

Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Tony Buti; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr John Day; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr Chris Hatton

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## EDUCATION — FUNDING

### *Matter of Public Interest*

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

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

**MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.47 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its cruel cuts to education that will result in \$103 million being lost in the 2013–14 financial year, and the effects this will have on students and staff.

If there is one issue since the state election that has defined the government, it has been the assault on schools around this state. It is an assault on schools, students and parents across Western Australia. Do not worry; people across this state have noticed what has gone on, as they have noticed the attack on the schools to which they send their children and to which they themselves went and on important components of children's education across this state. What makes it all the worse is that immediately before the cuts were made, the Minister for Education—we all remember him saying it—said that there would not be any cuts or job losses. Four days after giving that assurance, and after giving that assurance before the state election, we see this massive assault on schoolchildren and schools across Western Australia.

Today, the opposition has released the advice provided by the Department of Education to the Education and Health Standing Committee that confirms that we were wrong. We underestimated the attack on schools across Western Australia. We came up with a figure that underestimated the attack on schools across Western Australia. The truth of the matter is that in the 2013–14 financial year, in which the bulk of the cuts come in the second half of the year, there are \$103 million plus worth of cuts in public schools across Western Australia. Remember, the bulk of the cuts come in at the start of next year. Therefore, the \$103 million estimate is actually significantly under what it will be in the full calendar year next year. In response to my questions today, the Premier attacked me. Instead of telling me I was wrong, instead of saying that our press release was inaccurate and instead of saying that we had a significant fact wrong, he did not say any of those things. His attack was that the government made the announcement a few months ago. That was his attack. That was the depth of the argument he had against these statements. These facts, as contained in this document, were not out there a few months ago when the government announced this assault on schools across Western Australia. Now we have the full horrid detail of what the government is doing to schools across Western Australia to which our people send their children. We have the full horrible tableau writ large of what is going on in schools across Western Australia as a consequence of what the government has done. I will go through it in a moment.

I quite deliberately asked a question in question time today about Aboriginal education officers in schools. The reason I asked was the details contained in this document released and made available to the public by the opposition. Those details of what is happening to Aboriginal education officers in public schools across Western Australia are contained in that document. We quite deliberately made the issue the subject of the first question in question time today because it is a very high responsibility on the part of the Premier of the state to protect the education of the most disadvantaged people in our community—Aboriginal children. To protect those kids is one of the highest responsibilities any Premier could have. I gave the Premier an opportunity today to say that although there will be \$103 million worth of cuts this financial year, the government will pull back that \$2.7 million or so of cuts to Aboriginal children, which will kick in in the first half of next year. Instead of saying that the government would listen and consider this matter, the Premier just adopted a stonewalling, harsh, snippy, angry, arrogant approach to the issue—that is all he did. The Premier could have pulled back and said that it is an issue he was not properly aware of and that he would have a look at it. He did not do that.

The reason this issue came into focus for me is that, as a former education minister, I went to a lot of these remote schools and I met a lot of Aboriginal education officers. The week before last, with Josie Farrer, the member for Kimberley, and Hon Stephen Dawson, the member for the Mining and Pastoral Region, I again went to a range of schools in Derby and the Dampier Peninsula where virtually every single student is an Aboriginal child. I met those Aboriginal education officers whose jobs are now under threat. They are great role models for their communities. They are great people who do not get paid well, but they work in the schools with the students. The teachers I met, who were predominantly non-Aboriginal people, applauded these Aboriginal education officers, said how wonderful they were and said that they needed those staff to help them try to lift the educational attainment levels of Aboriginal kids in the schools. Those people who have done well in life are a great example for the burgeoning populations of children in these communities. Those teachers desperately want to keep those positions and those staff. With the first question in question time, I gave the Premier the

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opportunity to say that he might pull back and reconsider that small component of these very large cuts. Instead of the Premier saying that he would reconsider and perhaps the government had been too harsh, he just gave his blanket answer about little Aboriginal children and their education officers who do all they can to try to lift the educational attainment of those children. They are kids who often have very, very difficult lives and education is the way out. I gave that little ray of hope that the Premier might do something, but instead he snuffed it out. This issue came into focus today because of my recent visit and because we now have this document setting out all of the cuts across the education system.

Let us go through the new bits. The Premier's defence was that there was nothing new. There is new stuff there—things we did not know. We did not know that the full cut for the first half of next year to Aboriginal and islander education officers was \$2.3 million. That means that over the course of the whole year, it will approach \$5 million. What does that mean? It involves 105 full-time equivalent positions, bearing in mind that 105 full-time equivalent positions for Aboriginal education officers is a lot more jobs than that. It may well be 300 jobs for people who have families and children of their own who do a day or two in a school trying to lift the attainment of Aboriginal children. That may well be 300 people in these communities losing that opportunity and children losing that support. We did not know before this document became plain about the cuts to the national partnership agreement funding. Sorry; it is not a cut. It is clawing back; it is stealing national partnership reward payments worth \$7 million. Do members know what national partnership reward payments are? I have a definition from the federal budget of 2011–12. This is what the federal budget says these national partnership payments, which are part of the National Education Agreement, are. The budget papers state —

The agreement will contribute to shared outcomes, including:

...

- ensuring children meet basic literacy and numeracy standards and continuing to improve overall literacy and numeracy achievements.

Basically, the government needs to understand what it has done. The state government has been given \$7 million over the course of this financial year by the commonwealth for literacy and numeracy across the state and it has taken that straight out of the education budget and put it straight into Treasury. The state government was given \$7 million to improve literacy and numeracy and it has stolen it away, it has raked it away and it has clawed it away. I think the commonwealth should take action against the state government for that. If the government is to take money meant for literacy and numeracy amongst children in schools, surely the commonwealth should be able to take some action, because it is deplorable that the government has done that. The government has stolen money from children that was intended for literacy and numeracy that was provided by the commonwealth.

We then have a cut to the primary extension and challenge program that I did not know about. A lot of parents love PEAC, let me tell members. PEAC is much loved. The program succeeds in keeping students in public education who otherwise might leave. Students who are high achieving get extended academically via PEAC. It is a program for gifted kids in years 5, 6 and 7, keeping them in public education and allowing them entry into gifted and talented education in high school. It ensures that large numbers of students who might have gone to private education stay and support public education in our state. What is the government doing to that program? It is cutting PEAC in Western Australia by \$370 000 in the first year, but I am sure that will grow. That is an \$800 000 or so cut to the primary extension and challenge program next year that we did not know about. What will that do? That will take students predominantly in electorates such as Riverton, Mount Lawley and Fremantle away from public education, and take gifted students away from public education. That is what it will do. A group of parents came along with me today who had actually moved from the country to live in Willetton to put their kids into PEAC, and they are now finding that PEAC, which is for gifted children, is being cut. The government is dumbing down the public education system. It is taking from the programs that help children who are gifted to excel, and it is taking from the programs that help lift children up who might be disadvantaged or behind. The government is taking from both ends in these cuts to the education system. During question time I heard the Premier laud his achievement in early childhood education 15 years or so ago. I know a little about early childhood education. I have a daughter in kindergarten, and the aides are incredibly important in those early years. Those kids are hard to manage. They are delightful but they are hard to manage—my daughter is delightful. She is very smart; she is very delightful. For those members without daughters, I can commend having them! It is not too late for the ex-Leader of the National Party! The Premier has four or five sons—maybe daughters will not be coming along. It is not too late for the member for Pilbara—I can absolutely recommend them.

**Mr D.T. Redman:** Daughters?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Daughters.

**Mr D.T. Redman:** I have one.

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can tell; the Leader of the National Party is worthy of the position and worthy of the promotion.

**The SPEAKER:** Is this happy families, Leader of the Opposition?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Sorry; I am going a bit troppo. I saw Paul Keating last night, and I am going troppo.

We did not know there will be 91 fewer education assistants in those incredibly important early years of schooling. We now know that these important areas in which students are extended and lifted are being assaulted by the government. Aboriginal kids' education is the most appalling one. They are going to lose those supports in schools across Western Australia, and if members think we had problems with lifting the attainment levels of Aboriginal students today, it will be made worse when those resources and supports are pulled out. That is what the government will do. It is only a small ask to put that back in. I asked the Premier to do it today and he point-blank refused.

What will the consequence be for the education system? The government has assaulted it at a state level; it passed up \$660 million worth of commonwealth Better Schools support—the so-called Gonski deal—that other states signed up to and are getting. It has absolutely devastated both the potential and the reality of public schools across Western Australia. We also know that private schools have a review underway. Supports for private schools will be ripped away by the state government in Western Australia, otherwise it would not be undertaking the review in the terms announced. So education, once again, is copping it in the neck from this government. The Premier said that the former Labor government did nothing for education, but we never did anything like this. We completely rewrote the curriculum, kept students in school till year 12 and undertook the biggest school rebuilds across the state of Western Australia. We did all those things. We brought back traditional forms of marking. We put all those sorts of things in place and we lifted the number of students finishing year 12, which the Liberal Party never had the courage to do when in government. All those things were put in place, but now this government is absolutely fundamentally assaulting education in Western Australia and kids in this state will be the losers.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [3.04 pm]: I also rise to talk on the matter of public interest. It is very interesting that on this issue of such importance of education cuts, the Premier is out of the chamber. The Premier is just walking back in, I see.

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** He has been here for most of the time.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The Premier has not been in this place for most of the time. He does not even have the ticker for or the interest in an issue of incredible importance.

Several members interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The education system is one of the most fundamental obligations a government has.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** Be honest!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Carine! I call you to order for the first time.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The member for Carine called out “be honest”. I was required to withdraw that remark when I made it in the chamber, and I wonder whether the same standard will apply to the member for Carine.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not believe I was in the chair when that happened. Just carry on, member for Armadale.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Education is one of the most crucial obligations and duties for any state government. No-one—even the Liberal backbench—can deny that education is a significant factor in everyone's future economic and social development. What do we have from this government? We have the greatest single massive cut in any financial year in the history of Western Australia.

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** What, about 7.3 per cent?

**The SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** If the Minister for Planning wants to talk about it, he should get up and talk about it. The minister has credibility, but he will not have any if he gets up to try to defend a more than \$100 million cut in education in one single year. How can that be defended? For the past three or four months we have had the charade of the Premier, the Minister for Education and the Treasurer saying that it is part of a reform package.

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How can more than \$100 million in cuts in one single year be part of a reform package? It is a funny way to reform a system. The Premier has gotten up in question time and talked about reforming education and amalgamation in Armadale, but he has not even nominated the schools. Members would not believe the number of parents who have come to me worried about the future of their schools. I will be going to a graduation tonight at Armadale Senior High School with the Minister for Local Government; the parents, teachers and students there are concerned. What is the Premier talking about? He just brings out these things about amalgamation but will not give us any details. We do, though, have details of the cuts in Armadale; more than \$2 million has been cut from the education budget for 2013-14 in Armadale. I can tell the people who come up to me tonight that Armadale Senior High will have nearly \$280 000 cut from its budget for next year. How can that be reform to improve the education system of Western Australia? On 20 August, Hon Peter Collier put out a press release about the overall Western Australian public school funding and the new funding model for 2015. We will need an oxygen tank to revive the education system in 2015 after these massive education cuts that will have to be endured next year. Why are we having these cuts? There is no education philosophy or justification for them. They are purely the result of Treasury dictating to the education minister and his department that it had to find savings. There is no education basis to these cuts.

It is interesting to look at the process that led to these massive cuts. We originally had 14 district education offices; that has now dwindled to eight regional centres. It is my understanding that the regional directors were to sit on the executive of the education department to provide a conduit for the principals, teachers and education department because the regional directors are in constant dialogue with the principals. My understanding is that they were not consulted about these cuts. They know what the effects of these cuts will be. They are at the coalface. It is they who are in dialogue with teachers and principals, not the education minister or Premier. I challenge the Premier to tell me how these education cuts in 2013–14 will benefit the students of Western Australia and the public education system. They will not be of any benefit; if anything, the consequences of these cuts will be incredibly detrimental.

For instance, one independent public school in my electorate employs a social worker because of its students' special needs and the economic social situation in the region. The Minister for Child Protection knows about the issues at the school, and, to her credit, she has displayed keen concern about the situation in the school. Next year's cuts will mean that the social worker will not be employed at that school in 2014. The school that desperately needs a social worker will not have one. As an independent public school, it will be able to juggle the one-line budget and its finances a bit more to try to cope with the massive cuts, but it will still not be able to employ a social worker.

Another school in my electorate, which is not an IP school, has among the most needy students in Western Australia. That school has to voluntarily give up full-time equivalents to the salary pool to try to cope with the government's cuts. I ask the Minister for Planning, who has shown an interest in this motion, to explain how students will benefit from the school, which is in a low socioeconomic area, giving up FTEs, in addition to the FTEs that will be lost because of the cuts. The government is imposing mandatory FTE reductions, and, as a result of its cuts, it is making schools voluntarily give up FTEs to cover the long service leave levy imposed. The cuts have nothing to do with educational philosophy or educational justification. They are purely part of the cost-cutting measure the government has imposed on the Minister for Education, who has a track record of blowing out budgets. Look at what he did with the Muja power station. The punishment imposed on the Minister for Education for failing to administer his portfolios is an incredible cost on the teachers, principals and students of our public education system. Shame—shame on you! What are the Minister for Planning's priorities? If he does not think education is of central importance to the Western Australian state government, he has his priorities wrong.

**MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle)** [3.13 pm]: I rise today to speak about the frustration of people in my electorate with whom I have spoken about the cuts in education. I welcome the work that is being done to uncover further detail about the cuts. The Premier would have us believe that nothing is going on here and there are no cuts: "There is nothing to look at here—move along." However, the more people have learnt about the cuts, the angrier they have become. We need only look at some of the petitions tabled from government member electorates to see that the anger is felt not only by people in Labor-held seats, as people all over the state are learning what the cuts mean for their school, and they are angry. The member for Bateman last week tabled a petition containing more than 1 000 signatures, and the member for Bunbury this week tabled a similar petition. In the seat of Alfred Cove, which is alongside my electorate, parents have been attending protest meetings that have been held by a group called Save Our Schools. Those parents are furious about the cuts. I welcome the detail that we are starting to learn regarding these cuts. For instance, we did not know that \$370 000 will be cut from allocations to the Primary Extension and Academic Challenge—PEAC—program. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, people recognise the worth of that program. My family benefited from the program

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because my stepson was in the PEAC program throughout school. That is the sort of detail that we would not have learnt had we not gone through the detail in estimates hearings, in committees and the like.

Schools in Fremantle will lose close to \$200 million as a result of the cuts, with John Curtin College of the Arts losing \$590 000. I could not put it better than one of the parents in my electorate who wrote to the Minister for Education, and she said that she read details about the cuts in tears. Her letter reads —

I feel absolutely devastated about the impact these cuts will have on my children's education. This callous and short sighted government is cutting funding from the school support assistance programs children at our school desperately need - English as an additional language, Aboriginal Education Officer hours, languages other than English funding, Literacy and Numeracy funding, Learning Support Coordinator and Education Assistance for children with disabilities and other special needs ...

The next paragraph reads —

This is going to have a huge impact on all children at our school. I have been proud to send my children to a public school and I have been really impressed with the standard of education provided by our local school.

I could not have put it better myself. In addition to the cuts, the frustration felt by parents in my electorate has been added to by an offhand comment during the estimates committee hearings about school amalgamations in the Fremantle area—that means school closures. We heard about this only when the Premier made a comment in August during the estimates hearings, and that has fuelled suspicion among parents and other people in the Fremantle community that education excellence or improving the subject offerings for local students is not at the heart of school amalgamations and closures in my area; rather, closing schools and selling valuable land to help prop up a stretched state budget is at the source of those closures.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** People in your electorate aren't happy with the education choices they have.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The Premier is right: people in my electorate are not happy with the high school options. This issue has been discussed for more than two years. A very active community group on this issue has asked for government direction, but the Premier has not given any direction. He has simply said that there will be school amalgamations and school closures, but he has not laid out options or a process of change and consultation. He has only undermined the efforts of the schools in my electorate that are trying to attract students. Frankly, they are working their guts out to try to improve their schools. I refer, for example, to South Fremantle High School, which is working very hard to maintain its reputation and to keep its work going into next year. This government announced amalgamations without outlining options or a process of consultation. The Premier just threw it out there, and the community has been left floundering. It is a disgraceful act and it has fuelled suspicion that school education excellence has not driven the announcement—it is a cash grab. The government wants to close schools in the area to sell valuable land.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Planning)** [3.18 pm]: The government certainly does not support the motion. Indeed, there are good reasons why it should not be supported. To respond firstly to the Leader of the Opposition's concluding comment that the government has launched an assault —

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Cannington! I call you to order for the first time. There was general decorum in the first half of this debate —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Not from the Premier, there wasn't.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the second time. I expect the same decorum during this part of debate.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am responding on behalf of the Minister for Education whose portfolio I represent in this house.

It is absolute nonsense for the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that the government is launching an assault on the state's education system. There is no assault on the education system. How that statement can be made in the context of a 55 per cent increase in government funding for school education in this state in the five years that this government has been in office defies belief. It is interesting to note that the number of students has grown by 8.8 per cent from 2008 to the current year.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, I am telling you that if you shout out again, I am going to call you. Certain people are on three strikes. They shout out wantonly at their own peril.

*Point of Order*

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**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Mr Speaker, the Premier constantly interjected when the member for Fremantle was on her feet and you did not call him once.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order, member.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** But it is a good point.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Victoria Park, I call you to order for the second time. If I have to call to order everybody who interjects, I would be on my feet all the time. The first half of this debate was pretty balanced. I expect the same courtesy to be extended the other way.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The number of students has increased by 8.8 per cent in the past five years. The amount of taxpayer funding allocated to the government school system has increased by 55 per cent in the same period. It is far greater than the growth in the number of students. It has grown from \$2.8 billion to \$4.4 billion, including an increase of \$300 million, or 7.3 per cent, in the current financial year. That has been the general rate of increase over each of the past five years. The increase has been far greater than the rate of inflation and far greater than the increase in the allocation to just about every other agency in this state, with the exception of the health agency. This government certainly has given due regard to the needs of the government school education system by responding to those pressures in a substantial way. But there are valid questions about the effectiveness of how that very large increase in taxpayer funding is being used and the outcomes that are being achieved. A genuine attempt is being made to try to achieve better outcomes, because we do not do all that well on a national level according to the various testing regimes underway.

The other point I make is that the opposition cannot have it both ways. The member for Armadale in particular criticised the Minister for Education for blowing his budget. The reason that the budget has been blown in recent times is that we have increased the amount of funding available to the government school system. The opposition says that we should effectively increase it further.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the third time!

*Point of Order*

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Mr Speaker, the minister made a direct comment to the member and he answered him and you called him to order.

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, I have called him to order. There is no point of order. I repeat what I have told you before: the fact that a member is referred to by another member does not give that member licence to shout out.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Effectively, the opposition is saying in this motion and in its arguments that the government should have allocated an additional \$100 million approximately to the government school education system in addition to the \$300 million increase that has already been provided for in this financial year. The opposition has also made great play about concerns about the level of state debt, for example. The more we allocate to the school system or to any other aspect of state government expenditure, the more that state debt will increase over the next four years. The opposition has opposed the revenue measures to allow us to more easily afford what we need to put into the school education system. It opposed the legislation to increase land tax, which has now gone through Parliament.

A member interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the first time! If you want to speak, go to your seat, please.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The opposition opposed the legislation under which the government can now obtain a dividend from the Insurance Commission of Western Australia. Some of those funds have been made available for public purposes, including the school education system. The opposition cannot have it both ways. It wants even more to be spent on the education system, but it opposes any revenue measures that the government puts up to try to deal with these sorts of pressures.

The government has repeatedly stated that the number of teachers in 2014 will be maintained at 2013 levels. We made an additional allocation after the budget to ensure that that can be achieved, given the growth in student numbers that is occurring. Some changes have to be put in place—for example, in relation to education assistants, of which there are about 6 000 to 7 000. As the Premier said during question time, under the previous government, a policy was put in place whereby education assistants were allocated to schools for a particular student and they were given the ability to stay at that school regardless of whether the student was still at the

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school. That was clearly unsustainable and not an appropriate or the best use of taxpayers' money in achieving good educational outcomes. Education assistants were also appointed specifically to deal with anaphylaxis issues in schools. Since then, proper training has been provided for teachers and other staff in government schools so that they can respond to anaphylaxis problems; therefore, there is no need for specific education assistants for that purpose. We need only commonsense to understand that we need to make better use of the taxpayers' funding that is available so that it is directed to areas in need, including the primary extension and challenge program. Comments have been made that schools are not aware of the changes being made to this program. I am advised that principals were informed of this change as part of the statewide information sessions undertaken in August and September this year.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There is a concern that the funding made available for the gifted and talented programs in both primary and secondary schools could be used more efficiently than has been the case to this point. There are concerns about the effectiveness of the significant funding that has been made available and there will be a greater effort to try to achieve that. Comments were also made by the opposition about the national reward payments, which I am advised are incorrect and misleading. As I am advised, the payments are not related specifically to literacy and numeracy and are not required to be spent specifically on literacy and numeracy. The department has made a decision, obviously as part of government decision-making, to ensure that the funding will be used to assist in maintaining teacher FTE numbers at the current level.

Funding for Aboriginal education assistants has been provided in recent times based on an outdated formula that provides a different level of funding depending on the year level of the student. This has been changed to a fairer model so that Aboriginal students will receive the same level of support regardless of their year level.

**Mr R.H. Cook** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Kwinana! I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Although there will be reductions in the allocation to schools of hours for Aboriginal and islander education officers, all schools that are eligible to receive support will continue to do so.

**Mr R.H. Cook** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Kwinana!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I know that other members wish to speak. This government is proud of the substantial funding that has been allocated to the government school education system. As I have said, it has increased from \$2.8 billion to \$4.4 billion over the past five years, an increase of 55 per cent, with an increase of only 8.8 per cent in the number of students.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Fremantle, can you please let the minister finish.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** We have a responsibility to ensure that the funds are used as effectively as possible so that there is value for taxpayers' money and to ensure that better outcomes are achieved in some cases than has been the case to this point. That is the work that this government is undertaking.

**MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood — Leader of the National Party)** [3.30 pm]: I want to support the Minister for Planning in his response to this matter of public interest today, and make a number of comments around the state budget. I also want to lead into some observations about regional Western Australia. The Minister for Planning quite rightly highlighted that in the state budget, there is an increase in the global funding that goes to schooling in Western Australia. Over the course of the four-year forward estimates, there is an increase of about \$1.2 billion for education. That is on the public record, and that has been said in this place numerous times. So, the global figures are not cuts; they are actually increases in the funding to education.

**Mr P.B. Watson** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, I call you to order for the third time.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** When I had a talk with the Minister for Education about this issue, one of the points he made was that of the \$300 million increase in the first year's budget, about \$100 million will go into teachers. In my view, the greatest investment that we can make in education is into the quality of teaching. This government has made substantial investments into teachers in Western Australia.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

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**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the first time. I remind members that the member for Armadale is on three calls, the member for Warnbro is on three calls and the member for Albany is on three calls.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** We can, quite frankly, deliver a quality education under a tree, so long as we have a quality person or people who can deliver that education to the betterment of students in our community. Obviously facilities make a big difference, and this government has made substantial investments in both the city and regional Western Australia to support the infrastructure that is needed to provide a quality education, and to support all the information technology strategies for enhancing that education delivery.

The position that the state government finds itself in is that we have a challenge to deliver a state budget. In managing that budget, we need to manage the growth in expenditure. The areas that form the substantial part of the budget are health, education and police; those areas take up the lion's share of the budget. In reality, we cannot have an impact on the budget unless we deal with those areas. If we do not deal with those areas, we are not going to change the focus of what we do in terms of managing the global state budget.

In reality, over the last number of years, the growth in expenditure in education has been in double digit figures. As the Minister for Planning highlighted, since 2001, the global dollars that have gone into education, compared to the growth in student numbers, has been substantial. There is still growth in the education budget, but we are just bringing that back a bit. I think that is a reasonable position to take. Layered into that are two things. Yes, there are some transitional challenges in 2014, and members opposite have talked about that. When I go into schools in my electorate and talk to them, yes, at a school level, they have to deal with some savings. That is the reality of what we have put up in the budget. But I will make two points about that. When I was in the school system, the formula drivers that were in place for resourcing schools were clunky. Every time someone wanted to do something, they would layer something else onto it. So we had this really complex arrangement and formula for driving how schools were funded. At no time did anyone look at reforming the drivers for delivery of resources into schools to support education in Western Australia. At no point was that tackled.

The other part of this debate is about reforming education.

**Ms L.L. Baker** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Maylands!

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** One of the uncertainties that sits in schools—I think it is a fair call—is that in 2015, when the new formula drivers will come into place, based on student needs, schools do not have a read out on what that will look like for their school. That is because we do not know the student numbers and the cohorts in the schools that will drive that. The two things that are happening is that we are transitioning from the very clunky model that is in place now for driving resources into schools, to a reform that will support a number of outcomes from the Teese review and that will, in my view, enhance education in Western Australia. Those are the reforms that are in place.

I now want to make an observation about regional Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Fremantle, and member for Maylands, I call you both for the first time. I am trying to give you some leeway. But I want to hear the minister now.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It will be interesting to hear from the opposition what people in regional Western Australia see as the main drivers of the resources in their schools. Some would say that the funding formula should be according to student numbers. But in many regional communities, the school is the most important part of the community. The economic drivers in those communities are the things that drive growth in their schools, because growth drives student numbers, and student numbers drive resources into those schools, and that enables them to provide the curriculum offering that they want to provide. This government has delivered resources into our regional communities that will provide the economic drivers that will cause people to choose to visit, live in and invest in regional Western Australia. Those resources also enable the schools to remain viable so that they can deliver educational opportunities to people who live in some of the more remote parts of the state. We have also made investments through royalties for regions in a number of areas, not just directly into schools, but also into hostels, and that is also supporting people in the more remote parts of the state to get an education that they might not otherwise get in the area in which they live.

So, in summary, yes, there are changes in the funding model for education. It is a funding strategy that I absolutely support. We will go through a transitional year in 2014 to modernise the drivers of funding into schools, from an old system that has been awfully clunky, to a system that will be driven by student need. That is an absolutely appropriate shift. When we look at regional Western Australia, I think the Liberal–National

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government stands on a pretty good record for its investment into the regions and into supporting education, whether it be directly or through supporting regional economies that ultimately drive student numbers in their communities.

**MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield)** [3.36 pm]: Images of Bill Murray's character in the movie *Groundhog Day* are flying through my mind as I listen to this debate. There is nothing new here.

I want to reinforce the comment of the Leader of the Nationals, given that I am a former teacher, that the most important resource in schools is the quality of our teaching staff. I have seen first-hand classes of kids who possibly are labelled as ratbag or difficult to manage, but who, with a credible and quality teacher, have managed to get an education. In fact, the person I am thinking of is a finalist in the Teacher of the Year Awards, and I wish him all the very best; it is a very well-deserved nomination.

In talking about the resources that this government has allocated to education, since 2008, funding for education has gone from \$2.8 billion to \$4.4 billion, with another \$300 million being spent in this year's budget. In real terms, that means that approximately one in four Western Australian taxpayer dollars is being spent on education in Western Australia. This state government spends more money per child on education than any other jurisdiction in the country. That is a very proud record to stand by. However, it is also the responsibility of the government to ensure that it maximises the benefits of those dollars on behalf of the Western Australian taxpayers. That is why we are moving towards a student-centred model, and that is why we are ensuring that that funding is rationalised across the system.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I think the member for Armadale would probably disagree with the member for Bassendean there.

Having worked in the system, I am very cognisant that classes are often timetabled that have only five, six or seven students in them. That is unsustainable in any system. That is why we are moving towards a student-centred model, where the funding is allocated to the student, not the school or the program. That will ensure that money is directed to students with the most need. Some of the categories of need are Aboriginality, remoteness, literacy and numeracy, and disability.

To further demonstrate this government's commitment towards ensuring that our young people get the best quality education in the country, we have moved towards developing child and parent centres and we are rolling them out across our primary schools in the state in areas of need. That is a very good achievement by this Liberal-National government. Furthermore, we are also funding more school nurses. I think all members would agree that it is imperative that we give young people the best chance to get a quality education. Ensuring that their health needs are met and identified early so that we can get them the help that they need and so they can engage in their education is paramount. That is what this government is all about.

Let us look at some of the other reforms that this Liberal-National government has rolled out and continues to roll out. I am referring to the independent public school system, which has been widely endorsed and taken up with much gusto by the public education system. Approximately 250 schools are already in the IPS system, and I think another 256 schools—I do not have the figures on me—have shown an interest in coming online in the independent public school system. One of the key parts to the independent public school system is that it gives autonomy to the school community, and that is something that schools have been crying out for for some time. This government is now delivering that so that local schools, which best understand and best know their local community needs, can make the decisions that impact on those local communities.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean!

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** Let us go back to the previous government, when the now Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Education and Training, and look at —

Several members interjected.

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

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** As I was saying, looking back on the previous Labor government—in fact, I think the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Education and Training at the time—I certainly remember those years and the lack of interest that the minister showed in wanting to resolve the teacher pay dispute. We saw classrooms with no teachers in front of them. When the Liberal-National government was elected and the

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member for Cottesloe became the Premier, one of the first things that he did was resolve the pay dispute with teachers and ensure that they went from some of the lowest paid teachers in the nation to some of the highest paid in the nation. Funnily enough, now we do not see teacher shortages in classrooms because the government gave the teachers the respect they deserve and remunerated them accordingly. That is reform. That is what this government is about. It is about reforming education and ensuring that students in most need —

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, I can actually see you and hear you there.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** That is what this government is about. It is about ensuring that the students in most need of support for a range of reasons, as I have outlined in my brief address, are given it. That is something that we should be proud of.

I would also like to quickly mention that the members for Armadale and Fremantle should be supporting what this government intends to do in those areas by tailoring educational offerings in those areas to best suit their needs. That is what this government is about. On top of the reform that I have outlined, there has been a 55 per cent increase in funding since 2008. That is a proud record and one we stand by.

**MR C.D. HATTON (Balcatta)** [3.44 pm]: I rise on this occasion to speak against this matter of public interest. I back the words of the previous speakers. Minister Day, Minister Redman and the member for Forrestfield have raised some very, very important points. I must say that I just do not understand the opposition. It just does not get it. When I spoke back in September, I tried to illustrate the background of this funding model and why it was happening. After two or three months, I do not think that the opposition really knows what this model is about and why we are doing it. So I would like to go back over a few things in that regard. When we do reform, members of the opposition, we do it based upon sound evidence and sound principles, which I will illustrate to them shortly, and when we do it, we do it well. We do it to maximise benefits and we do it in the best way possible. With education reform, we are creating future citizens and a future workforce. So far the results in education are not very good compared with those in other states of Australia. I will come back to that in a moment.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale!

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** The benefits to society of this reform will be immense.

**Ms L.L. Baker:** What reforms? It's just cuts.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** It is not cuts; it is reform. Members opposite should think of individual funding. They have to get that into their heads. Individual funding is what it is all about—individual funding to improve the academic outcomes, the social outcomes and the outcomes for the emotional needs of children, whether they be special needs or mainstream, and for the physical needs of children. The funding will be allocated individually. I do not think members opposite understand that; they just do not understand it. Reforms are not easy. No reform is easy. This government acknowledges that the changes in 2014 may present challenges—may. They will, as a matter of fact; I will state that now. There will be challenges for some schools. Not all programs will be able to be continued in the same format, but no child will be worse off. Maybe the opposition has forgotten about the need to change.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean, I do not want to hear from you again.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** I am very passionate about this. This is the first opportunity I have had to speak on this issue since September.

An opposition member interjected.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** How would the member know? They have never been in a classroom. I have been in a classroom for 30 years. I have just come out of the classroom. Members opposite should please listen. This reform will not be easy.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Collie–Preston, that is very unlike you. I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** This government will —

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

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**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Collie–Preston. I call you to order for the second time. I think you have made your point.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** This government, unlike the opposition, knows that there is a need to change, based upon evidence, and I will come to that in a moment. Previously, the opposition, under the previous education minister, did not show enough will to make reform based upon good evidence.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Was that Liz Constable?

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** No, I am talking about the opposition; okay?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Historically, Western Australian schooling has been of a high standard. We know we have some problems with our results. Like law and order, education is highly valued in our society. It benchmarks our economic growth, our employment opportunities and our societal standards. Since 2008, WA schools, under the Liberal–National–led government, have been very, very well funded. As members have said previously, funding has risen from \$2.8 billion to \$4.4 billion. That is an increase of about \$1.6 billion from 2008 to 2013–14. As the member for Forrestfield has highlighted, we have the highest paid teachers in Australia, and in December the rate will go even higher with about a 4.5 or 4.4 per cent increase in their salary. Our teachers deserve it. That is what makes our education system so good. We have provided since 2008 a high level of special needs education, including an increase in education assistants. We all know the story of education assistants. Since around the year 2004–05, we have seen an increase from 2 500 to 7 500 education assistants. I will come back to education assistant reduction in a moment.

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Members opposite will get the answers. As has been said before, members opposite know that we have been impacted by a large population growth in a steadily and rapidly increasing strong economy. This has placed immense demands on educational infrastructure. The government has acted not just on infrastructure, wages and resourcing, but it has increased wages of teachers to become the best paid teachers in Australia. We have built high schools and primary schools in the last five years. We have maintained these schools. We have kept up with maintenance. We have poured a lot of money into education. We continue to do that. However, we must now look at the evidence. I wonder whether opposition members remember when they talked about Gonski, or whether they have forgotten it already. When there was a change of government, it died. Do they remember Gonski?

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Right!

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Opposition members should cast their memories back to Gonski. This Western Australian government did not support signing up to Gonski—the model was not good for us. The analysis showed that it would be centralised from Canberra, from the east, and it would not suit our style of education, which is the best system in Australia. Members opposite should just think back to what they were saying back then. They have probably forgotten. Gonski would have been very bureaucratic; it would have been regulatory; and it would have been potentially very conditional.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warnbro!

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** I have met with school principals in Balcatta, and they are willing to take on the reform because they probably have a better understanding than is the case with members opposite. Schools in WA are already experiencing extreme success under the independent public school model.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

**Extract from Hansard**  
[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 20 November 2013]  
p6317c-6328a

Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Tony Buti; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr John Day; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr Chris Hatton

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Ayes (19)

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

Mr W.J. Johnston  
Mr D.J. Kelly  
Mr F.M. Logan  
Mr M. McGowan  
Ms S.F. McGurk

Mr M.P. Murray  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Mrs M.H. Roberts

Ms R. Saffioti  
Mr P.B. Watson  
Mr B.S. Wyatt  
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (34)

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

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

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

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

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Pairs

Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Mr P.C. Tinley

Ms W.M. Duncan  
Mr I.M. Britza

Question thus negatived.