the member is looking at his area, as I would expect him to do, but he is looking at the current way that districts are configured. A new configuration would look at a number of ways of providing services, and that is what I am keen to do. I do not want to just change boundaries and rename things; I want to make sure that we have a strong educational

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

rationale for the way that those districts—or “new” districts as the member keeps calling them—are organised and configured and how those services are provided. What is most important in all of this is providing services to children in schools. The commitment to change the number of districts from 14 to, I think, six—it may not necessarily be six; it may well be more—is looking at the best way to provide those services to children in schools. I will give the member an example. School psychologists are currently, in the main, housed in district offices. I do not think that is a good idea. I think they should be in schools, working with the whole pastoral care team in schools. In that way a school psychologist could service a senior high school and a number of feeder primary schools and there would be continuity for the children. The principle that I am looking at is bringing services closer to schools. Often services have been removed from schools by distance and other things because of the way that district offices have been organised and configured. I am looking to provide better services to schools.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister’s Liberal election commitment was a decrease from 14 to six. I want to confirm that that is the target.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was not my Liberal election commitment; it was the Liberal Party’s commitment.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: She is the minister in the government. Is she committed to cutting 14 regional offices down to six—that is, two in the metropolitan region and four in the regions?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That was the commitment.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Were those numbers—14 to six—mentioned in the Liberal Party policy?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As I understand it, that was the commitment. Although that was the commitment, I am looking to see whether that is the best way to do it. There may well be more than six in my recommendation to cabinet.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Does that also mean that there will be a reduction in the number of district directors?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is pure speculation. Until I look at the final configuration and the educational rationale for it, I cannot answer the member’s question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: As part of the supplementary information, I would like to know the current premises leased by all district offices and when those leases are expected to expire.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Indeed.

[Supplementary Information No B24.]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will just make sure that we have got that right. The supplementary information the member wants is the location of each of the district offices and the length of lease still to run on them.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: And, presumably, if there is a Fremantle office and a Peel office, we want both addresses.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: All information will be provided, member.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I refer to the second dot point on page 357, which states —

The Department will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government through National Partnership agreements that focus on improving literacy and numeracy, providing comprehensive services for students in schools that operate in low socio-economic status communities, and developing teacher quality and school leadership.

Can the minister advise what progress has been made on that?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: What has this government done as opposed to what the commonwealth government has done, I think, is the member’s question.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am sure that he can ask the question himself, member.

I thank the member for Darling Range for the question. The question was about low socioeconomic status school communities and the national partnership agreement.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is obviously a key priority of this government to provide effective support to address the needs of children in low socioeconomic index areas. A range of things are happening through not only the national partnership, but also other activities within our state Department of Education. The member may

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

remember that in December 2008, Western Australia signed three Smarter Schools national partnerships and one of them was on improving teacher quality. Clearly, there are two fundamentals to education. One is attendance, and that is an ongoing issue that we are addressing. We released our new strategy on that last week. The other fundamental is having the best quality teachers and teaching that we can possibly have. Without those, no education system can say that it is providing the best that it possibly can. Over the past year, all school sectors in Western Australia—that is, government and non-government—have been working together to implement the three national partnerships in education, particularly the one on teacher quality. In January this year, the first 30 Western Australian public schools, out of the 99 selected through this partnership, commenced the programs within their school communities; a further 27 will begin in July this year and others will begin in June 2011. The purpose of this is to improve the achievement level and wellbeing of students. Under the partnership, Western Australia will have a mix of systemic and local strategies to improve teacher quality.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It would be very interesting to see what really is happening. One of our biggest problems, minister, is the quality of the teachers who are coming out, and that reflects on the quality of the institutions that they have been trained in. I have a series of questions. The fourth dot point on that same page indicates that there has been a Council of Australian Governments agreement to increase the available kindergarten hours from 11 to 15. This initiative will be rolled out from 2010 to 2013. Given the minister's supposed commitment to the Australian Early Development Index and to taking action to assist low socioeconomic index schools, I want to know why some of the lowest SEI schools in this state will not have these additional hours until 2013. It seems to me quite perverse that we are taking this very positive initiative, yet we are not directing it at the areas of greatest needs. Schools in my area will not get these extended hours until 2012–13, even though the performance in the AEDI is far more problematic. I would like the minister to explain how she can possibly justify not targeting the low AEDI schools with these additional hours. I would like a comprehensive list of which schools will get these additional hours and when.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for her question. The rollout of this initiative is over four years, and that coincides with the funding to 2012.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I have acknowledged that. That is not the issue; the issue is: how did the minister select the schools that will get these hours?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Public schools in five districts will get universal access to the increase from 11 to 15 hours in the first year, including 75 schools in the Swan district; 21 schools in the Kimberley district; 23 schools in the Pilbara; 30 schools in the Goldfields; and 45 schools in the Mid West. They are the districts and the areas with the lowest SEI. The money is following SEI, starting with the lowest —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: That is for 2010. What about 2011?

[9.30 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In 2011, there will be 93 schools in Fremantle–Peel and 28 schools in the Bunbury district. In 2012 there will be 19 schools in the Albany district, 26 in Narrogin, 38 in the Midland district, 18 in Warren–Blackwood and 73 in Canning. That is another 174 schools. In 2013—the final ones will happen this year and they are the ones the member would expect—there will be 93 in the west coast district and 19 in Esperance. The non-government schools are following the same pattern. I am told that is consistent with the Australian Early Development Index.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I challenge that because as the minister knows, many of the schools in Canning are at the bottom of the AEDI. In fact, schools in the Armadale area have some of the worse performances in the state, but rollout for those schools will not happen until the third year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: A lot of those schools are getting other funding. Not only is this being rolled out over a four-year period —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is national partnership money.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is more national partnership money, which has been allocated to schools and will be allocated -

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: There is a fundamental question here. Not all the schools in those areas would have as low an AEDI as a number of those schools for which the rollout will not happen until 2012. Why would the department not prioritise those schools that are low AEDI so that they can get this money?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The allocation of funding was based on the socioeconomic index, not AEDI results. This is the first year that we have AEDI results on a national basis. The funding allocation will be in 25 per cent amounts over four years and it is based on the socioeconomic index, not on AEDI results.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is the minister saying that her decision to leave the Canning district until 2012 is based on the SEI?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand it was based on the SEI. I will ask the director general to add some comments.

Ms S. O'Neill: The selection of schools was a combination of factors. Certainly we looked at the SEI across all sectors. We also looked at the way in which the funding was being provided to us. Naturally, we had to look at groupings of schools. A choice was made to maintain districts as a cohesive group; otherwise, some schools in an area would have offered more hours than other schools. We were advised by principals that that would not have been their preference in terms of operationalising the change. It is a combination of factors. We came up with the arrangements that the minister has just outlined to the member.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Can the minister provide a list of the functions and the relative SEIs? How did the department take into account the SEI of Bunbury and Fremantle–Peel compared with Albany? Does the department have a composite SEI?

Ms S. O'Neill: For the whole district?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Yes. Every time we look at the allocation of funds, there is a great deal of slipperiness. If it was based primarily on SEI, how did the department quantify an SEI for a district? Is there an SEI rating for a district?

Ms S. O'Neill: We were able to aggregate it by district and we used that function —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Can I be provided with, by way of supplementary information, the aggregated SEI figures and a description of how the department achieves that aggregation?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We can provide that.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the minister clear about what information is required?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As I understand it, the member wants information about the aggregation of the SEI across the districts.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: And a description of the methodology used to obtain it.

[*Supplementary Information No B25.*]

Mr P. ABETZ: I refer to the item on Tambrey early learning and care centre on page 363 of the *Budget Statements*. I understand that that centre is located in Karratha. In a media statement late last year the minister released details of 120 new long day care places for Pilbara children and the provision of early learning support for local families. Can the minister outline the progress of that project and what benefits it is delivering?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This is a very exciting development in schools and early education because we are combining early education and care in the one centre and on a school site. It is the first time that that has happened to this extent. Construction on the early learning and care centre in Tambrey, Karratha, commenced in August 2009 and is due for completion in August this year. I attended the centre for the ceremony that launched the construction of the centre. The centre will operate extended hours to support families and help integrate children's child care and early learning. I am sure the member for Armadale is supportive of this project. Given that the centre is in Karratha, Woodside Energy has been secured as an industry sponsor, which has enabled us to increase the number of childcare places. Woodside saw a need, particularly for its employees, to have access to the centre; therefore, the size of the childcare centre was increased with its support. The commonwealth government is committed to four early learning and care centres in Western Australia. The centres in Port Hedland, Mirrabooka and Darch will help meet the unmet demand in child care in Western Australia and they will be situated on school grounds or on community land that is close to schools. It will be a one-stop shop. Presumably, many of the children who attend the childcare centre will move on to regular school. The early learning childcare centres will be long day care centres operated by third party operators who will be selected through a competitive process. This is also new for us. The School Education Act does not allow for this; therefore, the Governor in Executive Council made an order to get the first one happening. At some point a number of changes will have to be made to the education act to accommodate all our new thinking about early childhood development and learning.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We will probably be waiting a few years.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are a lot of issues to work through. We are able to continue with this. Unfortunately the commonwealth government announced this year that it would not proceed with the second phase of the centres. We see them as an excellent way to go. With the development of the centre at Kununurra, we are looking at the zero–17 model of schooling, which has many benefits particularly for young children and families of young children.

Mr P. ABETZ: What proportion of children at the Tambrey centre will be Indigenous?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We do not have those figures. It would not be very high. In Port Hedland, Mirrabooka and Darch, the percentage would be quite substantial. Certainly, it will be substantial in Port Hedland. I am very anxious to see the Port Hedland centre proceed as soon as possible.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is at the Port Hedland school, not the South Hedland school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are negotiating for it to be in Baler, which is in South Hedland.

[9.40 am]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I refer to the amount of recurrent money provided for in this budget on page 355 of the *Budget Statements*. The estimated actual expenditure for 2009–10 is \$2 994 016 000 and the budget estimate for 2010–11 is \$3 020 167 000. That is a change of \$26.151 million, or 0.873 per cent. The government is estimating that it will have saved just under 0.9 per cent, or about \$26 million. The income statement on page 366 shows that the total income is estimated to be \$638.8 million for 2010–11. That is a decrease of \$26.3 million, which we are told is largely because the state government will receive less from the commonwealth grant funding. If the income is reduced by \$26.3 million, does it mean that any increase above the estimated actual for this year is illusory; and, if not, why not? I might as well ask about the cash assets at the same time, because it relates to page 355. The cash assets diminish considerably next year, and in the out years they are just about half of what they were previously. What is going on with the cash assets?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr Leaf to comment on that in a moment. The member will find that the massive Building the Education Revolution funding inflated the figures last year. I will ask Mr Leaf to explain the detail of that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I was not asking about the capital appropriation but the recurrent appropriation.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I ask Mr Leaf to give the detail of that.

Mr J. Leaf: The BER money that the minister referred to was the school pride component of the funding for maintenance. In 2009–10 that was some \$89 million worth of funding. That will not recur in the 2010–11 budget. That is a significant difference between comparing one year and another. There are other elements to funding that occurred in the 2009–10 financial year that also will not occur. A large component of that relates to the Digital Education Revolution funding whereby the Department of Education received funding in 2009–10 on behalf of independent schools and then passed on that funding to those schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That amount was \$39 million. We post-boxed the money, which came from Treasury to us and was passed on. The \$39 million appeared in last year's figures.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Was that money for the private school building program?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was for the Digital Education Revolution.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So it was not for school maintenance?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, that money was used for computers. Mr Leaf mentioned two amounts. The first was the school pride funding of \$89 500 000 and the second was the \$39 million for computers for non-government schools. The Department of Education was used as a post box. The money came from the federal government to our Treasury and then to the Department of Education and was then passed on. It is in these accounts from last time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I have an answer to my direct question? There is, I assume, an explanation for the decrease of \$26.3 million on page 367 under "Income". When a comparison is made between the estimated actual in 2009–10 and the budget estimate for 2010–11, I again ask whether or not any increase shown is illusory.

Mr J. Leaf: In trying to explain the answer to that question, it is important to recognise the one-off items that occurred in the previous year because they do not recur. The increase in funding is not illusory. The increases in funding for 2010–11 include the passing on of wage increases as a result of salary agreements, which are worth \$126.7 million.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the wage increase \$126 million?

Mr J. Leaf: That is correct. The increase in the depreciation funding for 2010–11 relates to the increased capital works that have been completed at a cost of \$27.2 million.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is that in the capital works budget?

Mr J. Leaf: No. This is the depreciation that is required to be set aside each year for the investment in the capital works that have occurred. There is an increase of \$18.7 million in the employee entitlement provisions, which relates to the annual leave and superannuation associated with the employee benefits. There is an increase of \$4.5 million for the contribution to Gold State Super employee members, whereby the government increases the percentage contribution in the future. A number of additional funding measures that the Department of Education proposed through the bilateral process were approved, including additional school support staff worth \$3.4 million; an allocation for funding associated with the roll out of independent public schools worth \$3.3 million; a submission was put forward to ensure that the students affected by the half-cohort move into secondary schools this year were not subject to a reduced access to curriculum —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: All those programs are listed in the budget papers. I have seen those.

Mr J. Leaf: Yes, member, but I wanted to explain that the increase in the funding that the member mentioned is not illusory. These items all contributed to increased funding for education in this year's budget.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is other funding too. As well as the half-cohort, there is \$1.69 million in royalties for regions funding and \$2 million for the movement in direct schools' expenses.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: My question was more of an accounting question rather than asking for the detail of that list. I do not need to hear the rest of it because it is all in the budget papers. I have not had an answer to the final question I asked about the cash assets as part of my original question. There is a drop of \$83.1 million between the cash assets budget and the budget for the estimated actual cash assets. There also are massive drops in the out years. I ask for an explanation of that, please.

Mr J. Leaf: There is indeed a reduction in the cash assets over the forward estimates. The balance sheet on page 368 sets out the annual amounts that are represented by free cash. Within the current cash assets, we see that in 2008–09 the actual is \$180 million, at the end of 2009–10 the actual is \$182 million and then it falls away to \$153.8 million. There is a fundamental underlying assumption in these budget statements that the cash that is accumulated within individual school bank balances is put to more effective use in the years when the cash is provided to the schools. It is reasonable to say that some of the cash that sits in our school bank balances should be spent in the year that the cash is provided to the school. Essentially, this recognises that rather than accumulate cash, we want the schools to spend the funds available for education in the year that the funds are provided.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: What will happen if a school does not do that? Will the department take back the money? In 2008–09 there was \$338 million-plus in cash assets. From the answer that Mr Leaf just gave, I presume that is mainly in schools' budgets. By 2014 it is projected to be down to \$127 million. That is way less than half; it is about 40 per cent or less.

[9.50 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What is the member's question?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Leaf has suggested that the department would like the schools to spend the money in the year that they get it. I am asking the minister: has the department changed the policy about that? If schools do not spend that money, does that money go back to the department, or will schools now be magically spending that money in the year that they get it?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This is a problem that has been ongoing for many, many years. Schools often accumulate fairly large amounts of money. I tabled a list of those schools last week or the week before, and the member saw those amounts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is right.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: A couple of schools have over \$2 million in their bank account. So it is an ongoing problem—or issue, rather than problem. The preference, of course, would be that schools are given those funds to spend on particular behaviour programs or other programs for which some of that money might have been earmarked. The preference obviously would be to spend those grants on those children at the time they are given. There is no intention of taking those funds away. Schools may accumulate money for the replacement of equipment, such as a bus, and we would expect with good management that they would do that. If a school's

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

priority is a new bus, it may accumulate funds over three or four years to replace the bus. That is good management of a school's funds. Sometimes funds are accumulated in those bank accounts that perhaps should be spent. But the policy has not changed since the member was in government.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So there is no take-back by the education department?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If schools have a lot of money in the bank, the department does not say, "Right; you obviously did not need all that money"?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. The policy has been the same for many, many years. It has not changed.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to page 356, and the fifth line item under the heading "Major Spending Changes". The amount of \$7.032 million has been allocated for English as a second language support for the children of 457 visa holders. How will the government use this funding to support the increasing number of students in this category who are enrolled in our public schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This is a very important question and one that has been addressed by the Education and Health Standing Committee. This has been a vexed area for some time. I know that the previous government made some attempts to get the commonwealth government to recognise its responsibilities in this area and provide funding for the children of 457 visa holders, as it does for other children with English as a second language needs in other visa categories. The previous government requested the commonwealth to do that, and we have also requested the commonwealth to do that. However, we have now decided that we cannot wait any longer for the commonwealth government to make up its mind about this and fulfil its responsibilities to these children. The commonwealth is happy to give visas to people so that they can work in this country but it is not happy to support their children.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The commonwealth is funding absolutely everything else that the minister is doing!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, it is not.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is not a great burden on the minister!

The CHAIRMAN: The minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. In this financial year, \$7.032 million has been allocated to support the children of 457 visa holders who need ESL in our public schools. These funds will be available in the schools in areas in which there is a number of students who require intensive English, and support will occur in various settings. I am very impressed by those schools that are able to maintain integration for these children most of the time and also provide ESL. I spoke to the principal of Joondalup Primary School late last year and heard about the good work that school is doing in this area. There is also funding for ESL in this year's budget, because we have been taking up that issue. We will continue that good work to assist these children. Many of these families, although they come into this state on temporary 457 visas, end up staying permanently in Western Australia. We need to give those children the best possible opportunities from the beginning. This will go a long way towards doing that and maintaining those children in the mainstream as well.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Minister, with regard to intensive English, I still have not received a formal response to my question in Parliament about the North Mandurah language centres.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do apologise for that. I did have that information with me last week but I did not get together with the member. That information is available.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I refer to page 358. I think we would all acknowledge that the literacy and numeracy performance standards in our schools have not been that good. We know that there are multiple reasons for that. I note that in February this year the minister tabled a document in Parliament, in response to a committee report on this question, on a number of initiatives that the government will be taking to respond to the Australian Early Development Index. We all know that the fundamental problem is that many of these kids are presenting at school at the age of four with multiple developmental vulnerabilities that make them more difficult to teach. In the statement that the minister made to Parliament in February, in response to the committee's request for supported playgroups for children aged between zero and three, the minister said that playgroup fees would be covered by government in areas where the AEDI indicates there are high proportions of vulnerable children. Can the minister show me where in the budget there is an allocation for the payment of these playgroup fees? The reason I ask that question is that what the minister has done in those schools that have set up these playgroups is stop any continuity of funding, and she has told these playgroups to take this money out of their national partnership literacy money to keep these playgroups going. So, the most vulnerable schools are having to take out money that they have been given by the commonwealth to deal with those children aged five and

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

upwards to improve their literacy and NAPLAN results and deal with this problem of developmental vulnerability. Can the minister show me where in the budget she is doing what she said in her statement to Parliament she would be doing?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are two issues here—well, there are more than two, but I will start by addressing two issues. Playgroups and funding for playgroups comes under the Department for Communities —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We are talking about the playgroups that are being operated by schools—by the education department.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: But schools have chosen, and are doing a fantastic job, to set those up. I will ask the director general in a moment to elaborate on this. But I understand that there is flexibility in school budgets for schools to use money towards these things. Under the act, in fact, we provide funding for children from kindergarten onwards. We do not provide funding, and we cannot provide funding, for this. But over the past few years in particular, there has been an increased recognition of the need to work with children before kindergarten age, and with Aboriginal children —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: But what has the minister done? The minister goes to conference after conference and she says she understands it, yet when the schools come to the minister and seek some help, they are told by the minister's department that they should take the money out of their national partnership literacy money. It is one thing to recognise the problem. It is one thing to talk about AEDI. But what has the minister done?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Member, that is what that partnership money is there for.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is not. It is for literacy. It is not for developmental skills. It is specifically for literacy from the age of five-plus.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member is talking about two different national partnerships. The member is talking about two different programs funded by the commonwealth. The member is mixing them up.

[10.00 am]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: No, I am not mixing them up.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to enlighten the member on this.

Ms S. O'Neill: There are actually three national partnerships, but of the two that we are referring to, there is one for literacy and numeracy development, and one for low-SES schools. The national partnership funding for low-SES schools has a number of elements that the schools can explore; they are not mandated, so schools make choices around their priorities. Inclusive in that low-SES national partnership funding is the capacity for those schools to explore school community-based groups for four-year-olds, remembering that we are legislated and appropriated for four-year-olds. It is true to say that our schools recognise the importance of early literacy development and early socialisation, so a number of schools have embarked on school community groups, for example the one at Challis.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Did the director general just say that the low-SES schools were for the four-pluses?

Ms S. O'Neill: All the funding that comes to Western Australia for the school sector is to be expended in keeping with our legislated responsibilities for 3.5-plus. A number of programs have emerged in our schools for the early years that take three-year-olds into the schools on a community basis, because we are able to do it at this point in that arrangement. The low-SES funding is not there for literacy and numeracy per se; obviously those two things interact. They are there to develop things like school community partnerships —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: But they are not for playgroups for zeros to threes, are they?

Ms S. O'Neill: For the funding that is there, the schools can make decisions about what suits their specific communities for low-SES strategies that will help communities and young children coming in. Early years strategies have been developed in 10 of the schools that are getting funding, and in some cases they have developed programs, not for zeros to threes, but certainly for three-year-olds and some younger students. Some of those programs are developing the beginnings of relationships with the families of zeros to fours. There are some programs emerging, but most often it would be with students who are three and perhaps just before three. I think it is fair to say that it is clearly within the ambit of low-SES funding to use it for this purpose, but that decision is made by schools, specific to their particular needs at that time.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: There are some question marks around that explanation. I would like the minister to tell us two things from that. In reference to the agreement on literacy and numeracy funding, is there an agreement with the commonwealth government about the nature of the programs? I understand that the programs have to be evidence-based and research-based. I am wondering what conditions the minister has put around

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

those. I also note that at some point the minister's title was changed, with great fanfare, to minister for education and early childhood development, was it not?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, that is not correct.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It never changed?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The title has not changed, but one of my responsibilities is early childhood development.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is that included in this budget?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, it is included in the general figures in the budget. The Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning was established; the Premier made the announcement in January last year, and soon after that the office was established within the Department of Education.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Putting aside the money that the commonwealth government has put in, can I ask the minister to describe to me what changes she has made since becoming Minister for Education to address the developmental vulnerability of zeroes to fours? She goes to conference after conference where she is told by teachers whom she recognises to be specialists in the area that the Australian Early Development Index is giving us hard evidence that children are presenting at school with multiple developmental vulnerabilities. Can the minister name one program she has introduced—not looked into—that has been funded by the state since the Liberal–National government came to power?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can I correct one thing the member said? She said that the AEDI gives us hard evidence on individual children. That is not the purpose of the AEDI. It does not give us that hard evidence.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is a test of individuals that is then aggregated and shows clusters of disadvantage.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is regarded as a way of judging a community as a whole; it is not a diagnostic tool —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I am not asking whether it is a diagnostic tool.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is the member's implication. It is important to the next part of my answer.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: No, it is not. I am saying that AEDI is a composite. It is a test of individuals, and when it is aggregated, it reveals the areas of need.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is at a community level.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: That is right.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It does not help the teacher working with the individual child. The most important thing amongst a number of initiatives that we have taken —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The minister should tell us what the initiatives are; that is what I am keen to know.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am halfway through my sentence; it would be really nice for the member for Armadale to be a little patient and let me finish my sentence before she interrupts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We are just waiting for the minister; she should not be so precious, she should just get on with it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: One of the most important things we have done is the development of a program of on-entry assessment of preprimary students, which began this year. As of next year, all schools will be using this program, which means assessing each individual child. Teachers will sit down with individual children to assess them early on and see what needs they have. We are using a measure that was developed in Victoria. Once the results for the child are tabulated, a lot of resources are made available to assist the teacher in programming for that individual child. All children in preprimary will be assessed for their developmental and learning needs, and programming for them will then be put in place, so that by the time they get to year 1, we know an awful lot about them from not only the observations of teachers but also the assessments that are made of those children. That did not exist before; the AEDI does not give us that. This will allow us to look at individual children's needs and to program for them.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is this for five-year-olds?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is for preprimary students.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Five-year-olds?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Preprimary students.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Which are five-year-olds, are they not?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Okay, they are five-year-olds.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The minister is profoundly missing the point here. I support the idea of individual testing. The minister says she really likes and understands what is coming out of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and the Australian Institute of Family Studies, but the whole point of the AEDI's body of work and the science that has been developed is that if we leave things until children are five, it is too late. I am asking the minister what she is doing in recognition of what the AEDI is telling us. The AEDI is telling us that there are lots of kids turning up to school with multiple developmental delays and that it is absolutely ridiculous to wait until they are five to start dealing with it. The area of maximum neuroplasticity is in the zero to three age group. I thought this was the whole point of the minister being not just Minister for Education but the minister responsible for early childhood development. That is what it was all about.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Member, the AEDI is done on four-year-olds. It gives us a picture of four-year-olds in our community.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Exactly, so it is what happens to them before they go to kindergarten; it is what happens in those early years before a child presents to school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are a number of portfolios with responsibility for those early years, particularly the Department of Health, the Department for Communities and the Department of Education.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: What has the minister done as the minister responsible for early childhood development? She has that title because she was supposed to be interested in driving change. Around Australia, the only places we have seen change are places where there is a minister who grabs this issue, stops this interdepartmental territorial war, and has the guts to get on and put something in place.

[10.10 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are working towards the integration of all those services. Without integrating the services, we cannot have the sorts of responses that the member is talking about. At the moment there are services in health, in communities and in education, and we are working collaboratively across those agencies and departments to make sure that we can provide the best for children. We are also looking at models, such as that we are putting in at Kununurra for zeros to 17s, so that we can work with children who need extra help with speech therapy and other points in their development before they go to school. That is through my office working with Minister McSweeney's office across those areas to provide the integrated service that is required. In a moment I will ask the director general to give a practical example. At the school level we are doing a range of things for young children. The development and implementation of the on-entry diagnostic assessment is well under way with 50 trial schools this year and all schools next year.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We are talking about before they turn five—zero to three years. The minister will be able to point to various pilot programs, but there is clear evidence coming out for a number of things that are quite simple to do, such as setting up supported playgroups and funding them. We come to the minister, and she says that it is not her department; it is someone else's department. The reality is that we need this, not on some mini-trial basis; we have to go into these communities with the high level of developmental vulnerability —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is really interesting, member for Armadale, that this has become your hobbyhorse in the past 12 months —

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: — and provide the parents with some training. I can see that it is the foundation. The minister is building on insecure foundations

Dr E. CONSTABLE: — but you did not see it when you were in government.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The minister is ignoring the science.

The CHAIRMAN: Members! We can shout across the chamber but we are not getting answers to questions. I have a real interest in this and I would like to hear the answer because my belief, as well, is that this should be under one minister. Can we hear the minister's response?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are working towards bringing this under one umbrella. That is not easy when we have a whole range of services across government. We work well together. We are coordinating those services and good things are happening. More and more we are seeing the sorts of programs that the member is talking about happening in our schools. They did not happen under the former government.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Excuse me! The ones that have been established were established under the Labor government.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not hear your loud voice when you were in government talking about this.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Anything good that has happened has been federally funded. The minister has shown no initiative.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Armadale!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to give some examples.

Ms S. O'Neill: Schools recognise the need for integration and reaching back to the early years. Quite a number of schools, including some of our language development centres, have developed partnerships with health and other government and non-government service providers to develop early intervention programs. Some programs involve the Department of Health speech pathologist, and we are working with health and with the Department for Communities to embed those practices. Speech therapy is the responsibility of health, but notwithstanding that we now have those integrated services in schools. Also, we are working with Therapy Focus and Rocky Bay to ensure we have that integration. What we have, which we have not had before, at officer level and at senior level, is focus on specific areas where we work across departments to have integration. Schools have not previously had a high degree of flexibility over their funding. Previously funding has been provided in a tied manner, and now it is untied. A number of our schools, where it is a priority for that school, have taken this on board and are using their funding in a flexible manner to provide such programs.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: That is real leadership! That is really taking the issue in both hands and charging forward!

The CHAIRMAN: Members, I need questions and my job is to get as many questions answered as possible and I have a list. The member for Southern River is next.

Mr P. ABETZ: My question relates to Harvey Agricultural College and I refer to the second dot point on page 361. There is a \$25 million election commitment for various additions and improvements to Harvey Agricultural College. Could the minister advise on the scope of the works, the time line of the project and how that is developing?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Harvey Agricultural College is moving from its site; it is being completely rebuilt. I visited the old area and the proposed area not long after we came into government, and the building of the new campus is well underway. It had been operating under a split system previously and this is bringing it together on the one campus. At the moment the students are transported for the practical part of their work to the second site, so the new buildings are being constructed on that second site where they do the program work now. Funding of \$25 million has been allocated over three financial years to provide for the rebuild of the college campus at the Wokalup farm site. We are on track with the design to be completed by 2010, and then it will go out to tender and that tender will be completed in April next year and occupation in October 2012. It will make a big difference to the work that is done and the programs that are run at the college when it is on the one site. The old site has pretty dilapidated buildings. In particular the residential quarters for the students will be greatly improved by this building. The new campus will feature state-of-the-art residential boarding facilities for 112 students in single private rooms, and other facilities include a comprehensive gymnasium and dining complex supported by general learning areas and a new administration building. The teaching areas will have science and IT infrastructure and will very much be the modern facilities that we would like to see, plus all the other things that happen with an agricultural college—the laundry, butchering facilities and so on. There are some interesting buildings on the old site dating to the Second World War when people were housed there, and they are seen as heritage buildings and I understand they will be maintained. Agriculture education in Western Australia is regarded nationally as being excellent. In 2006 and last year one of our colleges won an Australian training award, so the quality of training for students is second to none in our agricultural colleges. It is very important, given the importance of agriculture to this economy, to continue to provide secondary education of a very high quality and good facilities for students who attend those colleges.

Mr P. ABETZ: With the improvement of the facilities does the minister envisage growing enrolments or has it been stable?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The enrolments are generally tied to the number of students who can board at the school, but there are some day students as well. It would not surprise me if the renewal of this college attracts more day students—I hope it will. It has very high quality vocational education and training programs and a lot to offer students. Students living in the surrounding areas will benefit very much as well.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to page 357, “Service Summary”, and the expense appropriations for primary and secondary education. Is the minister able to provide to the committee today the approximate number of students in the state education system currently attending kindergarten, and also the number of students currently attending state schools, years 1 to 7 and years 8 to 12?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I can provide it for the member for Mandurah.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: And a total, please?

[10.20 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have figures for kindergarten to year 7, but the member also wanted the figure just for the pre-compulsory years of kindergarten and preprimary; I will provide that figure in a moment. The number of students in kindergarten to year 7 is 179 989. The number of students in years 8 to 12, bearing in mind the half cohort in year 8, is 76 923. There are also 1 203 kindergarten students in community kindergartens, which come under our umbrella. Only a very small number of community kindergartens are still operating. The figure for the pre-compulsory years, which is kindergarten and preprimary, is 36 784. It is worth mentioning that while kindergarten and preprimary are not compulsory—it is compulsory for parents to enrol their children from year 1—around 95 per cent of all children attend or are enrolled in kindergarten and preprimary. It is a very high proportion. People are voting with their feet, in a sense.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have a further question. I want to drill down to secondary education. How many secondary schools currently operate under the middle-school model; that is, years 8 to 10? Is the middle-school model in decline?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The second question is a big question. I will get the number of middle schools in a moment. It is actually quite a difficult question to answer. Middle schools can be for years 7 to 9, years 7 and 8, or years 7 to 10, but they are most likely to be for years 7 to 9. If we look at the private sector, middle schools are being built and a number of schools are being reconfigured to a middle-school model for the delivery of education. In the government schools sector, I cannot think of any middle schools that are being constructed at the moment; it would be some time since a middle school was constructed. We can talk about the buildings for middle schools but it is really about what happens in those schools. The middle-school model is really an approach to the delivery of educational programs or to teaching. There are variations on that. Some have more of a homeroom situation, where a smaller number of teachers teach those students but they still have access to specialist facilities. I will ask the director general to provide some examples of those sorts of configurations.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: To clarify, particularly for the director general, there are examples of middle schools changing back to senior high schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is the member talking about schools that are —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Currently years 8 to 10 going to —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is possible to have a middle-schooling approach for years 8 to 12.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, indeed.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: But that is not what the member is talking about.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am talking about standalone sites that are specifically for years 8 to 10. Two years ago, I think in Australind, a school went from years 8 to 10 to years 8 to 12.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was in Eaton.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Eaton. In my electorate, Coodanup Community College commenced with year 11s this year, along with Halls Head Community College. I am very interested to know whether the middle-school model, which evolved 10 years or so ago, is on the decline; and, if so, why. I have a personal view about it; I think it is a terrible model, quite frankly.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There were a couple of major changes, one of which was the increase in the school leaving age which has required a rethinking of the delivery of a whole range of programs in years 11 and 12. That is one reason for years 11 and 12 to be added to some schools, such as Coodanup Community College. The change in the school leaving age is probably one of the reasons we are not looking at building years 8 to 10 schools at the moment. Also, there is a transition for students at the end of primary school to year 8, and if they attend a middle school, there is another transition to year 11. Quite a lot of research suggests that we want to minimise the number of transitions that students experience. That would be another reason.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I believe that the middle-school model was developed in areas in which it was least appropriate, given the increased number of transition points. Some middle schools were set up in places of high vulnerability for the students in terms of their socioeconomic background, behaviour and other related issues. I am asking the minister or the director general whether there has been an admission by the department that that model is now a failure.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It may well be that the member has observed that middle schools were established in areas of high vulnerability, but I do not think the fact that we are not constructing those schools at the moment is an admission of failure. Rather, it recognises the very different educational landscape that we now have, with students, by law, having to stay on at school until they are 17. I think the increase in the school leaving age has made the biggest difference to that. There is also the recognition that too many transition points are not a good idea. Before the school leaving age was increased, if kids went to a years 8 to 10 school and then had to move to another school for year 11, some might have decided to get a job or to do something else rather than go on with their schooling. I think this is consolidated best education by looking at schools for years 8 to 12 rather than for years 8 to 10.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I know the director general is champing to respond.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not notice that!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have a theory that there would be a clear correlation between those schools and the bleed of students, particularly in secondary education, to the private sector.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It would be an interesting study to do; it may well be the case.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am not sure whether the minister would have those figures. I am not sure whether the director general wants to answer that question. The minister gave us the enrolment figures for kindergarten to year 12, and I thank her for that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: These schools were built in the last decade; some were built while Labor was in government.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, indeed.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: A path was set to build those schools, perhaps over that decade. I do not know when the first one was built. My own preference, if I can express an opinion, would always be for schools to offer years 8 to 12.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister gave us the figures for the state education system. Do we have current, up-to-date figures for independent and private school student numbers in Western Australia—a broad, global figure?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As of 22 March, there were 134 069 students in non-government schools.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is the figure for kindergarten to year 12.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will provide some other figures that would help. The number of pre-compulsory students is 16 772, the number of students in years 1 to 7 is 61 525, in years 8 to 10 it is 33 955, and for years 11 and 12 it is 21 817. The total number of students in years 8 to 12 is 55 772.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the minister for those figures. I have a final question on this matter.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The director general has pointed out that I need to correct a figure I gave earlier. The number I gave of pre-compulsory students in primary schools was correct, but there are a whole lot of other pre-compulsory students in other schools, such as district high schools and remote community schools. The total number of pre-compulsory children in public schools of one sort or another—they might be in School of the Air or a district high school—is 40 530.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: All right. I need to pursue this. The aim of the state education system, as highlighted in the *Budget Statements*, is quality education for students in Western Australia. I am interested to know whether the department has any figures or trends for the number of students who are leaving the state system and seeking to enter the private system. What are those figures from 2008 to this year? The Department of Education must have figures delivered to it via the various regional offices throughout the state that show places in the state where there is a clear bleed of students.

[10.30 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I can give the member the percentage of students in government schools from 2004 to 2010. That will give him the sort of indication that he is looking for. In 2004 it was 68.9; in 2005, 68.3; in 2006, 67.8; in 2007, 67.3; in 2008, 66.6; in 2009, 66.3; and in 2010, 65.8. So over that period of time, if my maths is right, it is almost a three per cent change. Now I will just also talk to the member about the growth in the numbers at that time as well. In 2004 the total number of children in government schools was 255 182. This year the total number is 256 912. There has therefore been growth in the numbers of children but a change in the percentage. I would venture to say that one of the major factors in that change in the percentage has been the change in year 7 in many non-government schools. The other thing that is in the budget, I think for the first time,

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

is that enrolment growth in 2009 in government schools was 3 741. Most of those were in kindy, preprimary and year 1, which is interesting. As for why we have such a large growth, some people have suggested it was Mr Costello's baby bonus, or whatever it was that he had, when he suggested that people have a couple of kids and then one for the country. The growth this year has been much lower at 240. There was a big blip in the birth rate or something that caused that change for us in 2009.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can the minister give me the total student numbers for 2008 in comparison with the current numbers? I think the minister said that in 2008 the percentage was 66.6. What is that in raw figures?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The figures I have here may not give the member a totally accurate answer to his question, but I will give him the figures that I have. The total figure I have for 2009 is 256 900 and for 2010 it is 256 912. I indicated a moment ago that there was an increase of 240 between 2009 and 2010, but the figure that I just gave the member of 256 912 for this year excludes community kindergarten children, which would make up that difference, I would expect, and part-time students are not included in that figure of 2010 at this point. The actual growth was 240.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: And just the figure for 2008?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is 252 585; that is where there was that large growth between 2008 and 2009.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am interested also if the department has any trends in figures that have been delivered by the regional offices that show a bleed of students from state primary schools to the private sector for year 7 and into the secondary system.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member's question dovetails with my comments about year 7s in non-government schools. We are finding that students finishing years 6 and 7 are transferring to private schools in greater numbers.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Do we have a percentage for that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Last year from year 7 to 8 it was 15.9 per cent, and that is with a half cohort.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Does that not show that parents have some significant concern about what they expect in the secondary education area of the state education system? Nearly 16 per cent is getting towards 20 per cent or one in five of our primary students in years 6 and 7.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Sixteen per cent is not 20 per cent.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Assuming that trend is increasing, that would be cause for concern about what parents are seeing that secondary education is offering them in the state system. Is that not cause for concern?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member has just offered an opinion on this. I could offer him another opinion. The opinion that I would offer him would be that parents perhaps think that their children are ready for secondary schooling in year 7 and we are not offering that. That is the major difference. Around this country three jurisdictions at the moment have year 7s in primary school. Queensland has decided that its year 7s will go into secondary school in 2014. That leaves South Australia and Western Australia, which are, in terms of numbers, quite small jurisdictions. The vast bulk of other children in this country go into secondary school in year 7.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Is the minister going to introduce year 7 into high schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not saying that I am going to do that. It is something that we are looking at.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Is that something the minister believes in?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not think it is a matter of believing in it. I think we must look at the hard evidence of what is there. At the moment we are looking at the national curriculum. The mapping of the national curriculum against our current curriculum is still occurring. We do not have what that final curriculum is, but we are looking at four subjects in the national curriculum that is being rolled out at the moment, and they are English, maths, science and history. It seems from the information that I have had so far, and I have had only preliminary information, that certainly in science, and probably in maths, there is an expectation that those subjects in year 7 would be taught by specialist teachers—that is, in high schools, as they are for the bulk of children. I am looking at all those issues. There is a whole range of issues to do with year 7s. Of course, the thing a year 7 student studying science in a secondary school would have that we do not have in our primary schools is specialist facilities. I therefore venture to say that a lot of those parents who are moving their children at year 6 into non-government secondary school see the benefits, some of which I have touched on in my comments this morning. It is a major issue for us to look at. I know it is an issue that the member looked at when he was in government. I think the decision that his government made, given the information that was available at the time, was a fair decision, but the landscape has changed dramatically since he was in government, particularly with the non-government schools deciding that they would put year 7s in high school and now with the national curriculum.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

We are seriously looking at the range of issues and analysing those, and waiting for the final analysis of the national curriculum. When I get that, I will be considering it.

[10.40 am]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will finish with this subject, because I have had a good go. I am alarmed, quite frankly, by that figure of 15.9 per cent. I know it is reflected in my community. Parents in my electorate are very happy with the primary system, but they are very concerned about what happens in secondary schools. That is not a reflection on secondary teachers or the schools, but there is a general view that what they expect from secondary education is not going to be delivered to their kids, so they are voting in droves; and that figure underlines that. I know the minister has said that she is looking into it, but what is going to happen in the next 12 months to address this very serious bleed of students from primary school? I do not want to come to next year's estimates and ask the same question and find that that figure has increased but nothing has been done to address it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Although we are talking about the figures for only the past year or two, what the member is calling the bleed from government primary schools to non-government secondary schools is a continuing trend that started quite some years ago. I do not think it has happened overnight or in the past year or two; it has been happening for some time.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I think that the minister will find that that figure is much higher in particular areas in Western Australia. I have heard that in some places nearly 50 per cent of year 6 and 7 students in primary school are going into a non-state secondary school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We have to be a bit careful that we are talking about these figures in the context of the half-cohort moving from primary to secondary schools. That must have a big influence. There are schools in the metropolitan area that have virtually no year 7 students. Last year one school in my electorate had one year 7 student, and there were other schools that had no year 7 students. The greatest shift was not in the country from government primary schools to non-government secondary schools. The greatest shift has been not necessarily in those areas in the metropolitan area that we would expect the shift to be in. A lot of low-fee non-government schools have proved to be very attractive to parents as well.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Midland.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Before the member for Midland asks her question, can we decide on the time for a short break, please?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Eleven o'clock?

The CHAIRMAN: At 11 o'clock for five minutes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is fine.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I go back to the three per cent efficiency dividend targets, which I have referred to previously, that are listed in the table of major spending changes on page 356 of the *Budget Statements*. Basically, it explains that the efficiency dividend shortfall from the current financial year is being distributed across the forward estimate years. Last year, the minister had some three per cent targets that were in the budget papers. For 2010–11 it was \$96.344 million, for 2011–12 it was \$99.303 million, and for 2012–13 it was \$104.687 million. They are considerable amounts of money. The minister implied in her earlier answer to my question that the three per cent dividends are now embedded in the budget. Can the minister explain whether those targets are still in place and what specific areas will be cut?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The three per cent dividend is now built into the bottom line of the education department budget. As the member knows, it has been very difficult to find those savings because, as I indicated earlier, upwards of 90 per cent of the education budget is directly related to salaries or direct services to schools, so it is extremely difficult to find three per cent out of 10 per cent of such a large budget.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the minister still doing it or not?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will be continuing with it, and in a moment I will ask Mr Leaf to elaborate for the member. The three per cent dividend is now incorporated into annual estimates, while, at the same time, we will be continually looking for efficiencies in the budget as we move forward. Those are the areas of efficiencies that we are still trying to identify.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Last year the minister cut the number of participation officers by 50, and the number of teacher assistants and so forth. What is the story on those positions now? We appointed 100 participation officers, and this government cut out 50 last year. Is the minister going to cut out any this year?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No; there are no plans to further cut participation personnel.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Are school closures or amalgamations on the agenda?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are no school closures before me at the moment. Planning is a continuous process, with changes in demographics and old schools needing to be rebuilt; there is a range of possibilities. For instance, there are two old primary schools in Merredin. They are being combined and rebuilt on the high school site so that there will be a K–12 configuration in Merredin. There are planning and changes all the time. I am very keen to see—we are continuously doing it—very thorough planning of what is required right across the state, particularly revisiting non-metropolitan areas to see how we can best provide what needs to be provided. For instance, after talking with the Minister for Regional Development, some royalties for regions funding will be available in the coming years to look at how best to configure and consolidate the provision of very good residential facilities in country areas. The residential facility in Albany, which was planned under the previous government, will soon be ready to be opened. We are looking at some work on the facilities in Merredin and Esperance. We recognise, particularly with the increase in the school leaving age, the need to have good facilities for young people, particularly those who live in the country who are tertiary bound to study in larger centres.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I ask specifically about the school closures? I understand that in Kingsley there are three primary schools. Is the minister looking at amalgamating those three schools into two or closing one of the schools; or have schools in other suburbs been identified?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No; there is no plan at all to look at Kingsley.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There are other cuts that were part of the three per cent cuts announced last year and some are ongoing. Students doing Schools of Isolated and Distance Education courses are now being charged \$1 000 per subject. Is it the minister's plan to maintain that \$1 000 charge to schools, or is she looking at increasing that figure, perhaps closer to the \$4 000 figure that she has previously said is the actual cost?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member will recall that it was pointed out in the debate last week that some students studying at senior high schools who undertake a SIDE course are being double-funded. They are funded when they enrol in a SIDE course, and the cost of that course is \$4 000. They are fully funded through staffing and through school grants at their school, so they are double-funded.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can the minister give a commitment that that fee will stay at \$1 000?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Let me finish my answer. That \$1 000 has been imposed only on senior high schools. There is no plan to change that \$1 000. It is only 25 per cent of the cost. That means that each of those students is being funded at a far greater rate than are other students in senior high schools. Some overlap is needed so that there can be supervision of those students studying SIDE courses and for other reasons.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Last year as part of the three per cent budget cuts, the minister removed the \$100 subsidy for student fees. Are there any proposals to impose greater fees on parents? For example, will the minister lift the cap of the dollar figure that schools are allowed to charge for school fees?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are no further plans along those lines.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is there any further assistance planned for either parents who find it difficult to pay the fees or schools that have a low collection rate? Last year the minister provided me with some figures on the collection rates of school fees for the previous calendar year. Is the minister again able to provide that information?

[10.50 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand that the collection rates of fees have remained stable. If there was an issue with the level of contribution from parents through those fees, such an issue would be looked at on a school-by-school basis. That was stated at last year's estimates committee.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister said that she would look at it last year. Have any schools benefited from the minister looking at this issue?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No school has sought the assistance of the department because of that change.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: A school in the minister's electorate of Churchlands collects the best part of \$2 million. As revealed by the minister last year, some schools in that area collect \$1.8 million or \$1.9 million. Some schools collect only a few hundred thousand dollars. Is the minister saying that there has been no rebalancing taking into account student numbers at each school?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to provide more information about this.

Ms S. O'Neill: If a school finds through the collection of fees that it is in financial difficulty, it has the capacity to approach the department to seek assistance. We have had no such action from schools. The member must remember that the school fee collection is only one small part of a school's total funding allocation. Schools in low socioeconomic areas, which are the ones that have the greatest difficulty in collecting fees, are funded in various ways to address some of the gap or the high cost of students.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: What are those various ways? The director general is making a lot of generalisations. I would like to know how schools in lower socioeconomic areas, which have greater difficulty in collecting fees, are compensated.

Ms S. O'Neill: They get greater staff allocations. Our staffing allocations have a socioeconomic index factor. They also have a distance and Aboriginality factor. The school support funding, which goes directly to schools so that they can run additional and supplementary programs, is recognised by the SEI. The schools that have a low SEI receive additional funding and additional staffing for that purpose. In addition, if they have financial difficulty through the low collection of fees, they have been told that they can approach the department to seek assistance.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Have any further programs or additional funding been put in place since the \$100 subsidy was removed? Most of the things that the director general mentioned have been in place for years. It is the same pool of money. The schools that have collected and lost that \$100 per student do not have additional programs for subsidy. From what the minister and the director general have said, it is a matter of schools approaching the department and pointing out that they are having difficulty. I want to know whether the minister or the department are aware of any instances in which children have been disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their parents' inability or failure to pay school fees. For example, I refer to a child who has not been able to take a certain subject choice or to a child who has had to attend a home economics class without being able to make what the other children were making.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No such cases have been brought to my attention. It is worth remembering that if a student's parents hold a healthcare card, they receive \$235 in assistance —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister pointed that out during last year's estimates committee.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is worth pointing out again, because the member is talking generally about low SEI schools. It is likely that in a low SEI school a number of parents are eligible for the fees to be paid in that way. No new mechanisms have been put in place.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I also asked whether the minister or her department were aware of any instances in which a student had been disadvantaged.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I said that none had been brought to my attention.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Have any instances been brought to the attention of the department? Have any children been disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their parents' inability or failure to pay school fees?

Ms S. O'Neill: No such cases have been brought to my attention.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to the third dot point on page 357 of the *Budget Statements* and also to the first and second line items. What funds have been provided to schools to enable them to make decisions that reflect their own needs and aspirations as well as those of their local community?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: One of the things that we looked at and that has been in place for some time—I am very keen to see more of this in our schools—is the ability of schools to allocate their school grant to the area that they think it is best placed. All schools have the flexibility to direct their funds to specific programs, projects or needs. The school grant is calculated using a number of different funding factors to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by their location or isolation. Those are two very important factors. In 2009–10, more than \$100 million was distributed to public schools through the school grants. Within that grant they received an allocation known as the school support programs resource allocation—or SSPRA. That allocation is for the behaviour management and discipline program. Funding is given to those schools that need to engage extra support behaviour management and discipline, such as a school psychologist. That funding is also for the learning support program, the literacy and numeracy program, the primary science project program and the priority country areas program. Combining those school support programs into a single funding line means that schools have more flexibility. They are not given an amount and told what to spend it on. They have the flexibility to spend the total amount in a way that is the most appropriate for their school. The provision of that funding for five areas in a single line allocation provides additional flexibility to schools, as I have indicated. Prior to this flexibility schools received additional funds from a variety of state and commonwealth sources with

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

varying reporting requirements. It has simplified the administration of those funds for schools. Of course, time is of the essence in schools and is very important. The school grant fund includes the provision of information and communications technology resources in schools. Of course, these days ICT resources are fundamental in schools. In 2010, \$18.3 million will be provided to schools for the purpose of managing their ICT resources. Schools can use that funding to purchase computers and other technologies to ensure that students have the latest resources that they require to learn and that teachers have the latest resources that they require to teach the teaching program. Schools that have been identified to participate in the smarter schools program also receive additional funding. In 2010 we distributed \$3.1 million to 40 schools under the low socioeconomic status national partnership. A further \$3.1 million has been distributed to 66 schools through the literacy and numeracy partnership and further funding will be provided to schools in the second half of this year and beyond. Other schools will come on-stream in both the low socioeconomic status national partnership and the literacy–numeracy partnership. The schools that require additional funding have been identified and are already receiving that money. They can make the best decision for their schools and have the flexibility to decide how to spend that money. Schools with specific needs are also considered in this way. A range of funding is provided to schools to support vocational education and training in schools activity. Schools with eligible special needs are supported through the provision of additional full-time equivalents and are given a cash allocation to ensure that their special needs are met. All these grants are provided as cash in the bank, which gives each school the maximum flexibility to allocate those funds to the specific programs that they choose.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I refer to the second dot point on page 357 of the *Budget Statements* regarding school attendance and ask the minister to provide information about the initiatives to improve the rate of school attendance.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member may recall that in August last year the Auditor General brought down a report that contained a number of recommendations for the department.

The CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt, minister, but members indicated that they wanted a 10-minute break.

Meeting suspended from 11.00 to 11.10 am

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Before the break I was talking about the Auditor General's report last year on school attendance. That was followed in the latter part of the year with community consultation involving schools, parents and others about attendance measures. A week or so ago we officially released the Better attendance: Brighter futures strategy, although much of the work on improving the attendance rate had already started. As I said very early on in today's session, two things are important for schools, the first of which is attendance. It is one thing to enrol children in a school but we must make sure that they attend. Unless they attend, they will not learn and get the best chances in life. Attendance is something that concerns schools and parents equally. Parents have a legal obligation to make sure that their children are enrolled in, and attend, school. I will mention two or three very important things that we are looking at. We must make sure that every child who is of compulsory school age is enrolled in year 1. We are not sure of the percentage of children who are not enrolled, but in any one year some children are not enrolled in a school. Through working with Centrelink, we will follow up and make sure that all children are enrolled in school. We have identified 40 schools with low attendance rates. A quite complex range of criteria was used to identify those schools. They will receive funding, and some already have received funding, to assist them in working on the issue of poor attendance rates. Often the attendance rate is not good for schools with a high percentage of Aboriginal children. It is in those schools in particular that we are looking to make sure that children attend school. We have a tri-border arrangement with the Northern Territory and South Australia. Some children who belong to transient populations move from one school to another quite regularly. We can trace the enrolment and attendance rate of those children so that they can attend school when they move.

That trial has been in place for a number of years. I have had one early discussion with the non-government sector, which runs our own remote schools, about how we can put that sort of program in place in this state. We want to be able to track children in remote communities, who are often transient and may attend one school for a short while and then move to another community, so that they can enrol in a school in that community and continue their education. In some cases these children move from a remote community in which there is a government school to a remote community in which there is a non-government school. I would like to see us track those children across the sectors so that they are given the best opportunities as well.

We know that in terms of learning, children need to attend school 90 per cent of the time, or more, to be successful. We are aiming to increase that. On any one day, over 90 per cent of children attend our schools. We know that just over one-third of school absences are unexplained. We need to work on that. We also need to make sure that people know that this is not just about schools. It is also about parents, and it is about communities. We need to ensure that if shopkeepers and other people in the community—particularly in smaller

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

communities, which often have a greater ability to do this—see children who are not attending school, they work with the department and the other authorities in those towns to make sure that those children do attend school.

Mr P. ABETZ: I refer to page 362, under the heading “Works in Progress”, line one, the allocation of \$53 million for a new high school in Butler. Butler is a rapidly growing area. Will the minister please advise on the scope of that work and the time line for that project.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for the question. As the member will understand, a huge building program is underway at the moment with the Building the Education Revolution funds, as well as the funds injected into this area by this government. This year, we will be spending over \$1 billion on developing capital works in our schools. There is an amount of \$53 million for a new high school in Butler, to be allocated over four financial years. Of course as the member will know, there is rapid and unprecedented growth in that northern metropolitan area of Perth. This school will be located on a secondary school site that, of course, the department of education owns. The government is delivering this project as an election commitment. This project will provide a state-of-the-art secondary education facility for the communities in the Butler area. The school will include, most importantly, an education support centre for students with special needs, particularly catering for a variety of children with low to high-care disabilities, so that they can attend what will be their local high school. The first stage is expected to be completed in 2012 and to be open for the school year in 2013. Stage 1 will comprise an administration building, shared by the high school and education support centre staff. The first stage will also include the education support centre, with four general learning areas, a therapy pool, a gym, a life skills room, a nurse and treatment room, and associated staff areas. In stage one of the secondary school, there will be eight general learning areas, with activities spaces, student services, a café, a library resource centre with staff, and a common room. It will also include the specialist areas that we would expect to find in a school such as this, with eight science learning areas, three food and textile studios, a design and technology facility for mechatronics, a graphics studio, woodwork, metalwork and composite workshops, and a performing arts centre. All these things indicate the wide range of programs that schools are expected to provide. Students are given an enormously wide choice these days. Things have changed very rapidly, even in the past 15 or 20 years, in what we are expected to offer and what we wish to offer. Part of that is the changing of the school leaving age. That has meant that we want to cater to a very wide range of possibilities for young people to give them those choices. Sporting facilities will also be provided, including change rooms, cricket pitches and so on, and landscaping for the site. The site will be master-planned to facilitate the provision of a second stage and transportable classroom accommodation that may be required in the future in this incredibly fast-growing area.

[11.20 am]

Mr P. ABETZ: Will the school commence with a full spectrum of classes, or just begin with year 8 and gradually work up? In what year will the first enrolments be taken?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is in two stages. In stage 1, year 8 will be the first year and the years will move through, which is the common pattern for a new high school.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to page 356 and the line item “Maintenance Funding Transfer to Building Management and Works”, under “Major Spending Changes”. Can the minister please explain this item? Does it refer to school maintenance? If so, is the implication that funding will be transferred to Building Management and Works in the Department of Treasury and Finance, and that that unit is now responsible for school maintenance?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr Leaf to answer this question, because I think it is the transfer of funds to Building Management and Works that the member is asking about.

Mr J. Leaf: Yes, that is correct. Building Management and Works is now contained within the Department of Treasury and Finance. In previous years a fee has been charged for Building Management and Works to manage each project, and we have released those funds during the course of being billed for completion of projects, contract works or maintenance works. Those funds are now to be retained by the Department of Treasury and Finance’s Building Management and Works directorate, and it will manage the release of those funds on its own behalf. The change to the financial statements that the member refers to on page 356, where the maintenance funding is being transferred to the Building Management and Works directorate in the Department of Treasury and Finance, represents what was previously billed to the Department of Education on a month-by-month basis. It will now be retained and paid for directly by Building Management and Works.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to page 370 and “School Development and Improvement Special Purpose Account”. It refers to an amount budgeted for school maintenance. How does that relate to what we have just heard? It is the amount budgeted for school maintenance. I am wondering how these items are linked now that maintenance has been effectively transferred.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I see; “renovation of school facilities”. I will ask either Mr Thom or Mr Leaf to answer.

Mr J. Thom: The short answer to the question is that there are essentially a couple of components to maintenance. There is a fairly significant amount of money held centrally to handle, for example, breakdown repairs and that sort of thing, but schools also get a small component of maintenance funding for weekend vandalism, window repairs and that sort of thing. The bulk of the maintenance funding sits inside the recurrent budget, and the level of maintenance funding has been fairly consistent over the past few years.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: We have heard mention of vandalism and broken windows. Is the minister able to tell us the average turnaround time for repairs within a school?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is this still on the same budget line item?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr Thom to answer the question.

Mr J. Thom: I will have to take the question on notice. Averages vary depending upon the location of the school.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Can we have the lowest and highest figures, maybe? We can average it out ourselves.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will have to get that information for the member. Mr Thom can correct me if I am wrong, but there are some instances in which schools seek to have minor repair and maintenance work done internally, while other repairs, such as leaking roofs et cetera, are dealt with more centrally, at a district level. Is that correct?

Mr J. Thom: Correct.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not exactly sure what the member is asking for.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I want to know how long it takes to get a broken window fixed or damage from vandalism repaired in a school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Will the member be happy with the longest and shortest times?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: If the minister can give us that now, yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will have to do that as supplementary information.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: In that case, can I have the average times?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will try to get that sorted out for the member in that time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will it be possible to have both the average time and the shortest and longest times?

The CHAIRMAN: Let the member for Girrawheen ask her further question for supplementary information, then if the member for Midland wants something extra, she can add to it.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a final question on the issue of maintenance. Broken windows are obviously replaced, but I want to know what the policy is for repairs to windows that have had graffiti scratched onto them. In my experience they are not replaced, and I want to know why.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I ask Mr Thom to answer the first part of the question.

Mr J. Thom: I was not aware that we were not replacing graffitied windows.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: From scratching.

Mr J. Thom: From scratching?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I suggest the minister visit Rawlinson Primary School in Marangaroo.

Mr J. Thom: I am happy to do that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If the member has a particular issue, I am more than happy to follow it up for her.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am just using that as an example, but I suspect it might be statewide, and that is what I am trying to find out.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will certainly follow up on the example the member has given and look into that issue.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I require information on maintenance and repairs to vandalism, such as graffiti and broken windows in schools. What is the longest time, the shortest time and the average turnaround time to get repairs done in schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I need to check whether it is possible to get that information within the week. The shortest and longest times might be possible, but working out the average across all our 800 schools might be very difficult to provide within a week. Individual schools quite often attend to such repairs, so that would not be centrally held information.

M.M. QUIRK: I ask for the information to the extent that it is available. I have some rudimentary maths so, if necessary, I am sure I can work out the averages.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will do the best we can; it is all very well to scoff and laugh at the fact that each individual school does this.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am not scoffing; it is a serious matter, minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member for Midland was scoffing about individual schools —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If I want to scoff, I will scoff. I did not actually say anything; the minister is just being rude.

The CHAIRMAN: As far as it is available, that information will be provided. That is how I understand it. Did the member for Midland want to add something?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has already responded to my interjection, but I do have a question.

[*Supplementary Information No B26.*]

The CHAIRMAN: We will go to the member for Mandurah, then we will go to the member for Midland.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the full-time equivalent figures shown at the bottom of page 367. I have a couple of questions regarding the current male–female staffing ratio profile for the Department of Education.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Across the entire department?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, particularly focusing on classroom teaching. I am also interested in the male–female ratio of school principals. Over the past 12 months, how many teachers have been assaulted by students or parents?

[11.30 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have some of that information in this form, but if the member wanted it in another form we could go on from here. For district and central offices, the number of female teachers assaulted is 72.2 per cent and males 27.8 per cent; primary schools, females, 84 per cent and males 16 per cent; and secondary schools, females, 58.5 per cent and males, 41.5 per cent; support staff, females, 83.1 per cent and males 16.9 per cent; and the total across all of those is 75 per cent females and 25 per cent males. That is Education Act staff only, so public service staff will not be included in those numbers.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: And what is the figure for the number of teachers in the past 12 months assaulted by students or parents?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There have been a number of requests for these figures. The member for Midland asked in a question on notice for actual assaults. It is hard to know what she means by that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Then in a follow-up question a few weeks later I asked whether the minister could tell me anything. The minister still could not.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It depends on the definition of assault. Two databases are kept on this. One of them is the incident reporting database, in which assaults have a very broad definition, and the other one is the suspension database, in which the definition is a combined category of assault and verbal intimidation. It is very difficult to answer the member's question because of the way the data is collected. It is collected in two ways: for two databases under two definitions.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: First, perhaps the minister can give us the definitions and then the figures she has for each of those definitions.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to give the member the details of the definition.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms S. O'Neill: For the figures on assault, it will depend on how that assault was reported and put onto the database—whether it was a physical or verbal assault and whether it was between student–student or student–teacher. All of those things are reported through the online incident notification system.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Would that be the central online register?

Ms S. O'Neill: Yes, it includes incidents as well as assaults. They report centrally all manner of incidents.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Physical assault and verbal intimidation is seen as one category.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Do we have the numbers for that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not think that we do have those numbers with us. I do not have them in front of me. I have the figures for the other database, which is the suspension database, not the figures for the incident notification system

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can the minister clarify that she cannot give me the figures that are registered under the central register?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will give the member what I have in my hand, which is the number of suspension notices for the school year 2009: physical assault or intimidation of staff, 6.5 per cent or 1 784.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is for 2009. Let me clarify that there were 1 784.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This is the suspension database on which there are 1 784 notices recorded, or 6.5 per cent, for physical assault or intimidation of staff. Physical assault could mean pushing or touching, so it could be a fairly mild form of physical contact or it could be a more dangerous sort of physical assault. We need to be careful. For verbal abuse or harassment of staff there were 5 269 notices, or 19 per cent; and for physical assault or intimidation of other students, there were 8 714 notices, or 32 per cent.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Those figures could represent multiple notices for the same incident and could be attributed to the same person?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: They are notices, not the number of students. The next category is verbal abuse or harassment of students, for which there were 912 notices, or 3.5 per cent; wilful offence against property, 1 093 notices, or four per cent; for violation of school code of conduct, behaviour management plan, classroom or school rules, 7 205 notices, or 26.5 per cent; substance misuse, 363 notices, or 1.5 per cent; illegal substance offences 573 notices, or two per cent; and negative behaviour – other, which is a miscellaneous category, 1 411 notices, or five per cent. One child could get a notice that can include several things; it might be physical assault and intimidation of staff and at the same time verbal abuse and harassment of students and wilful offence against property so it might be counted three times for the one student's suspension. These are very much gross numbers. I am also giving the member numbers according to year group, which he might be interested in.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am happy to receive that as supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member want to receive that by year group as supplementary and this other information also by way of supplementary?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, and can the minister also provide me with details of other figures relating to the matter of assaults and/or suspensions?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member for Mandurah needs to be more specific. What does the member mean by “assault”?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Whatever the minister was going to read out, I will have, thanks!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It sounds like a fishing trip.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister made the offer.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have specifics by year group in my hand. That was the data I had.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister will supply supplementary information on suspensions by year group.

[*Supplementary Information No B27.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister talked about assault and the grouping of intimidation and physical assault, which under the law are both assault, and that is recorded on some sort of incident form within the department. Are all of those incidents reported to police or is there another subset that is reported to the police and is there some way of calling up those incidents for which a report is made to police?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is the member asking me whether the school reports them?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister has given evidence that these incidents—if I can say assault in general, whether it is verbal or physical—are reported in some way on some sort of incident form.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Certainly, but they are not all reported.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: No. I want to know what percentage of those are reported—we have established that not all are reported to police—and is there some database or some entry on the database that indicates which ones are reported to police?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Not that I am aware of, but I ask the director general to elaborate.

Ms S. O'Neill: We have data on when it has been reported to police, but there are many occasions on which we are not informed because individual families or indeed teachers might pursue that outside the school.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Therefore, is a small percentage only reported to police as a general rule by someone from the department?

Ms S. O'Neill: It is a percentage, and I do not have the percentage with me, but not all are reported to police because individuals make that choice themselves.

[11.40 am]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is that something the department has somewhere else? It is not something that the advisers have with them now. Can that information be accessed?

Ms S. O'Neill: It is not readily available.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I think the director general is getting some advice from behind her.

Ms S. O'Neill: No, it is not.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is not recorded.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Not only do they not have it with them, they do not have it at all!

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is it not recorded?

Ms S. O'Neill: We have that information if a school has advised on the incident notification database that it has reported an assault to the police. If a school does not advise us of that, that information will not be on the database.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is there no yearly overview or review of whether that is occurring, in terms of contact with the police? For example, is there a section on the form that asks whether the matter has been reported to the police?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: A police officer was seconded to the department last year. I think that police officer does review activity across the year.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: So he will obviously have access to some information on that, which could presumably be provided to us.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not sure of the extent of the information that is available now, as that person started in the department only during last year. I will ask the director general to elaborate on that.

Ms S. O'Neill: If we have any information on incidents reported to the police, we can make an attempt to find that, but that information will be available only if a school has indicated that to us on the form. We will not be able to indicate instances when individuals have gone to the police in their own right. It is an incomplete dataset from that perspective.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I thank the director general. By way of supplementary information, can I request information relating to incidents of assault, both physical and verbal, that have been reported to police and that the department has been made aware of, for the past 12 months?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can I just clarify what that information is? I want to make sure that we can do that in time.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I clarified it while the minister was engaged in a conversation with her advisers.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I apologise for that; I have people talking in one ear and I could not hear the member.

The CHAIRMAN: The member has asked for information on any incidents of assault for the past 12 months, both physical and verbal, that have been reported to the police and that the department has a record of.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am told that information is recorded once police have become involved in a case, and not when something has just been reported to the police; in other words, when there has been police involvement. Something might be reported to the police and just left as a report; other things might be reported and police action follows that report. We will give the member what we have.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The evidence we have been given is that the department is aware of incidents when a report has been made on that form. That is the information I want.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If a report has been made.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Yes. I understand that the minister is not responsible for whether the police decide to do anything.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will try to provide that information.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Thank you, minister.

[*Supplementary Information No B28.*]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I refer to page 359 of the *Budget Statements*, which is the page for which the minister has today provided corrections. The figures were apparently corrected on the Department of Treasury and Finance website. The mistakes have been known about since 20 May, yet the Treasurer did not correct them in the Parliament when he had the opportunity to do so. I specifically refer to some figures that have not been corrected on that page; that is, the figures for full-time equivalent employees under point 2, “Secondary Education”. I do not believe that those figures were changed in the corrigendum. There were 12 352 full-time equivalent employees in secondary education in 2008–09, and the department budgeted for 11 993 in 2009–10. The estimated actual figure for 2009–10 is somewhat smaller than the budgeted figure—it is 450 fewer, at 11 543. Last year, the department budgeted to have 11 993 secondary staff, yet the estimated actual figure is 450 fewer than that at 11 543. What is the explanation for that? If we look at the next column for 2010–11, the budget target is 10 680. As I calculate it, that is 863 fewer FTEs than there were for 2009–10. The target for the number of staff working in secondary education in 2010–11 is 10 680. In the last budget Labor struck, 12 352 people were working in the secondary sector. That is a cut of 1 672 FTEs. There will be 1 672 fewer FTEs in secondary education in this state next year than there were just two years ago. I appreciate the issue of the half-year cohort. The figure banded around last year was a reduction of around 500 teachers because of that. The department managed to finish the last financial year with 450 fewer FTEs than intended. That is a further cut to that figure. The impact just over the course of a year is about 863, but over a two-year period it is 1 672. I want an explanation of that. I also want a breakdown of employees, specifically the number of secondary teachers and the number from other employee categories.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think the member will find that the decline from the estimated actual figure to the budget target is explained by the half cohort. If we look at the primary —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is a reduction of 863 people and not the 500 that had previously been spoken about.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This is FTEs, not people.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If the member looks at the figures for primary education on the same page, she will see that, in the main, the difference in the number of FTEs in secondary education is offset by the number in primary education.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister herself said that there has been a big increase in kindergarten and so forth.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That occurred last year. I will ask Mr Leaf to add some comments.

Mr J. Leaf: The calculation of FTEs for secondary and primary education is based on student enrolment numbers. A staffing formula allocates FTEs to each particular year group from pre-primary right through to year 12.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the minister able to provide the staffing formula for this year and the previous two years that I have been referring to?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We can supply those but, for instance, class sizes, which are a major part of that formula, are part of the teachers’ agreement, so they do not change. There has been no change to the staffing formula anyway, but we can certainly provide that.

The CHAIRMAN: Right.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry, I have not had the question answered. I asked for a breakdown of the number of employees under the figures for FTEs—how many are secondary teachers and how many fit into other categories? Are they all secondary teachers, or are some school psychologists, chaplains or teachers' assistants?

Mr J. Leaf: All staff employed by the department are allocated to those two service outputs.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I be provided with a breakdown of the staff numbers in the budget target of 10 680 and in the 2008–09 figure of 12 352?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have some of that information now. This is for FTEs in this school year.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will those figures add up to 12 352 and 10 680? It is reasonable for me to ask for an exact breakdown of the employees in each category under the figures provided in the *Budget Statements*.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It cannot be an absolute match because they are taken at different times, but I have some figures that would indicate what the member is asking.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will those figures add up to those total amounts?

[11.50 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The one that is constructed in the budget is the financial FTEs. These are actual FTEs in schools.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I want to know how these figures in the budget papers are comprised. Surely the minister cannot just have dreamt these out of the ether or has some rough figures and a few notes. The minister must be able to specifically say what people's jobs are.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We can certainly provide as supplementary information how those figures in the budget papers on page 359 are made up. The member is asking for the secondary —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes. Can I just clarify, Mr Chairman, I am asking for a breakdown of how the figure of 12 352 actual full-time equivalents employed in secondary education in 2008–09 was comprised, and the categories of employees—that is, teachers, teacher assistants, psychologists and any other possible category that comprise that figure—and also a breakdown of the budget target of 10 680 FTEs. I appreciate that is the target, but I would like to know how that target is comprised and a breakdown of secondary teachers, teacher assistants and so forth, as per the other request. That is supplementary information. I then had a further question relating to it.

The CHAIRMAN: Are we clear on the information that is requested?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No B29.*]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: In the Liberal Party's election policy, to which the minister was referring previously, there were targets for numbers of school psychologists, chaplains and police in schools. Would the minister be able to advise us how many of each of those categories she has managed to employ at this time and also how many she intends being able to appoint by, say, the end of the year?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member is quite correct in terms of school psychologists. The undertaking was 50 additional school psychologists over four years. I understand from a conversation I had in just the past week or so that the recruitment of school psychologists is on track. It has been very difficult over several years to actually find school psychologists. It is still difficult to recruit people into some country areas and regional areas. That has been an ongoing problem for many years. As of 30 May 2010, there were 217.8 FTE school psychologists. That is a headcount of 288 employees who make up those FTEs and who were on the payroll. That compares with the 2009 year average of 207.6 FTEs and a 2008 year average of 204.9 FTEs. Therefore, currently there is an increase of 12.9 FTEs since we came to government, and we are on track to employ the 40. There is now quite a database of people who are interested in being school psychologists. Certainly only a few years ago that was very difficult to establish.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: At the end of this year how many additional school psychologist FTEs will the minister have in place?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I cannot say how many we would have in place, but we will be aiming to continue to recruit at that rate so that we reach the target of fifty over four years.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am asking what is the target for the end of this year?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The target is 13.4 additional school psychologists from between the election and the end of this year.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: And the chaplains and the police?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have the chaplain numbers with me. We have been trialling a very interesting and important trial with the police. It is the first one at Gilmore College. At the suggestion of the Commissioner of Police, we have been engaging with police and citizens youth clubs. I think the first one is Rockingham PCYC for Gilmore. Police officers from the PCYC are involved.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is there more than one police officer at the Rockingham PCYC.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not sure, but there is certainly a sergeant, because I met him.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister used the plural; that is all. I was aware of only one being there.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Maybe there is just the one person. He has of course got extensive experience with young people. I think this suggestion of the Commissioner of Police was excellent in taking people with that expertise and their being engaged in schools with kids. If my memory serves me correctly, that began in the second half of last year at Gilmore. I have not had details of how that has gone, but it is continuing. Depending on how that arrangement continues and the relative success of it, we would be very interested with the police engaging more with PCYCs. I think it is an excellent way to go with the expertise that is held in the PCYCs. There is also a police officer seconded to the department.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I just get some clarification on the Gilmore College one. Is the police officer actually based at the school or not?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: He spends some of his time there. I do not know the detail of that. He is not based there but is engaged in programs at the school.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: To clarify that, are there any plans at all to fulfil the Liberal Party election promise of school-based police officers? Is there a single school in the state that is likely to get a school-based police officer or, on the basis of the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police, has the minister backed away from that Liberal Party election commitment?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think in looking at the issue it was decided that the expertise that was available through PCYC officers was an excellent way for us to proceed. We have done that. We are looking at that as a demonstration of how we might proceed in the future. That is as far as we have got with police officers involved in schools. The director general is continuing to have discussions and meetings. I understand she is meeting with the commissioner next week about the very issue that the member is raising.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So it is a broken promise. What about the chaplains?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is not a broken promise. It is looking at the best way to provide it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister promised one thing and is delivering another. What the minister is talking about was being delivered for years under different arrangements of cooperation between schools and police. There are lots of examples of lots of things being looked into and trialled.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand this is a new arrangement with the Rockingham PCYC to involve that police officer with young people.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So 18 months on, one trial of something that was not promised. Do not tell me that the minister has delivered.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay. Member for Kingsley.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We are waiting to hear about the chaplains. The minister has not even mentioned the chaplains yet.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is very hard to get a word in edgewise sometimes.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, do you want to speak?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As of May 2010, there were 256 chaplains working in 304 public schools; that is, in 39 per cent of all public schools. As the member would be aware, it is up to each and every public school to make the decision about whether or not it has a chaplain involved in the school. The reason I do not have the number is that the chaplains are not employed directly by schools. They are placed in schools but they are employed by

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

YouthCARE. There is a contract between the department and YouthCARE to engage and provide chaplains to schools.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Does the department know what YouthCARE has managed to do?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is a service agreement between the department and YouthCARE. The new service level agreement, which was signed quite recently, includes some additional things that the member might be interested in. It includes the appointment, training, induction and accreditation of chaplains, enabling all public schools to have access to school chaplaincy services—that is one part of the agreement; an internship for Indigenous chaplains to service metropolitan, rural and remote schools; and a cohort of 60 appropriately trained chaplains to support schools with critical incidents. However, all chaplains will undertake foundational training in mental health issues. There is additional support to chaplains in rural and remote areas; limited seed funding to establish chaplaincy positions in high-need areas; an independent evaluation of the efficacy of the school chaplaincy program operating in Western Australian public schools; and a trial of information and communication technology strategies to deliver services and training to chaplains in rural and remote areas. These are all new elements of the agreement with YouthCARE.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Has that just been signed in the past few weeks? What does the minister mean by “recently”?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am informed it was in the past couple of months. Two hundred and ninety-three public schools also received support through the national school chaplaincy program, with the majority receiving maximum funding of \$20 000 per annum. I do not have the comparative figures because chaplaincies are organised through YouthCARE.

[12 noon]

[Mr J.M. Francis took the chair.]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has said that there are 256 chaplains. How is that figure operative in 304 public schools? Does that compare with the figure for 2008?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have that figure. It is an increase, but I do not have the figure with me.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Would the minister be able to provide by way of supplementary information the number of chaplains and the number of schools they were servicing in 2008?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, we will get that information for the member.

[*Supplementary Information No B30.*]

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to the third line item from the bottom of the table on page 356, “Royalties for Regions — Clontarf Colleges”. Clontarf Foundation colleges have certainly achieved some benefits, but I am not sure that the educational outcomes have been as strong as they should be. Will this funding be able to improve educational outcomes, as well as football outcomes?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand that there are nine schools with Clontarf academies. As the member has suggested, the Clontarf football academies provide a way for Aboriginal students to engage with their schools through sport. The important point is that with any such program, not only should students engage with their school and attend more often, but also there should be improvements in educational attainment. It is a way of looking at closing the gap in retention and attendance and, hopefully, academic achievement. We have nine academies at the moment covering 14 schools, so some of those academies are at more than one school. Under the royalties for regions program, new academies will be set up in Carnarvon, Newman, Northam, Wyndham, Katanning, Roebourne–Karratha, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing—areas that have schools with high Aboriginal attendance. It is interesting to note that attendance for Aboriginal males at the academy host schools is higher than the state average. Certainly, so far we have seen increased attendance. However, we do not have much evidence—if any—of increased academic attainment. I understand that in the new agreement that has been signed, such criteria have been added to the agreement with the Clontarf Foundation. Attendance is the first step; the next step is to see increased attainment. The new programs that will be rolled out in those eight locations are in addition to the existing 14 schools. There are some good things that have happened that I think are worth reporting. Twenty-eight of the 54 Clontarf academy year 12 students achieved a Western Australian Certificate of Education in 2009—that is just over half of those students. It should be noted, however, that the WACE achievement is not necessarily the primary goal of programs offered by Clontarf. Last year 861 young people were enrolled and 27.6 per cent of the students achieved some qualifications. Most training is focused on skills acquisition, combined with work preparation and employment skills. My goal, as Minister for Education, is to see that attainment increase at a fairly fast pace. We must remember that many of these students would not have attended school previously without this program. To that extent, it has been pretty successful in increasing

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

school attendance for this group of young males. We are very keen to see it succeed in the future as well. The royalties for regions funding will help with that.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I refer to the seventh dot point on page 357. In response to the government's commitment to meet the needs of students with a disability, will the minister provide information on the review of Schools Plus, please?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Most certainly. I will make some comments and then I will ask the director general to also make some comments. As the member knows, Schools Plus funding has been allocated in the past to schools for students with particular disabilities and categories of disabilities that fit a diagnosis. There are some areas in which children need extra help that do not fall under Schools Plus. During 2009, the Schools Plus processes and procedures were reviewed. There was a lot of criticism, and I am sure that every member here today would have heard the criticism that it was a pretty cumbersome process whereby schools needed to apply and reapply in great detail for funding from year to year. Those processes and procedures have been reviewed. It is not surprising that that review indicated that the processes could be streamlined somewhat for those students. A new process has been developed. Students with a disability will be allocated resources without the requirement of a lengthy reapplication. I am sure that everyone will welcome that, particularly parents and schools, as well as members of Parliament.

An online checklist has been developed and that online checklist has greatly reduced the time and workload of teachers and other school staff. I am sure that the member has had the same conversations that I have had with principals who are concerned about the amount of time that was being taken to make these applications. When a student's eligibility is confirmed, the appropriate resource is allocated without the need for reapplication once the initial funding has been sought and received. If a school determines that the resource is inadequate, because, obviously, children's needs change over time, the online checklist can be filled in. I will ask the director general to add any comments she may wish to about the new process and how it will benefit children in schools.

Ms S. O'Neill: The streamlining of the process has led to a substantial reduction in teacher and administration workload. Schools do not need to repeat, year after year, the application for additional funding. Schools receive funding to support students with learning difficulties in their own right. Schools Plus is additional funding that we will put more money into this year. Not only has the new process streamlined the administration of it, but also it is provided in such a way that there is greater flexibility for the school to make decisions about how that resourcing is used, thereby reducing the demand on parents and medical professionals to repeat processes year after year. It is a streamlining that parents, principals, teachers and professionals are very happy about. Certainly, our schools are very pleased to have the bureaucratic nature of the previous process streamlined.

[12.10 pm]

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Has the number of categories been increased?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As I understand it, the number of categories has not changed. The director general might wish to comment on that.

Ms S. O'Neill: The number of categories has not increased. There are fluctuations from year to year in the percentages of each of those eligibility groups and the number of students who fall in them. The categories remain the same as they did last year.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to transportable classrooms under the heading "New Works" on page 364 of the *Budget Statements*. How many transportable classrooms are currently in use in government schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr Thom to provide the figure. Given the Building the Education Revolution funding in primary schools, there will be a dramatic decrease in the number of transportables on primary school sites.

Mr J. Thom: Currently there are 2 855 transportable buildings and that includes classrooms and other forms of transportable buildings, such as science facilities and other specialist buildings.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: How many were in use in May 2008 and May 2009?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr Thom if he is able to answer that question.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister can use her discretion to ask her adviser to answer that question because it is not specific to this year's budget. However, I will allow it.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The question relates to the evidence just given in case the Chairman is under any misapprehension.

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member said May 2009. That coincides with this budget. So at the time of the budget in 2008 and 2009, the member wants to know how many were in use. We will try our very best to provide the member with that information.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the minister agree to provide the information as mentioned?

[*Supplementary Information No B31.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is the allocation for transportable classrooms for purchase or location–relocation costs or both?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: My guess is that it would be for both.

Mr J. Thom: It is all combined in one.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: If both, what is the breakdown between purchase and location–relocation costs?

Mr J. Thom: I will need to provide an answer by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the minister agree to provide the information as mentioned?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will provide the information for 2009.

[*Supplementary Information No B32.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Given that the \$4.5 million allocation for 2009-10 was not fully exhausted and has been carried over with another \$4.5 million allocation on new works—giving a total of more than \$8.5 million on transportable classrooms this year—will there be a greater than usual increase in the number of transportable classrooms this financial year?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: My guess is that there will be fewer because BER classrooms will replace transportables at primary schools and that will make the need for transportables unnecessary. I will ask Mr Thom to clarify that.

Mr J. Thom: What the minister said is correct. In the forthcoming six to 12 months we anticipate that a very reasonable proportion of transportable classrooms will be replaced by permanent structures under the Building the Education Revolution program. However, in doing that our cost of moving transportables will correspondingly increase. In some instances—possibly in schools in the member’s electorate—the member may have seen —

Ms M.M. QUIRK: We cannot get them in my electorate. That is another issue.

Mr J. Thom: We will have plenty of spares soon. In some instances to ensure that a permanent building on a school site is situated in the most sensible place we have had to move transportables out of the way—for example, they have been relocated to the school oval—whilst the permanent works are undertaken. The kids use the transportables but once the job is finished they are decanted into permanent facilities. If the school has no further use for the transportables, there is a cost to move them off.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: A number of requests for transportables are not met. What are the criteria for the allocation of transportable classrooms?

Mr J. Thom: Transportables are allocated on the basis of known requests and need with some advice about priorities from the district offices. I expect that subsequent to Building the Education Revolution we will have a surplus.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: That is good to hear.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the government for deciding to build Meadow Springs primary school, which will open in 2012. I refer to the first dot point on page 360 of the *Budget Statements*. Has the minister decided on the future of North Mandurah Primary School? Does she have a time line? There are obviously potential impacts for North Mandurah Primary. I receive phone calls every day asking about the overall future of North Mandurah Primary. I am aware that the minister is yet to make a decision. When will that decision be made?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I hope that a decision will be made fairly soon. As the member would understand from discussions that we have had, when we start talking about one school in an area, we end up talking about a number of schools in the area. We are considering the configuration of all the schools in the area. We have made a number of visits to that area and we have had a number of discussions about this issue. I hope that a decision will be made in the near future.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The first line item on page 356 refers to additional funding for education assistants, cleaners and gardeners and to an enterprise bargaining agreement. Has an agreement been reached with that sector of workers? If not, when is an agreement expected to be reached?

Chairman; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Tony Simpson; Ms
Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Peter Abetz; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Margaret Quirk

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The commissioner has not handed down his decision. In fact, in the last week of May further submissions were made.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Is it intended that there be a change in the conditions of employment? For example, will there be a contracting out of gardening and cleaning work?

[12.20 pm]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. The policy position has not changed.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If an agreement has been reached and it includes a financial contribution by the department greater than that shown in the budget, will the minister either go back to Treasury or the Treasurer to ask for additional funds or will it be absorbed as part of the overall budget?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I would expect to go back to cabinet about that matter.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Before I ask a question, I seek some clarification from the Chair. We have the Department of Education Services and Curriculum Council divisions to deal with and some members are waiting to get to tourism. Are we discussing Education Services and the Curriculum Council as part of the Department of Education division, or will the Chair put the appropriation for the Department of Education division first?

The CHAIRMAN: We are required to do them as separate divisions. I am guided by opposition members about how much time is spent on each division. I am aware that just 40 minutes is remaining.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can we move to the Department of Education Services?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can I just add to this? It is a totally different department with different staff.

The CHAIRMAN: We would have to treat that as a separate division.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I was just being polite with the Chair.

The appropriation was recommended.