

MEADOW SPRINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Grievance

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [9.33 am]: I am very pleased to rise to present a grievance to my very good friend the Minister for Education. My grievance is about a critical issue for my electorate, particularly the northern localities of Mandurah. I know the minister is well aware of the tremendous growth that has occurred in the City of Mandurah over the last number of decades, but particularly over the last five to 10 years. Our population within the municipal boundary of Mandurah has doubled. In fact, over the past five years the population growth has been reported as being up to four per cent annually. There has been massive growth.

Much of that growth has occurred in the two key corridors of the northern area and the southern area. The southern area is the member for Dawesville's electorate. I want to focus on the northern area today, but I remind the house that during our time in government, two new state schools were constructed and opened in the southern area of Mandurah. They were the Ocean Road Primary School and the South Halls Head Primary School in the Dawesville electorate; also stage 2 of the Mandurah Senior College was completed.

But it has been very clear, in the last two years in particular, that the northern area of Mandurah has grown very, very rapidly. We already have a very large suburb known as Meadow Springs, but the areas to the west of Meadow Springs, including San Remo, the new Madora Bay development, the old Madora Bay locality, and the very, very fast-growing Lakelands suburb to the north, are seeing a burgeoning population. I want to highlight to the minister that this growth in population is very much in the young family category. The predominant demographic buying homes in the Lakelands-Meadow Springs area is young families. Based on the population demographic, the former Minister for Education committed a re-elected Labor government to building a school at Meadow Springs. But I also want to highlight to the minister another issue that I think is important for the government to consider.

There is no state primary school north of Gordon Road, which is the major east-west link in Mandurah, or the Mandurah bypass road. There is no state school currently servicing the significant population within that locality. The closest primary school is North Mandurah Primary School, which is further south on the other side of Gordon Road. When we consider that Gordon Road and the Mandurah bypass cater for over 30 000 vehicles a day, the minister can understand that these localities that I am talking about are effectively hemmed in by major arterial roads. The situation will worsen when the Perth-Bunbury highway opens in a few months. Gordon Road—one of those arterial roads I have mentioned—will be a key distributor road for people coming off the Perth-Bunbury highway to access Mandurah. There will be a massive increase in traffic on Gordon Road. Until the Mandurah entrance road is constructed—which is still over a year and a half away—it will cause major congestion and safety issues.

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have to keep going because I am running out of time, but I know this issue is a concern of the member's.

The people of Meadow Springs, San Remo, Madora Bay, Lakelands, and even Parklands—a more rural subdivision—must have a primary school in their community.

I read the statistical analysis, which I know the minister has access to, but I will provide a very quick snapshot: in Madora Bay there are over 500 households; Parklands has nearly 200; San Remo has nearly 400; Lakelands has nearly 400—it is the real growth area; and Meadow Springs has nearly 2 000. In all, there are around 3 500 households, but they have no primary school. The only primary school is in north Mandurah, and the only access for these people is to cross this busy road. There is a pedestrian overpass, but, quite frankly, if I had children, I would not be sending them across there.

Dr E. Constable: You do have a child!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If I had children and I lived in that area, I would be very seriously considering whether or not I would allow them to walk or ride to school. It is a very great concern.

The minister can understand why I was angry and disappointed, after having read in the budget papers the list of schools the government has proposed to construct for the next four years, that the list does not include Meadow Springs Primary School. My disappointment and anger was based upon my understanding that the department itself recognises—which I am sure the minister can clarify for me—that the issue of the construction of a school in Meadow Springs has a long history and certainly goes as far back as when the Meadow Springs development was first proposed back in the mid-1980s. The minister can understand why I was disappointed.

I want to work with the minister to get this school constructed. I want the minister to confirm that the department recognises the school as a priority, as the former Minister for Education did, which was reflected in his

announcement that there would be a school ready to open in 2011. I also want the minister to tell me why the school is not supported by the government and why it has not been included in the list of new schools announced in the budget papers to be built over the next four years. I mean this sincerely: I do respect the minister and I know she will take this grievance seriously and in the manner that it is delivered, but I really am pleading to the minister to understand why this school is so important. I really would urge the minister to review the department's recommendations about the need for this school. I really want the minister to come down to Mandurah so that I can take her through these suburbs that I have mentioned, so that she can gain a sense and an understanding of why I am arguing for the construction of this school. I know that the member for Murray-Wellington, the former member responsible for this locality, would share my concerns. I want to work with the minister to get this school built. It is a huge disappointment to the many families in the area that this school will not be funded.

DR E. CONSTABLE (Churchlands — Minister for Education) [9.40 am]: I am delighted that the member for Mandurah has raised this grievance this morning. He is a man who is true to his word. On Tuesday night he made an impassioned speech; he will be pleased to know that I went back and read it. He promised that he would take up this issue with me, and he has wasted no time in doing so. I am sure that his constituents will be very pleased that he raised this issue this morning. As I said, the member did make an impassioned speech on Tuesday night. Clearly, he is right across the issues for his constituents living in Meadow Springs, San Remo, the new Lakelands area and so on.

I am not sure where this promise for a school came from. I made inquiries of the Department of Education and Training overnight; it had no record of any promise of a school at Meadow Springs. However, that does not mean that it is not on the radar; it is definitely on the radar, as is the planning for it. Clearly, the population has increased in the Mandurah area. More people will arrive to live in that area with new subdivisions having been developed and so on. That area is on watch for a school. Indeed, two sites have been identified—one in north Meadow Springs and one in south Meadow Springs. Clearly, we are looking to build a school in that area whenever possible. My advice is that the demographics have not held up, despite the growth. The member would be pleased to know that money is still unallocated in the four years of forward estimates for some new schools. Meadow Springs would be one of the areas on watch to be selected for a school. The demographics will be followed very, very closely over the next couple of years to see how that develops. There is a real possibility that a school will be built using the block of money that is there. A lot of work has been done on the overall provision for schooling in that area, such as planning and demographic work. The demographic information comes from the state demographer. It is always being updated in the planning of schools.

The member would understand that many areas are competing for new schools. Areas close to Meadow Springs in the Peel area are also growing very quickly, including Comet Bay and so on. The member will have some competition with some of his parliamentary colleagues when it comes to the planning of schools. That does not mean that a school will not be built in Meadow Springs; I am very conscious of the need to build schools in new areas. It is worth noting that WA has been so successful in recent years that it has almost been a victim of its success. More and more people have been moving into the state from interstate and overseas, and we must accommodate the children of those people as well as the children of WA residents in our schools.

I would like to make a couple of comments about North Mandurah Primary School, which the member mentioned. That is the school that children living in that area attend at the moment. There has been a very sharp decline in enrolments at North Mandurah Primary School. At the beginning of the first semester in 2008, the school had 629 students. That figure has dropped to about 560. I have two different numbers here, but it is around the 560 mark. There has been a huge drop in students at that school over the past year. I would like to know why we have seen a drop. At the moment that school has the capacity to take in children living in Meadow Springs. There is a good school for those children to attend while we are in the planning stage.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Minister, if you come down, you'll see that one of the problems with North Mandurah Primary School is that it was built in the wrong spot. There is very little residential area around it. That is one of the problems with it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: During our discussion the other day, I said that I would come down. I will certainly undertake to come down as soon as it can possibly be arranged. I would really like to see the area. Briefings are one thing—we learn a lot from those—but we can learn a lot more from seeing schools and visiting schools and looking at areas. I would be delighted to make the time to come down not only to that area but also to look at two or three other schools.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The nearest house would be about 500 metres away from North Mandurah Primary School. It is not even surrounded by houses.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That school was built in 1982. I would have hoped that there would be better planning at that time. It was built not that long ago—27 years ago. It is very disappointing that we have ended up with that

situation. We know that there is a good school in the area that children can attend. We also know that it is a growing area. The population is expanding rapidly. We are watching the demographics. The issue that strikes me as being perhaps more important than all others is the safety of the children going to school. That is what we have to be very mindful of in all this planning. I assume that those roads have been built since 1982. The bypass has been built since then. The new Bunbury bypass road has complicated the situation. An increasing amount of traffic since 1982 has created a situation that should be of utmost concern.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Thank you for agreeing to do that. When the children come over the pedestrian access way, they are actually delivered on the other side of Gordon Road into a commercial development near Bunnings. The kids who walk or ride have to then meander through a commercial development, which is at least 600 metres as the crow flies before they get to the school gate. The minister is right; the planning issue for North Mandurah is a real issue.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I had some comments about other areas. The department is monitoring population pressures all the way along that strip. I am trying to get a map of that in my mind as I speak. In the Peel area, we are seeing huge increases or potential increases in population in Comet Bay and Golden Bay with developments occurring there. We need to look at that area as a whole so that the planning for that area is done well. I certainly acknowledge the issues that the member has raised. The population has increased. We are monitoring those demographics very closely. The safety issues are uppermost in my mind. We will get together and see if we can coincide our diaries for a day in Mandurah so that the member can show me these areas.