

PUBLIC SCHOOLS — FUNDING RESOURCES

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) [3.04 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its savage cuts to Western Australian public schools and the dishonest attempt to describe them as education reforms.

There is nothing more important to parents and students across Western Australia than a well-funded, well-resourced education system that serves the needs of children in this state. There is an obligation on the state to provide children with a quality education. There is an obligation to ensure that all children who go to school have the best opportunity in life, the best opportunity to be all that they can be and the best opportunity to progress through their schooling and go on to bigger and better things in life. That is why we on this side of the house are so appalled by the attack on education by the Premier and this government in recent weeks as part of its state budget and its ongoing program of cuts —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Local Government, I call you to order for the first time. Member for Perth, I call you to order for the first time. If members want to have private meetings, they should go outside and have a private meeting.

Mr M. MCGOWAN: There is nothing more shocking to us than this ongoing program of cuts and attacks on education, schools, teachers and their representatives across Western Australia by this Premier and this government. Those attacks have been shameful. The performance of this Premier has been disgusting and disgraceful, as shown in the way he has commented on those people, the way he has dealt with those people and the way he has treated public schools and the education system across Western Australia. What makes it worse is that the Premier's attacks are based upon false premises and false promises. In the lead-up to the state election and, indeed, post the state election just six months ago, the Premier told the people of Western Australia that there would be no cuts to jobs in the public sector. He said that in September last year, prior to the election, and he said it after the state election in March this year. He said —

I make it very clear that there are no cuts, proposed or planned, for staffing within the public sector—none at all, and that was made very clear by the Treasurer

A few days after the state election in March, he even said —

We are not going down the path of forced redundancies; I made that clear in the election campaign. I repeat it today.

What did we learn a few weeks ago? We learnt from the Minister for Education, the disgracefully incompetent Peter Collier, that there will be no cuts to any jobs across Western Australia, as he explained to Paul Murray on his morning radio program. Four days after that radio interview—two weeks ago—the backflip came. That is when we learnt that the axing of 500 jobs across the education system, including the jobs of education assistants who help children across our system, teachers and other staff in head office administering the education system, were not commitments or promises that this Premier intended to deliver. Indeed, the Minister for Education directly misled the people of Western Australia in his commentary on this issue.

What is the Premier's response? He went out and attacked the head of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations and the head of the West Australian Primary Principals' Association, which are dedicated to the education of children in the primary and high school systems across this state. The Premier attacked the mild-mannered Kylie Catto, the head of WACSSO, for daring to use a metaphor. He claimed that children are not learning in school because people are coming up with these damn metaphors in Western Australia that are hard for people to understand the meaning of, because they are not speaking clearly. Just because the Premier does not seem to have the mental dexterity to understand a metaphor does not mean that everyone else does not understand what she was trying to say. She was trying to say that we need to ensure that basic education services to children across Western Australia are properly funded and supported in this state.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

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Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr Chris Hatton; Dr Tony Buti; Speaker

Mr M. McGOWAN: There goes the Premier again, attacking someone. She is not even a teacher. He loves attacking the messenger. In this case, the messenger was right. What he is doing in education across Western Australia is nothing short of disgraceful.

I will deal with the staff cuts first and then I will turn to funding in individual schools. Five hundred staff will be cut from schools across Western Australia. The Minister for Education said that we have the most inefficient education system in Western Australia—and he said it after five years of a Liberal–National government! He said that we have the most inefficient high school education system in Western Australia, but he forgot to mention that the government has been in office for five years of this alleged inefficiency. A couple of weeks ago he said —

It is true our primary schools are recognised as the most efficient in the nation, which is why secondary schools have seen more changes.

He has said that high schools are inefficient, so all those high school teachers need to understand that the minister thinks that they are inefficient. Then he said that primary schools in Western Australia are the most efficient in the nation.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yet what does the government do? It cuts education assistants from the early years. Where does the government cut the education assistants from? It cuts them from those efficient primary schools that the minister himself said were efficient. My children are in primary school; in fact, my daughter is in kindy with an education assistant in her class. They are great people doing a great job on which the system relies. Despite the government's promises, 350 low-paid education assistants will be gone from primary schools.

Minister Collier also said that the government was not going to get rid of any teachers. He said that no teaching jobs would go as a consequence of these cuts. He misunderstood Paul Murray's question, which everyone here knows is laughable. He said that there would not be any teaching jobs lost from the system. What did we then learn? We learnt about the cuts to the school support programs resource allocation. What does that allocation do? It provides funding for programs for literacy, numeracy, behaviour management, English as a second language and Aboriginal students. Guess who provides those programs? Teachers provide those programs. Those programs will suffer a 30 per cent cut, which amounts to millions of dollars across the education system. Guess who will lose their jobs as a result of that cut? Teachers will lose their jobs. When Minister Collier said that no teaching jobs would be lost, that was completely and utterly untrue.

On top of that, we found that a document has been provided to schools across Western Australia that outlines the cuts to schools. The first two provisions of the document set out how base teacher full-time equivalent allocation will occur in schools across Western Australia. At the moment, every school across the state has a 1.5 full-time equivalent allocation so that staff are available in case teachers are sick, on leave, need support or the like. Every school across the state has that 1.5 allocation. Guess what? That will be reduced to a 1.2 full-time equivalent. That means that every school across Western Australia will lose 0.3 of a teacher. When Minister Collier said that no teaching jobs would be lost, again that was not true according to the government's document released by the department to explain the staffing process. The second part of this document, which exposes Minister Collier's falsehoods, goes through the per student allocations per year. In the higher years of school, from year 8 upwards, the teacher formula will be changed so that there will be more students per teacher; in other words, there will be fewer teachers across the system from year 8 to year 12. That is the third way in which teachers are being removed.

We then learnt from a talkback caller that the bit of support that all those level 3 teachers, who have ordinarily been in the classroom for more than eight years, and often for 20 or 30 years, and who have reached the pinnacle of teaching, are provided with by—guess who?—teachers, will be removed from schools across the state. There are four ways in which teachers will be removed from the system, despite the fact that the Premier and the minister said that no teachers would be lost. There will be the removal of 500 or so full-time equivalent teachers from the education system across Western Australia. That is what the government's changes will do, yet the Premier dresses them up in all sorts of spin and other language to try to hide from them. The Premier has said that the education budget has gone up this year. Of course the education budget has gone up this year, because there has been an expansion in the number of students in the system, as well as all the ordinary things which normally take place, such as pay rises, and which need to be accounted for across the education system in Western Australia. Of course, the budget will go up because of those issues.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, maybe you should allow your leader to speak. Treasurer!

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Mr M. McGOWAN: The point I am making is that the claims that were made to defend these changes that impact on schools across the state were false. Teachers will be lost to the system, and this document proves it. Individual schools that have been given discretionary money for behaviour management, literacy and numeracy programs—for which they employ teachers—will lose one-third of that money and, therefore, naturally teaching staff will be lost. The State School Teachers' Union of WA estimates that 500 full-time equivalent teachers will be lost across the system as a consequence of these changes; in fact, it estimates that it will be more than 500 teachers across the system. Yet the Premier and the minister promised that no teaching jobs would be lost. That was directly untrue. It is another untrue statement from the master of untrue statements—the Premier of Western Australia. He is a master of squibbing the truth. He is the grand Pooh-Bah of avoiding the truth about the changes that he makes, because all these staff will be lost.

Let us go to the other failures, including the Gonski dollars. New South Wales and Victoria signed up to the Better Schools program, which is to be delivered by the commonwealth. According to Christopher Pyne, the putative commonwealth education minister, this state will not receive that money. An amount of \$670 million has been lost to Western Australia because of this Premier, despite Barry O'Farrell and Denis Napthine, two Liberals from the eastern states, signing up to the deal and getting billions of dollars for the education systems in their respective states.

Then there are the capital works cuts. Members will remember the big change to put year 7 students into high school. The government allocated a huge amount of money for it. What did we find in the budget? We found that \$35 million has been cut from the funding for capital works in high schools across the state to manage that change. Then we found that some of the significant dollars that were promised for the new improved schools in Collie, Rossmoyne and Willetton were not delivered and are nowhere in the forward estimates of this budget.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Yes, they are.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Some of it is in there; a proportion is in there.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The minister promised \$95 million for Willetton and it is not in the budget.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Rossmoyne is in there in full.

The SPEAKER: Member for Riverton!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Then we had the appalling and gross attack on the children of 457 visa holders. What could be more shameful than to price out of going to school in this state the children of people who come to this state to work at the invitation of the government? What could be more shameful than that attack on those children whose parents often earn less than \$50 000 and sometimes have four children, which would mean a \$16 000 annual bill? The lack of compassion and heart that the government has shown for those people in our education system is nothing short of appalling.

Dr M.D. Nahan: What do the unions say about 457 people?

The SPEAKER: Member for Riverton!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Then the government justified it all by rolling out the Teese report, yet Professor Teese stated —

It will be important to ensure that principals are well-prepared and supported to manage the transition and take full advantage ...

Despite Professor Teese saying that in his report, the government is taking teaching resources and education assistants out of the system. Professor Teese recommended, because of the model the government said that it would use, that the government should provide continuing support. Indeed, after the government announced its changes, Professor Teese described what the government is doing to the education system as “strange”. The author of the changes that the government is making in the system is critical of the changes the government is making because it is de-resourcing the education of children in Western Australia. It has been a disgraceful episode. The government has abdicated its most fundamental responsibility, which is to provide a high-quality, well-resourced system of education across Western Australia; one that meets the needs of the most vulnerable people in our community—our children.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [3.21 pm]: I support the motion. We have a cold and heartless government. What has happened in regional areas since this government came to power?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Albany Hospital?

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Mr P.B. WATSON: Is the Premier going to ride that for five years?

Dr M.D. Nahan: We have spent more money on education than any government.

The SPEAKER: Member for Riverton!

Point of Order

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Albany has only just commenced his commentary, yet members opposite are interjecting incessantly. I note, Mr Speaker, that you were very concerned about interjections earlier in the day. I hope the member for Albany, who is an Acting Speaker, receives the same attention received by other members.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. I will give your remarks due consideration.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.B. WATSON: Thank you for your protection, Mr Speaker.

As I said, we have a cold and heartless government. The district education office was transferred from Albany to Bunbury. If a teacher wants training, he or she has to go to Bunbury. If principals want to hold a meeting, they have to go to Bunbury. When that happens, they have to provide relief staff, the money for which they do not have. What has happened with the year 7 transition? There has been no consultation in regional areas despite the fact that people there are being affected. Where is the National Party on this? National Party members sit like jockeys up the back. How are they looking after people in regional areas? We hear about kingmakers, but the Nationals are not worried about people unless they live in the Pilbara or in the Leader of the National Party's electorate. The Leader of the National Party should get out. On the weekend, the polling booths in Albany reflected that he is only second worse to the Premier. I do not think the Nationals are sweet in regional areas. The National Party is on the nose because it is not looking out for people in the regions, unless the region is up north. Let me talk about —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr P.B. WATSON: No-one in Albany likes the Premier. There is always a swing towards me and away from the Premier no matter what is happening. The people in Albany do not like the Premier. The Premier should come to Albany to debate this matter with me, teachers and parents at the town hall.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I would not go anywhere with you!

Mr P.B. WATSON: No, because the Premier does not have any guts—no ticker.

I will read a letter from the board of Mount Lockyer Primary School, of which I am a member. According to my notes, it reads —

We, the Mount Lockyer School Board, wish to express our concern —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Warnbro and Leader of the National Party!

Mr P.B. WATSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The letter reads —

We, the Mount Lockyer School Board, wish to express our concern at the unreasonable cuts to the education budget. The future education of our most important asset, our students, is being jeopardised as these cuts are likely to affect the school's ability to fund the breadth of programs we consider to be of great benefit. These include highly effective initiatives such as the Talented and Gifted Program, Reading Recovery —

I refer to young children whose reading ability has gone up 50 per cent because of the program, yet the program was cut overnight. It continues —

Drumbeat, Rock and Water, Passport Program, support for graduate teachers, Our Place -

We have a spot in the school where Aboriginal parents can sit and talk with their children about issues in a happy environment. The Behaviour Intervention Centre in Mount Lockyer is innovative. All those things will be affected. I heard the Premier say that some schools have plenty of money. The board of Mount Lockyer Primary has been told that it has money in the account, but we cannot let it run down. We have \$65 000 in the account. We will lose \$123 000. If we continue to run the projects that are now running, we will not have any money in

the bank and we will be \$65 000 in the red. I followed this school with interest even before I was on the board and before it became an independent public school. It was a real mess when the current headmaster came along. The school has worked so hard to put money aside to provide these programs. It has worked so hard for the children, who are from a low socioeconomic background. Despite that, the government has announced that it will take \$123 000 away. Is that fair, Premier? The Premier said that schools will lose only their education assistants. Those assistants look after the most vulnerable people in our communities. Spencer Park Primary School will lose \$50 000.

I refer to procurement savings. Throughout the year, schools purchase equipment and goods for teaching the students and running the school, such as reading books and cleaning equipment. The government has a number of common-use agreements whereby schools must purchase from a particular supplier, which is not local. The government's understanding is that by using these common-use agreements, schools will save money. Schools have been asked to hand back the government's projected saving of about 1.5 per cent of the school grant. The government is penalising the schools for saving. I do not understand this in this day and age. We are talking about the education of our most vulnerable students. The government has made these cuts so that it can build a big football stadium in Perth and other monuments. The Premier is very arrogant today, but I know that in four years, if the backbench has not rolled him, he will not be here.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [3.27 pm]: It certainly is a sad day when Parliament has to censure a government for its failure to provide a good education pathway for our students. That is what is happening today. Furious headmasters and teachers have contacted me through the back door because they have been gagged. What a disgraceful situation! They are not even allowed to say what they really think about the education cuts. Students need guidance in all areas and, sometimes, such guidance is needed for only a short time. That guidance will not happen in the future. What will happen to those who miss out? I believe there will be problems further down the road in 10 years, because these students will not receive the full education they need. They could end up becoming criminals and might not be able to get jobs. The government's actions will create a social problem in 10 years' time. We must think about that. Will we create a stolen education generation? I believe we will. We will have a group of people who will not get the specialist education they need. Many of them are on the way through. The Treasurer can laugh, but it is not a joke. It is really, really serious. We need to change this situation. We need to remember the old saying, "the education of our children is our future". The Treasurer has forgotten one of the basics that this Parliament is about; that is, looking after our students so they have a proper education. The government should not split up groups, and it should not tell certain schools they are not good enough because they do not have a special education kid who may need a bit of assistance in maths to move them forward. The government is pulling apart the system. It is really struggling to balance the budget at the cost of the students of this state. On my estimation, schools in the Collie electorate will lose \$2.3 million. I will break it down even further and provide the schools and their losses: Allanson Primary School, \$39 000; Amaroo Primary School, \$136 000; Australind Primary School, \$445 605; Boyanup Primary School, \$39 000; Capel Primary School, \$114 000; and Collie Senior High School, \$216 000. I would like to see that school's headmaster, who stood out the front with a promo for the government. The list continues: Dalyellup College, \$289 000; Dalyellup Primary School, \$249 000; Dardanup Primary School, \$63 000; Eaton Community College, \$194 000; Eaton Primary School, \$127 000; Fairview Primary School, \$81 000; Glen Huon Primary School, \$149 000; River Valley Primary School, 27 000; Tuart Forest Primary School, \$70 000; and Wilson Park Primary School, \$38 000. That is what is happening in one electorate alone. Add it up—that is \$2.4 million. Where will the teachers go? They will go to the beach at Dalyellup because there are no jobs for them because the government has wound them down. Then along will come the kids. The Premier can nod and agree with me, but he is being facetious as usual. He is ruining the future of this state. Premier, I beg you to change this as you did for the solar-panel system.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [3.29 pm]: I simply remind the house that in the 2013–14 financial year the education budget will rise overall by \$300 million—or 7.3 per cent. I also remind the house that since 2007–08, education spending by the Liberal–National government has increased by 55 per cent; it has gone from \$2.8 billion in 2007–08 to \$4.4 billion today. That is a strong commitment to education, particularly to public schools in this state. When the Labor Party was in government, enrolments in our state school system were flat with virtually no growth. Between 2008 and 2013, the number of student enrolments grew by nine per cent—or a further 22 000 students—from 254 000 to 276 000. Other members on this side will talk about what the national leading independent public school system is doing and about some of the other advances taken in education.

The State School Teachers' Union of WA made a big mistake last Thursday.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It did. It claims to be apolitical.

Mr M. McGowan: You were invited to speak and you didn't.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. Mr Speaker, let me place it on the record.

Mr M. McGowan: You were frightened. You made the choice.

The SPEAKER: Members! Leader of the Opposition!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The teachers' union ran a joint rally with the Labor Party. That is what the teachers' union did outside Parliament House.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The union ran that joint rally two days before a federal election. It was not a very smart thing to do—not a smart thing at all.

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It was a joint political rally by the teachers' union and the Labor Party. That is what happened.

Dr A.D. Buti: Don't divert from the real issue.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is a pretty real issue to me, Mr Speaker.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Leader of the Opposition got to speak at the rally.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro! Member for Armadale!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Leader of the Opposition got to speak at the rally. The federal minister at the time, Bill Shorten, got to speak at the rally. The deputy president of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations and Labor candidate for Balcatta at the last state election, Janet Pettigrew, got to speak at the rally.

Dr A.D. Buti: Why shouldn't she?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not saying she should not have, but she did. The education minister of Western Australia went to the rally, stood there for an hour and 20 minutes but was not given the opportunity to speak.

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I am calling you to order for the second time. There is still time if you wish to speak. I do not want anybody drowning anybody else out.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There were two rallies that day. At the earlier one, the United Voice union at least had the courtesy to invite the Minister for Education, Hon Peter Collier, to speak at its rally, which he did. He probably got heckled a bit but at least he was given the opportunity to speak. I therefore think the teachers' union has a bit of a problem now. It engaged overtly in political activity two days before a federal election by holding a joint protest with the Labor Party. There is no doubt that it was a big, big mistake by the teachers' union.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan!

Mr R.H. Cook: What's the consequence of that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is just a big mistake.

Mr R.H. Cook: It's a threat, is it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. It is a big mistake for a union, which claims that it is not politically connected, to hold a joint rally with the Labor Party two days out from a federal election. And keynote speaker, Bill Shorten—okay, I do not mind whether Bill Shorten speaks—is the same person that about six weeks ago thought that the creation of independent public schools was privatisation. It shows that he was totally ill-informed about his own portfolio. He did not know the difference. However, let us get back to this motion.

Professor Teese of the University of Melbourne undertook a review of staffing in our schools. The recommendations he made are very similar to the approach taken in the Gonski report. The resources should go

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where the population growth of students is and where the need is greatest. Opposition members have argued about schools being disadvantaged. They should be on our side on this. This reform will take resources and put them into the schools with the highest number of needy children. That is what it is doing.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: In implementing —

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a historic fact —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The history of the staffing formula in past years has basically been to fund schools according to what they do rather than what they need to do for the number and needs of the students in those schools. In the senior school of a number of high schools—probably quite a number—there is a senior, highly paid, highly qualified schoolteacher teaching classes of maybe six or eight kids. That is what is happening under the current funding system, and that is not reasonable. Many teachers in administration in schools should be providing guidance not only to students but also to young teachers coming through. This is what the reform will do. It will move the teachers and the money to where the need is greatest.

There will be some concerns and some disruption during the transition year, but I think it will be slight. During the transition year—that is, the 2014 school year—the staffing formula will be re-set on a needs basis and on a per-child funding basis à la Gonski. That is what is happening. In doing that—I will not use the word “frozen”—the total number of teachers will stay essentially the same as they are reallocated, even though funding overall is increasing. For the 2015 school year, with the restaffing in place, there will then be the normal growth in teaching staff numbers as student population grows. I therefore cannot understand why opposition members oppose that. I am bewildered by those who purport to represent some of the most needy schools opposing it, because they will be the winners in this funding. That is what will happen.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There are difficulties in making these sorts of reforms, but this reform is long overdue. It is based on educational needs, and it will make sure that ever-increasing amounts of taxpayer money will be spent where it is needed most.

I made the comments that some schools gain and some schools lose, but the changes are not dramatic.

Mr M. McGowan: Churchlands gains.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Churchlands Senior High School is one of the most rapidly growing schools —

Mr M. McGowan: Churchlands gains.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, it does, and so what is the point?

Mr M. McGowan: Warnbro loses; Churchlands gains.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Here they go with a chip on the shoulder!

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Churchlands has something like 1 600 students. It is probably second only to Willetton Senior High School as the biggest school in the state.

Mr P. Papalia: Actually Comet Bay’s bigger.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Okay; good on it.

Mr P. Papalia: And you’re taking \$600 000 out of it!

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, you have time if you want to speak. You have been called three times. If you want to go and have a cup of tea of your own volition, you can. If you want me to send you to have a cup of tea, it is up to you.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The staffing will be re-set in the context of a \$300 million increase in the budget, in the context of ensuring teacher numbers stay the same, and in the context that teacher numbers will continue to grow further after the 2014 school year.

Mr M. McGowan: What about the document?

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Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition's document says that.

Mr M. McGowan: The document you have.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know and I do not particularly care about the Leader of the Opposition's document.

Mr M. McGowan: But you don't want the facts; facts bother you.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, let the Premier make his speech.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Education assistants do an important job in our schools. It is a fact that a higher proportion of children with disabilities, in many cases severe disabilities, are in the government school system rather than in the private or independent systems. Education assistant numbers were 4 500 in 2004 and are now 7 500. That is a massive increase that I have to say is not justified. We will reduce the number by 350. Included within that 350 will be 150 education assistants for children with an anaphylactic condition. Teaching staff are now trained in the use of EpiPens that deal with that condition. No other state provides education assistants for children with anaphylaxis; they are not required. Some children may have other conditions. As the Minister for Education has said, any boy or girl in our government school system, regardless of age, who has a disability or condition that justifies an education assistant, will have an education assistant.

Mr P. Papalia: Not true.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: They will. Those criteria are established across Australia, and we have given that guarantee. One of the ludicrous things the Labor government allowed was education assistants who were appointed to work with children being given permanency at school sites. As a result, if a child left and moved on to high school, that education assistant had a permanent job at that primary school. That is not reasonable or sensible. That explains in large part the growth in the number of education assistants. We have underemployed education assistants—some are not required and some have remained at the school when the child has left. No wonder they want to keep that job. Who would not? If they are not required at a particular school, they will need to go to a school where an education assistant is needed. We cannot justify wasting taxpayers' money by employing people at a site where there is no job for them when there is a job for them at a school nearby.

A member interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is right.

With some of the cash grants and programs to schools, there is funding. As a former Minister for Education, I think there are too many programs in our schools. Too many disjointed, individual programs are being promoted by all sorts of organisations, often the federal government. We should get back to more simply structured, high-quality education programs in our schools, rather than all these little schemes and subsidies with teacher relief time and all the rest of it. We need to get back to what good teachers want to do—run good education in a school to a program.

In conclusion, the Leader of the Opposition carries on, again trying to rewrite history. Someone else in this chamber might comment. This government has a record of massive increases in education funding. We are saying that that money needs to be spent better rather than simply being increased by large amounts every year. That is what these reforms will do. Members can find a year when there was a significant cut in education funding. Who was the minister? It was none other than the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M. McGowan: That's rubbish. You make it up.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Teachers in Western Australian schools are the highest paid teachers in Australia. There was a time when teachers in Western Australia were the lowest paid in Australia, and who was the minister? It was the now Leader of the Opposition.

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [3.42 pm]: I rise today to speak on this matter of public interest. I find it astonishing that the opposition would try to mislead the people of Western Australia.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr N.W. MORTON: The opposition's claim that this Liberal–National government is cutting funding to public education in Western Australia is an outright lie. This financial year, this Liberal–National government has committed a further \$300 million for public education funding. In fact, I researched public education funding over the past decade and found some interesting information. I do not purport to have a degree in pure mathematics, but we can expect that as the population grows and the cost of resources increases, we will see a linear growth in spending in education in Western Australia. That is more or less the general trend except for the

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years 2005–06, 2006–07 and 2007–08. I paraphrase a comment the Leader of the Opposition opened this debate with today when he said that there is nothing more important than a well-funded and well-resourced public education system. The years in question that I have highlighted show a big dip in funding. I have a graph, which I am prepared to table if members so wish, that shows that in those years there was a massive cut in funding for public education in Western Australia. Who was the minister from December 2006 to September 2008 when the majority of these cuts took place? It was none other than the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Rockingham.

Mr M. McGowan: You make it up.

Several members interjected.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Members can have a look.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. Barnett: He accuses us of making it up. Look at the chart.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGowan: Goodness, he has a chart! It must be right; he has a chart. You've been drinking too much champagne.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Forrestfield, can you continue?

Mr N.W. MORTON: I will; thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for your intervention.

Having worked in the system, I recall these years quite vividly. In 2006, when these savage cuts by the then Labor government and the then Minister for Education, the member for Rockingham, were taking place, I recall that the compulsory school leaving age was raised to 16. We could therefore expect resources to increase, but, no; we see there was a savage cut to funding in public education. The following year, in 2007, the compulsory school leaving age was raised to 17. It was great for children to be getting further education, and we could have expected a correlation with spending in education. But, no, we saw further cuts in spending on public education, all under the stewardship of the now Leader of the Opposition, whom we heard say in here today that there is nothing more important than a well-funded and well-resourced public education system.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr N.W. MORTON: I have visited about seven of my local schools in the last fortnight and had good conversations there.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mirrabooka!

Mr N.W. MORTON: I now move on to this Liberal–National government's commitment to public education in Western Australia. When I looked at the trend line, it was obvious that spending on public education in the last several years, since this Liberal–National government has been in power, has gone from \$2.8 billion to \$4.4 billion. That means one in every four taxpayer dollars is being spent on education in this state. That is a fantastic record and something this government should be proud of.

We look forward to what this Liberal–National government is implementing in our public schools. It is a student-centred model of funding. Who can argue with a student-centred model of funding? It is a model of funding that will allocate the Western Australian taxpayer dollars to the areas of most need within our schools. I stand by this. I fully support a government that has the intestinal fortitude to implement these reforms for the most disadvantaged in our schools. As a former deputy principal who worked in the system, a mantra of mine was that the educational opportunities of all children in Western Australia should not be determined by their postcode. This reform is something that will go a long way to addressing these disadvantages. To that end, I want to describe a couple of examples. When I was a science teacher, I had also a pastoral care role, and a student used to come into my classroom, get his work and lock himself in a cabinet in the classroom. Of course, that is quite strange behaviour. Through my pastoral care role —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Does the member for Cockburn find this funny?

Mr P.B. Watson: Why bring it up?

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

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Mr N.W. MORTON: Through my pastoral care role I discovered that when that child went home, he was bashed and locked in a cupboard under the sink and released the following day to go to school. This kind of funding is to address students who come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro! You now have four calls.

Tabling of Paper

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: During his speech a couple of minutes ago, the member for Forrestfield offered to table a graph. I wonder whether he intends to table it.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Happily.

The SPEAKER: Are you going to table that graph, member, please?

Mr N.W. MORTON: It does highlight the cuts.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

Debate Resumed

Mr N.W. MORTON: I thank the member for Midland, for ensuring that the graph was tabled.

The member for Midland interrupted me at a poignant moment in my address. I would like to detail another example from my time as a classroom teacher several years ago. A child in my class put up his hand and said, “Sir, my mother left me this morning; where do I go when I go home?” Of course, I did not want to have that conversation in front of a class full of children, so I spoke to the student after the class and became aware that his mother had met someone on the internet, had booked a one-way flight to the United States and had departed. This student was then left without a guardian, without real direction and of course in a state of fear and panic—I think the child was 13 years old. A situation such as this would severely hamper and disadvantage this child’s educational outcomes and opportunities. This Liberal–National government is moving towards a student-centred model that will allocate funds on a needs basis so that students with the most need get the most attention. As a Liberal member of Parliament —

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Shall we go back to the real cuts—the real cuts under the Labor government that the member for Kwinana was complicit in?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Can you talk through the Chair please, member for Forrestfield?

Mr N.W. MORTON: Thank you, Mr Speaker; I apologise.

As a Liberal member of Parliament, I stand by the empowerment of the individual.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

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

Mr N.W. MORTON: This government is committed to empowering individuals through a true recognition of their disadvantage so they can best maximise their educational outcomes for the future. Of course, I am hopeful that all members in this chamber agree that education is a key to freedom and choice in the future. That is what this government is committed to and I stand by the reforms on education of this Liberal–National government. I cannot support this motion.

MR C.D. HATTON (Balcatta) [3.52 pm]: I rise to speak to this matter of public interest on educational reforms, moved by the opposition. Mainly for the opposition’s benefit, I would like to put this matter into its true context because I do not believe the opposition has a full understanding of how this matter has evolved. We are talking about a new evolution in education, but it goes back to 2008 and after, with a very successful model of schooling—that is when the evolution started. This new evolution of funding only supports the good done up to now. Post-2008, the Liberal–National government pursued a model—I want the opposition to listen carefully to this—to provide greater autonomy to schools. In fact, it was the beginning of the evolution to provide better outcomes for students in a complex teaching environment. There is no single formula to provide good outcomes; there is no magic wand. The movement away from a centralised system was an area that definitely stood out, post-2008. I know because I was amongst it, being a teacher in a primary school.

The movement away from a centralised system did not just happen. Principals wanted more autonomy for schooling in Western Australia; they wanted to facilitate the needs of children at a local level. Principals wanted change; they wanted flexibility and autonomy. This pre-evolution was independent public schooling. What did

independent public schooling mean to me as a teacher? At that time of my teaching career, to be honest, my colleagues and I thought it was quite daunting—any change is. As a matter of fact, it was rather intimidating. I originally entered teaching in the very early 1980s with a sort of one-size-fits-all mentality. For example, it was my job to teach the children in my year 4 class a base curriculum and move them on ready for year 5. To be honest again, this sort of worked for a number of years, whether it was good teaching or not. I believe it was still good teaching because a bit of the old-fashioned teaching stood well then; it worked. However, over time—two and a half decades maybe—delivering education has certainly changed. Education has been impacted tremendously by technology. That has had the greatest impact; we all know it and I do not have to say it.

Schooling has also been changed by the attitudes of society. Parents have wanted to be more involved in schools; children have needed to be motivated more; and teachers have needed a lot of support. Also, the needs of local schools have had to be met. There needed to be an evolution of solid independent decision making that empowered local communities to develop their real identities—to give them identity, motivation and a goal and desire for children to succeed—and so evolved the first applications for independent public school status that allowed this flexibility and autonomy. I remember the period post-2008 very well. With a funding component, with a fiscal management component, there was a budgetary provision to schools at a local level. I commend school administrators, particularly principals at the school I worked in at the time, for being bold enough to explore a new way of operating. I commend school administrators for stepping out at another professional level, rising above and educating their staff and community. School principals had a vision and belief in autonomy and flexibility based upon delivering resources and money in the right areas, which is very important, and in a responsible way to produce better student outcomes. I said earlier that there is no magic wand to produce better school student outcomes. I believe over 300 schools are now independent public schools. There are over 800 schools in Western Australia and many are ready to become independent public schools. This government supports all schools to move forward with their autonomy and flexibility to produce better outcomes. The support given by this government has not just happened year by year; it has been measured and well facilitated, and we are seeing the benefits of the IPS system. Many more schools want to come on board and, as a matter of fact, we have too many coming on board now.

What have we done? We are providing more professional development, we are streamlining the process and we intend to cater for those schools that want to take on this autonomy and flexibility for their local communities, and to deliver the funding to the needs of the students. As has already been said a number of times, since 2008, education funding in this state by this government has increased by about 55 per cent—the opposition knows it. It has gone up from \$2.8 billion in 2007–08 to \$4.4 billion in 2013–14. In this recent budget we are not pulling back; we are actually giving an additional \$300 million in 2013–14. We have supported schools with resourcing. Last year I left my teaching career after 30 years with the highest pay, at my level, of any teacher in Australia.

Mr D.A. Templeman: They are not very highly paid then, are they?

Mr C.D. HATTON: Well—whatever.

My teaching career has not been all good. I have to admit that there have been times of stress and I have felt that I was underpaid, but in the last five years this government has definitely left me feeling good. It has left me and my colleagues feeling valued and looked after.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.D. HATTON: We must treat this matter seriously. I see members are laughing, but I am very serious and passionate about this matter.

Over 50 per cent of the government budget goes towards teachers' wages, because this government has recognised and still recognises that teachers are the biggest influence in a child's life. I believe that I have been the biggest influence in many children's lives, and I am proud of that. I have left teaching knowing that I was valued.

In recent years, funding for employing education assistants has increased incredibly. In many schools there are often as many education assistants in the staffroom as there are teachers.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Are there too many?

Mr C.D. HATTON: There are. Education assistants play valuable roles in schools. Their number has increased from 4 500 in 2004–05 during the time of the Labor government to around 7 500 in 2013. This increase to that high level cannot continue any longer. We value education assistants. The ones I have been in contact with are dear friends, colleagues and professionals, but we cannot sustain those high levels.

For example, in one of my classes of 30 students in which I would have run 12 individual education programs, I would have been allocated extra education assistants.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [4.02 pm]: I rise to support this matter of public importance. The government may want to spin these funding cuts to public schools as an education reform, but it is obviously not an education reform—it is cuts, cuts and more cuts. The Premier asserted that the Labor Party is now in bed with the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, and he talked about rallies. The Premier was invited to the rallies, and, as usual, he did not go to a place where he could not control the message spoken by others. He was invited to both rallies on the day and he did not attend. The Minister for Education appeared and spoke at the first rally. He was so bad and wimpy that he was not invited to speak at the second rally. They are the facts. The Premier should not come to this house and tell the opposition that the union did not invite him. It invited the Premier but he decided not to turn up. They are the facts.

I was very interested in the contribution of the member for Forrestfield. He has a long history in education. He was a deputy principal at a school in my electorate. I invite the member for Forrestfield to come to Cecil Andrews Senior High School, and I challenge him to support the government's cuts and see whether his former colleagues —

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Forrestfield! The member for Armadale may carry on.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I know from telephone calls I have received that the member for Forrestfield's former colleagues do not support —

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: I did not ask the member for Forrestfield to comment; I did not do anything. The member for Forrestfield is now shouting, so I call him for the first time.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Teaching was his former occupation; he is now the member for Forrestfield. Will he go to Darling Range Sports College, where the estimated cuts will rob that school of \$380 000? What about Wattle Grove Primary School, member for Forrestfield, which will lose about \$157 000? Will he go to those schools and say that losing \$157 000 is great education reform? The high school in his electorate is going to lose \$380 000. Will he say to those schools, "I am your local member and I think that is fantastic"? Because the member for Forrestfield is so supportive of the education cuts, we will make sure that all teachers in his electorate receive a copy of his contribution to this matter of public importance. I am sure they will be happy to hear that he supports education cuts, not education reform.

The member for Forrestfield has talked about empowering individuals. That is a very laudable motive. I also wish we could empower individuals. The greatest way to empower individuals is by having a first-class education system, particularly a public education system. The problem, member for Forrestfield, is that it is not good enough to empower only some individuals. The cuts that the government has introduced to education will not empower all individuals in all schools. The people who will be most severely affected by the savage cuts the government will introduce are the most disadvantaged—people that the member for Forrestfield used to teach at Cecil Andrews Senior High School.

In a committee meeting of this house the member for Forrestfield queried the director general of Education on school support program resource allocation funding.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Forrestfield asked some interesting questions. Under the current government cuts, there will be a 30 per cent cut to SSPRA funding for specialist literacy and numeracy programs in Western Australian public schools. How will that empower the most disadvantaged individuals of this state? Shame on the member for Forrestfield for coming to this house and, in order to get brownie points with the Barnett government, washing away all his principles.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Forrestfield to order for the second time. The member for Armadale should speak through the Chair.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the cuts we are experiencing under this government are so great, why did the Premier not talk about them during the election? He did not talk about them because he knew they are not reforms; they are cuts. We had the budget process and then a few days later the incompetent Minister for Education announced these 500 job cuts in education. Is it not absurd that this announcement was by a former Minister for Energy who wasted over a billion dollars in that portfolio, whether it was the Muja powerhouse fiasco or the solar feed-in system? Who is to pay for that? It will be our students in public schools, and their teachers and their parents.

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They are paying for the incompetence of the Minister for Education. We know the Premier's true views on the Minister for Education. He was incompetent as the Minister for Energy and then he was given this incredibly important portfolio: education decides the future wealth of this state. What is the Premier doing? He is not investing in education, but cutting education. Where are the reforms? Tell us where the reforms are. All we hear is cuts, cuts, cuts! These cuts are so great that the Premier has gagged principals from speaking to their local members of Parliament and the public.

Mr P.T. Miles: No, no, no.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, he has. He is gagging principals. This is nothing do with reform. This is all about cuts, cuts, cuts. Shame on the Premier! Shame on the member for Wanneroo!

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

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 F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr M.P. Murray

Mr P. Papalia
Mr J.R. Quigley
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr C.J. Tallentire

Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (35)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr V.A. Catania
Mr M.J. Cowper
Ms M.J. Davies
Mr J.H.D. Day

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

Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr R.S. Love
Mr 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 J. Norberger
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Pairs

Ms M.M. Quirk
Mr D.J. Kelly

Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr I.C. Blayney

Question thus negatived.