

Chairman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr John McGrath; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Alan Carpenter; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Frank Alban; Mr David Templeman; Ms Lisa Baker

Division 28: Education and Training—Service 1, Primary Education, \$1 728 784 000; Service 2, Secondary Education, \$1 189 508 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Dr E. Constable, Minister for Education.

Ms S.A. O’Neill, Director General.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey, Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration.

Mr J.W. Thom, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Mrs N. Jeffery, Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Accountability.

Ms M. Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr. J. Serich, Executive Director, Workforce.

Mr R. Player, Deputy Director General, Training.

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

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

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister’s cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the Committee Clerk by Friday, 5 June 2009, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and accordingly I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if the minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk’s office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by Friday, 5 June 2009. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the program statements volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, item, program and amount in preface to their question.

I now ask the minister to introduce her advisers to the committee.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Midland.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I draw the minister’s attention to page 348 and the three per cent efficiency dividend. Has there been a business case prepared for each of the listed three per cent efficiency dividend items listed at the top of the page; and, if so, has the business case been prepared for 2009-10 and for each of the out years? The items listed are substantially “Central Office Administration and Operations”, “Education and Training Support Programs”, “Learning and Training Allowance and Programs”, “State-wide Schooling Provision Reform” and “Student Community Services Program”.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What was the third one?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: All the three per cent ones are listed there under “Education Sector”.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is no business case but there is a detailed analysis of each one.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Could the minister provide us with a copy of that detailed analysis?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: I could go through those now. Starting with central office administration and operations, the total savings in 2009-10 will be \$15 141 000 and increasing over the four years to approximately \$21 million for each of the following three years. The impact of that will be some reporting time lines and responses to briefings may be impacted upon. Staff reductions will total about 150 full-time employees and will be managed through natural attrition in the first instance. Mr McCaffrey will correct me if I am wrong, but it is a 10 per cent decrease in central office and district office staff.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Correct.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is correct. There will be a reduction in the education awards program. For some time there has been some disquiet, particularly from teachers, about the increase in major awards from \$25 000 to \$100 000; therefore, they will go back to the original \$25 000 level, and other awards will be involved in that as well. The total reduction will be \$300 000. There are a number of education and training support programs and I will give the member some examples. The saving in curriculum improvement and assessment will be \$1.326 million. The reason for the ability to make a saving there is that the work has been completed substantially, and recently this budget has not been fully expended and was therefore a saving that was quite easy to find.

I should say that it was not easy to find a three per cent efficiency dividend in education; in fact we have not reached three per cent at this point because, as a major policy decision, we do not want at all to affect direct face-to-face classroom activity. It was therefore very difficult in this portfolio to find a three per cent efficiency, as I am sure the member for Midland would have found had the Labor Party won the last election. We will therefore continue to work on the three per cent efficiency dividend in the next year or so, and perhaps beyond that, to find those efficiencies, as they will not in any circumstance impact upon classroom activity.

There is a saving in the Learning with ICT program of \$1.5 million over the four years. There will be no impact there, and I might ask Mr McCaffrey to explain the operational aspects of that.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: This project was originally developed to improve the student information system that we were putting across the school sector as part of our standard operating environment. It gave us the opportunity to conduct some in-depth analysis and some longitudinal teacher judgement of grades et cetera. With recent developments we have now found that we have been able to provide schools with access to statewide testing data as part of this process. The work is substantially completed. Again, we always project our budget out four years, as the government does as part of the state budgeting process, and now that that work has been completed we have found that those funds will no longer be needed at the level for which they have been used in the past. The work therefore is pretty well done and we have a really comprehensive product that we can use on behalf of our schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is another saving of \$601 000 under support programs in education and training syllabus development. That will have little or no impact because the initial development work has been completed already. That was therefore money that was quite easily saved. In running costs of schools there is a saving of \$1.6 million in 2009-10 going up to about \$2.8 million to \$2.9 million for each year in the following three years, and there will be no impact there. Schools with excessive amounts retained in their salary pool for the year 2008 had funds that could not be justified for carryover into 2009 and they have been withheld. Again I will ask Mr McCaffrey to comment on that.

[9.10 am]

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The processes that we follow allow schools a great deal of flexibility, and they also provide funding from the school grant for the school salary pool. We found that it has been about \$10 million over the past three or four years and that those funds have just generally been carried forward. Over the past three years we have analysed a number of the schools that are holding excessive amounts in their salary pool. This year we wrote to them and asked them to justify what they were going to expend those funds on. We had a mixed response. Only a handful of schools wrote back and said that they really needed them to complete some programs, and in those cases we allowed them to have those funds reinstated. However, the majority of the schools were cooperative and quite comfortable with the fact that they had not used them. It is important to remember that each year schools have the opportunity to "cash in", as we call it—that is, convert some of their full-time equivalents into dollars so that they can bring in different types of people to support their programs. It is an annual allocation; therefore, if schools do not use the resources within the year they were provided, we have tended to say that next year they will get another staffing allocation and they will be able to complete their program. It is something that we have been working on with the schools, as I say, for about three years, and I think it is a reasonable approach that schools have accepted by and large.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: A number of other items under that second line item come under training, and we are not dealing with that today. I think they will be dealt with during estimates this afternoon under training, but I am not dealing with training.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is news to me. The training is actually listed, is it not?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. Minister Buswell is the minister representing Minister Collier.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Would the minister like to outline, perhaps, because it is really unclear —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I cannot because I do not represent —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, the minister does not know what I am going to ask. What I am asking is for the minister to outline the delineation of responsibility between herself and Minister Collier with training—for example, vocational education and training programs and so forth—because that has never been made clear to us.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It has certainly been clear to me. Schools, universities and VET in schools come under my jurisdiction, and technical and further education colleges are under Minister Collier.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Therefore, only TAFE colleges?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: And private providers.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: And?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Private training providers come under Minister Collier. I am told it is outlined on page 348 of the *Budget Statements*.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: All right. However, we have not dealt with the other three per cent cuts, as I understand.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I was just saying that there were some items under that second line item that come under training, which can be dealt with at that point.

There is also another cut, and that is to discontinue the \$100 secondary subsidy. Due to the voluntary nature of school fees, schools in lower socioeconomic areas may see some reduction in revenue. The reason for this is that —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They will see a reduction.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will come to that in a moment, member. The reason for this is that it was not means-tested, and those families who have a health care card or equivalent are able to have the full fees of \$235 paid. We felt that to have non-means-tested payments to families in the current circumstances was something that we were not prepared to continue. As has happened in the past, we will be monitoring this to ensure that if schools have a major fall-off in the fees they collect, we can see how we can best help them. Therefore, each school will be monitored carefully.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is that saying that the government's position is that, as a policy, it does not want to make payments to parents on a non-means-tested basis?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In this instance, that was the decision that was made.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As the minister says, it was in this instance, but I am trying to work out whether that is a policy issue or whether it is simply that the government does not want to pay families on a —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In this instance, the decision was made. The It Pays to Learn allowance, which we will come to in a moment, is also non-means-tested. It is a payment and, as part of our three per cent efficiency dividend—very difficult decisions to make—that decision was made.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Therefore, is it only whether payments to families are means-tested that the government is concerned about?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This was a subsidy and, yes, it affects families. However, it went directly to schools and not to families. It is for the voluntary fees that parents are expected to pay. If the member looks at \$100 over a school year, that is \$25 a school term or \$2.50 a week, which is not a huge impost on a lot of the families that were getting this subsidy.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Therefore, the government payment of \$2 a week to people who are over 60 years of age and who have a Seniors Card, which is not means-tested, is not seen by the government as —

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: People with a health care card or equivalent will continue to get the \$235 voluntary fees paid directly to the school. There are also other subsidies, such as for public transport.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sure, but there are means-tested payments to seniors, and that is not —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I cannot comment on those payments and I am not going to comment on them today.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I know, but I am going to the question of policy, minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not going to engage in a discussion on that policy. In this instance, the decision was made in the very difficult task of finding three per cent efficiency cuts in education.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am interested in hearing what the other three per cent efficiency dividend savings are.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Continuing on, there are a range of other savings that we will still need to find, including \$41 million in 2009-10, and \$27 million, \$20 million and \$22 million over the following three years. They are savings that are yet to be found in the three per cent efficiency dividend. As I said, we have got to this point —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: What was that total?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have the total; I only have the years, but Mr McCaffrey —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am asking for the total savings yet to be found.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The \$41 million is in 2009-10. Across that, Mr McCaffrey, I think, could probably give me the total because I do not have it in front of me.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: We were looking at \$111 million —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is \$111 million over the four years.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: In that three per cent efficiency dividend, how much is attributable to a reduction in staff due to the half-cohort in high schools at the start of next year?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: None, and we will come to that, I think, as a question later on. I am sure that members opposite will want to have a discussion about the half-cohort. However, that is not in this three per cent saving.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: In this three per cent across the four years?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The main staffing refers to the central and district office reduction of 10 per cent in staffing.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Has the minister completed listing the three per cent efficiency cuts to education and training support programs?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I believe I have. My finger has now reached the third line item under “3% Efficiency Dividend”—namely, “Learning and Training Allowance and Programs”.

The first saving is from the It Pays to Learn allowance, which is a saving of \$13.5 million a year. That allowance is still in place for this year. I think there was a question the other day about the allowance continuing to be advertised. The reason is that people can still apply for this allowance for the 2009 school year.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is actually listed as an \$18 million or \$19 million saving for this year and the out years. The government has already cut \$5 million out this year, and it is listed as \$18 million or \$19 million in the budget papers.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will pass that on to Mr McCaffrey.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Part of the reduction is related to the third training output because students who are in apprenticeships and traineeships in the TAFE sector also receive the It Pays to Learn allowance, as we refer to it. Their allowance was \$400 a semester. Therefore, the reduction in total includes the \$13.5 million for the schools area and also picks up those training savings.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The way the budget papers have been set out is quite misleading, because the government has a separate heading for the TAFE sector and it should perhaps have relisted it there, I would have thought, to make it clear, especially as two separate ministers are answering questions.

[9.20 am]

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are discontinuing the support and transition network and the learning and transition network, and although there was money in the budget for these transition network programs, they did not commence. Consequently, it was quite easy to take those programs out of the budget.

A reduction in the participation program will result in a budget decrease of 50 per cent. In the early years following the decision to increase the school leaving age, there was a need to have participation coordinators to assist students, particularly those who were not in full-time school but who were looking to combine school with employment or some training outside the school setting. Now that that program is pretty much in place and fewer participation coordinators will be needed, that funding is being decreased.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How much money will be saved by sacking 50 participation officers?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will get either the director general or Mr McCaffrey to comment. No-one will be sacked. They are people on contract and their contracts will be completed; is that correct?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So they will just lose their jobs; they will not be sacked. It is a fine line!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: A contract is a contract, and those contracts will be completed.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I appreciate that their contracts will terminate and that they will no longer have a job.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Some of those people —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How much money will be saved by doing that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is a saving of \$4.5 million.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will that saving be on an annual basis?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr McCaffrey to add to that.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: When the changes to the school leaving age were implemented, it was understood that there would be a need for some significant resources to enable the transition into the new programs. We have found that those students now in year 12, that 18-year-old cohort, have been pretty well embedded into school processes. It could be said that that \$4.5 million reduction is equivalent to about 50 staff, but there is no intention to reduce the number of staff by 50. Staff will be required to talk to all the district offices who look at the programs offered in school districts and the district offices will look at the needs of the students and a judgement will be made as to what mix of staff reductions, as the member called it, will be implemented. However, it will involve people whose contracts have expired because they were put in place for only two years to address a specific need and to look at issues as they arose. The expectation is that, over the total program, we would be looking to be able to save \$4.5 million. It is a total approach over the needs of the districts as they arise.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As the member will understand, a lot of people are on contract throughout industry and government. In this case I think most of the people are on two-year contracts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Those people would have looked at the forward estimates and seen money available to continue paying participation officers—money that has been cut this year. I would have thought that, given that program was fully funded across the out years by the previous government, those people would have had an expectation that their jobs would be likely to continue.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was quite clear that this was a transition period as the extended school leaving age was phased in to become a part of our system. Discontinuing the participation of extra staff in non-senior schools for years 11 and 12 will save \$570 000, and I will ask the director general to explain that saving.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: During the transition period for year 11 and 12 some schools that ordinarily would not provide schooling for year 11 and 12 students provided that schooling. These schools were not established for that purpose, but in the transition they provided some programs. We are working with each of those schools on a case-by-case basis to ensure that any remaining year 11 and 12 students will be given an appropriate program through either Schools of Isolated and Distance Education or other local schools. It is only in the last one or two years that some of these schools have provided year 11 and 12 programs, and we will be making sure that each and every student involved has an appropriate program. Many of those students already attend tertiary and further education programs part time or are undertaking training qualifications in addition to their schooling. That is the \$570 000 that will be saved in our program.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to the fourth line item, “State-wide Schooling Provision Reform” on page 348. In the ongoing structural reform process, which includes the enormous task of planning for schools state wide, it is found from time to time that it is sensible to amalgamate schools that are old stock or where the demographic has changed. Bannister Creek Primary School is one such example and that school is, I believe, well underway.

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Structural reform involving amalgamations, following consultation with communities, is one way we will save funds. The estimate is that in 2011-12 it will be a \$3 million saving and in 2012-13, it will be \$6 million, but that will depend on the identification of schools and school communities that it is sensible to amalgamate. The new Greenwood Primary School is another example of an amalgamation of two schools, and that is about to be constructed. With the amalgamations, there are some savings.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How much is it anticipated will be saved on school amalgamations over the out years?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Savings are already in the pipeline and there are schools that the planning process is yet to identify—

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How much savings have been budgeted for?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We expect \$9 million, starting in 2011-12, \$3 million in 2011-12 and possibly \$6 million in 2012-13—but those schools are still to be identified.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the minister saying that the department has identified locations where amalgamations might take place, but has not started the consultation process?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, they have not been identified at this point.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: So the minister does not know.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is, as always, an ongoing process. Identification is a continuing process which probably began in the life of the last government and which continues now.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Absolutely; that is what I am trying to clarify.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: At this point there is no list of schools. We are really at the beginning of that planning stage. It is a very sensible part of planning. As we all know, amalgamating—or rebuilding—two and in some cases three old schools produces a terrific result for school communities because those children and their families and teachers have the opportunity to have the best in modern school design and in information and communication technology and so on. Amalgamation should be seen as a very positive step for communities.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Is the minister saying that the school buildings are replaced when two or three schools are amalgamated into one school?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: They can be, but not always—it is case by case. Often a school might be amalgamated into another existing school with additions to that school. It can be done in different ways, depending on the size of school sites, the age of the schools being amalgamated in the area and so on. It is a case-by-case basis. However, the two examples that I gave happened to be of new schools that are being built.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Minister, could the concept of amalgamating primary and high schools into an educational precinct also be considered?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are all sorts of possibilities. I think that exploring what is right for a particular community and the children in that community is central to the planning process. I think we are always open minded about coming up with the best result for a particular area, community or group of schools.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Further to that question, is the minister aware of any proposals to establish a K-12 school on the Como Secondary College site; and, if so, does she support that proposal?

[9.30 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is a very interesting question. I visited Como Secondary College with the member for South Perth to sign the memorandum of understanding with Curtin University of Technology. It is an excellent school. Certainly, its relationship with Curtin University in science and mathematics gives that school a very special place. I am aware of the suggestion. These types of suggestions from the community are a good way to start exploring these ideas. A request was made for the department to complete a feasibility study to rebuild Curtin Primary School on the Como Secondary College site to establish a K-12 school. The feasibility study has begun. Once we have seen that, we will look at building a K-12 school, which will provide a lot of benefits for the community and the students because of the students' seamless transition through the school. It will mean that primary school students will have access to teachers who are experts in a particular field and the primary school students will have access to facilities that they would not otherwise have access to in a regular primary school. There are a lot of opportunities to explore that type of amalgamation or rebuild of the primary school on the high school site. Recently I was in Adelaide and visited Ocean View College—

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: My question was about the three per cent efficiency dividend.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: The answer took us off into amalgamations.

The CHAIRMAN: We went off into amalgamations.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Point of order, Mr Chairman. We did go to amalgamations. A question was asked about amalgamations.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for South Perth is correct, but the minister has moved off the topic.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: The opposition has been given half an hour to ask questions.

The CHAIRMAN: That is fine. I will let the minister finish the answer. After she had completed this question, I was going to ask the minister to deal with what we are dealing with and to not go off on a tangent. The minister will conclude.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I was commenting on a school in Adelaide, which takes students from birth to 17 years old and has integrated childcare and other parenting facilities. There is a child health nurse on site from time to time and so on. One of the things that we can do now, especially regarding encouragement through the national partnerships, is look at different ways of putting our schools together. There are one or two K-12 schools. Certainly district high schools go from K-10. There are a number of ways of looking at how we can deliver the best schooling. When the feasibility study is done, it might show that this is the best answer for the schools in that area, where I know there are a number of ageing primary schools. It is a good way to renew the facilities.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister will get back to the three per cent efficiency dividend.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I have a question about the three per cent efficiency dividend.

The CHAIRMAN: Let the minister continue.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am continuing through the list. Is that what the Chairman would like me to do?

The CHAIRMAN: The minister can continue until she has finished and then members can ask further questions.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are discussing the statewide schooling provision. The next item is the reduction of the overestablishment of education assistants, which is a saving of \$15.7 million. I will ask the director general to explain the intricacies of this item.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: We have 450 education assistants surplus to location. The education assistants were placed for the early years and for students with disabilities. There has been mammoth growth in the percentage of students with disabilities—some seven per cent in 2008 alone—and the number of education assistants has grown rapidly. This is an issue of location. Education assistants have been permanently placed in schools, under the department's interpretation of the modes of employment policy. A special needs education assistant who was employed at a school for more than two years was made a permanent employee rather than a temporary employee on contract. For example, if a student with disabilities left a school and went to another school, the student was given an aide at the new school but the original teacher assistant remained at the original school, despite not having to service a student with disabilities there. There have been restrictions on our ability to redeploy teacher assistants to other sites. We have worked out a process of doing that and the 450 FTEs will be reduced over a four-year period by being redeployed to other vacancies in the system. The saving comes about by placing or redeploying these education assistants into vacancies that occur elsewhere. That will be tricky in some places—for example, with education assistants who work in a country location where there is not likely to be a vacancy in a nearby school. We will work with those people individually, but they will be redeployed under the legislation that appropriately governs the redeployment of people under the act. That will save \$15.75 million.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: How many of the 450 education assistants are we expected to lose out of the system to save roughly \$16 million?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I ask the director general to answer that.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: We do not anticipate losing any of those people; they will be redeployed to other education assistant positions. They will not lose their job. They are permanent employees of the department and we will obviously respect the employment contract that we have with them. They will be redeployed to another position to provide a service to students.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: With regard to these special needs assistant teachers, I have a letter from a constituent who is very concerned about a child who suffers from autism and attends South Perth Primary School. My constituent has informed me that this year the education assistant's time has been reduced to 0.5. The school was

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so concerned about that that it kept employing the assistant at 0.9 by using school funds. I have been informed that this situation will not continue beyond term 1. The student's parents feel that their eight-year-old son was doing well while he was getting the full-time help of a special needs assistant but are very concerned that their child might not continue to receive that help in the future. They have written to the central office and the student services manager at the local district office in Cannington but have not yet received a reply. Can the minister assure me that this matter will be looked at?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am sure that we can look at the individual case for the member. If he would like to pass that on to me, I will follow it up.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have a specific question about the money associated with teacher assistants. Is it not true that the government intends to save \$68 million over the forward estimates by cutting the budget for teacher assistants and employing fewer teacher assistants?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. The item that we are discussing at the moment, which is the education assistants —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I be quite clear that the minister is saying that she will not be saving \$68 million in total because of the reduction in the number of teacher assistants and the redeployment practices?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. I will pass that over to Mr McCaffrey, but the answer is no.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The director general has pointed out that this will be a staged approach and a redeployment issue. Over the four-year estimates, we expect to save \$43.7 million. The \$15.7 million is the full cost of the 450 teacher assistants when we have been successful in reducing the numbers by that amount.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will the minister explain why she is reported to have specifically said —

The Minister said these reforms to the participation program and the deployment practices for education assistants would save \$68 million over the next four years. Staff reductions would be achieved through redeployment or natural attrition.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the member for Midland reading from?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is the minister's media release.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are two items to that: the participation coordinators, which we have dealt with already, and the sub-item of education assistants, which we are now dealing with. There is an oversupply of education assistants, as I understand it, because of the department's employment practices. Those people will be dealt with through redeployment. There is a surplus number of those people. Those two things add up to that \$68 million.

[9.40 am]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister previously gave a figure for participation officers and what would be saved there. Can the minister give an exact figure or is it about the \$15.7 million that the minister just claimed? Is that the only money that will be saved?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think it is \$15.7 million. I will ask Mr McCaffrey to explain.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The \$15.7 million is the final salaries that we would save in the last year. That adds up to the \$44 million that I mentioned. On the participation issue, as part of that question, there are three programs, which the minister has mentioned, which add up to \$24 million and which bring it up to \$68 million. There are two components to that answer.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Therefore, over \$40 million is being saved by making cuts to the area of teacher assistants, deployment practices and so forth.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The \$68 million would include participation coordinators.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has referred to the salary component. Over that time how many full-time jobs will be lost? What is the reduction in the number of full-time jobs for teacher assistants?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are 450 people who are surplus to needs at the moment because of the employment practices.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister will be reducing the numbers by 450 people over that time. Is that the plan?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. I will ask the director general to explain again to the member.

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Ms S.A. O'Neill: With respect to the 450 people, they are already in schools where they are surplus to needs. There are a commensurate number of vacancies that have not yet been filled, so it is a replacement issue. It is redeployment from one place to another. They are not being cut. Our spend will bring us back to where we ought to be on education assistants; whereas at the moment it is inefficient, they are surplus and they are in places where they should not be, and we need to restore the balance. Rather than paying twice we will be paying once for education assistants where they ought to be placed.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr McCaffrey said that he was making a significant saving on salaries. How can the department do that if it is going to employ the same number of people?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will give the member an example of where this can occur. An education assistant is employed in a country school for a child with special needs. After two years that person becomes a permanent employee. Let us say that after three years that child moves from that country school to the city —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have understood all that perfectly.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That person then becomes surplus to need.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: When that person is put to another school, the department saves money. It does not work out that way. The department is employing fewer FTEs, otherwise it cannot make a salary saving.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr McCaffrey to explain it again.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: It is tied up with the expected growth that we would see. The identification of students with disabilities would be part of the answer. Instead of having to employ additional people, the people we have on our books will be redeployed. We would expect that there would be some growth, which we have factored into our forward estimates. At the moment I think we are paying something like 5 600 education assistants. We would probably say that based on our current needs we would need about 450 fewer than that. It is a matter of absorbing as we go, because there will always be increased costs as these people are identified.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The department is reducing the number by 450 people.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Of those we would have on our books at the moment, yes.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: What has just been said is that the department has 450 people surplus to requirements at the moment. That comes about because a student moves, goes out of the system or whatever. The department also has 450 vacancies in other areas in other schools. There are therefore 900 people, which is what it works out at. There would be 900 people and the department is cutting it to 450 people; therefore, 450 positions are being cut from the system.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, they are being absorbed.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Being absorbed and being cut are one and the same thing. I think the minister is being a little mischievous here. If the department is losing 450 jobs, just say it and we will be happy.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Perhaps Mr McCaffrey would like to have another go.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Part of the answer is that we would have the need to track students as they move around the state. Until this stage we have been putting additional teacher aides in place to cover those kids as they move. I also mention that it is expected there will be some growth in some areas as students get into the system. As we all know, with the way that medical technology and improvements in practice have gone, more kids are surviving, so we would expect that over the years they would enter the school system. We would therefore have the need to put 450 people on. We have 450 more people on our books than we think we will need over the next four years, so instead of employing another 450 people, we will use those people, and also reduce numbers through natural attrition if those numbers do not grow.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What is the roster that the department has now and what is the roster expected to be in future for the total number of education assistants? There are 5 600 now and there will be 5 000 in the future. Is that correct?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What is the figure?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The number required will increase, as it has been, as more children are diagnosed with special needs, for instance.

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Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What is the number? It cannot be that hard to say. There are 5 163 today and there will be 4 500 in four years. Surely somebody is capable of providing that figure.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will give an example of the growth. In the year 2000 there were 875 education assistants for children with special needs.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: But with respect —

The CHAIRMAN: Let the minister answer, please.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: May I just show where this is going, because it does answer the member's question. In the year 2000 there were 875 education assistants for children with special needs. This year there are 3 200. Those numbers will continue to grow as more children are diagnosed. Let me give the member an example: it may well be that some or quite a few of the 450 education assistants who are in schools and surplus to needs will become part of this number.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is a very simple question: what is the complement of education assistants on 27 May 2009; what is the budgeted complement for 27 May 2010; what is the budgeted complement for 27 May 2011; what is the budgeted complement for 27 May 2012; and what is the budgeted complement for 27 May 2013? The minister cannot present this information to us, saying that there will be savings, if the minister cannot answer those questions. The next question is this: on those dates, what was the original budgeted position before the minister made the cuts? If the minister cannot answer those questions, she cannot claim that she is making a saving, because she will not know what the department is going to spend.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In the year to date the average number of education assistants is 5 592.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the minister cannot answer those very specific questions, which are not very complicated and which form the basis of the assertion by the government that it is saving money, I am happy to have the answers as supplementary information.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will be very happy to provide that as supplementary information. I do not have those figures in front of me.

The CHAIRMAN: We will allocate supplementary question No A15. What exactly will the information be that the minister will provide?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The information I am requesting—I do not know whether the minister will provide it—

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will do our very best for the member.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Let us choose an easy date, such as 31 March. What number of education assistants is the department budgeting for on 31 March 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, and what was the position prior to the decision to reduce that number by 450 people? What was the budgeted position for each of those dates?

[9.50 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We have the information; we just do not have it with us now. We will provide it as supplementary information.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is fine.

[*Supplementary Information No A15.*]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: On the same topic, how many principals have come to the Department of Education and Training, saying that they have too many education assistants in their schools?

Mr P.B. WATSON: None in my electorate.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We do not keep a list of how many principals come in with questions or statements.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Has there been one?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Have there been any?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not know; they have not come to me. But it is certainly widely acknowledged that when a child leaves a school, the person who is employed there on a permanent basis to look after that child is surplus to needs. I am sure those people could always be used, but if somebody has been employed as an assistant to a child with special needs and there is no longer a child with special needs at that school, we would all like to see that assistant helping a child with special needs somewhere else.

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Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Further to that answer, is the minister saying that if I have a child with a disability and there is an education assistant provided, and I move my child from school A to school B, there is no opportunity for that education assistant to also move, because of the staffing formula?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In some instances it is quite possible for that person to move with the child, but if the child moves 500 kilometres, from a rural setting to the city, it is not always possible for that person to move with the child.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: But is there that flexibility generally in the metro area?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Certainly there can be; absolutely. It would be good education practice to do that, but it is not always possible. That is how the situation arises that we are describing to members now, whereby sometimes the assistant is appointed to the school and is not able to be moved. It may well be that the assistant could be moved to a school 50 kilometres away, but sometimes even that is very difficult to do.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Finally, on that topic, can the minister advise us where the 450 surplus-to-need education assistants are currently? Have any been identified as permanent teachers who are no longer required at any school?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I shall ask the director general to answer that question.

Ms S.A. O’Neill: We do not have a specific list of those schools with us today, but we can identify the location of those surplus education assistants.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Could I have that information by way of supplementary information?

The CHAIRMAN: Is the minister happy to provide that information?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, Mr Chairman, I will provide that.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister will provide a list of the schools where these staff members are superfluous.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Surplus.

The CHAIRMAN: Surplus.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, Mr Chairman, we will.

[Supplementary Information No A16.]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is one more item in the three per cent efficiency dividend, which is a compulsory school community services program. There is no doubt that there is great value in students doing community service. There is some question in my mind about whether community service, which is seen as voluntary, can be made compulsory. It was pointed out at the launch of Conservation Volunteers Australia the other day that it seemed a contradiction in terms to make compulsory something that is normally voluntary. Having said that, this issue has been raised with me by both the Curriculum Council and the Department of Education and Training over many months, and I have been very concerned about it.

The reason for my concern and the bottom line for the decision is that it is a policy decision. A number of students were likely to miss out on their Western Australian Certificate of Education for not completing 20 hours’ compulsory community service, because it was tied to getting the WACE certificate. The students most likely to miss out on their high school graduation certificate were those children in disadvantaged circumstances.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is not necessarily the case

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I said, most likely to miss out. That was the information presented to me.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have heard that it is more likely to be some of those schools in better-off areas.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: With discussions going on over several months on this subject, as Minister for Education I was not prepared—I discussed it at length with the Premier as well—to see students miss out on their high school graduation, especially those students from disadvantaged backgrounds, whom we all want to see succeed and graduate from high school and go on to further training or university, because they had not completed their 20 hours’ compulsory community service. A decision was taken that it would no longer be compulsory, that it would be voluntary, and that a change would be made to what would have been recorded on their certificate. At the moment it is just ticking a box to indicate that they have completed it or not completed it. Some students, in fact, do a lot more than that, especially students who are involved in things like surf-lifesaving and other community activities like that. They do a lot more than 20 hours. The number of hours completed by students will now be on their certificates, to show the difference. If it is five hours, they will have five hours on there; if it

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is none, they will have none; if it is 10, 15, 20, 25, or whatever, the number of hours will be on their certificate. That will differentiate between those students who are involved in a lot of community service and those who do very little.

The other problem that some schools faced difficulties in finding placements and in fulfilling their duty-of-care obligations. Also, whilst this initiative was announced with all good intentions by the former government—I would not detract from that—very little funding was provided for it. The funding had to be found from within the budget. The overriding problem was the strong possibility of students missing out on their WACE certificate, and I was not prepared to see that happen over something that I think should be a voluntary commitment.

Having said that, it is very interesting to see how many schools and community groups have responded to it and are engaging young people. We will monitor this over the coming years and watch what happens, but a lot of community groups are now approaching schools to encourage young people to get involved in voluntary activities. As Minister for Education I encourage that, as we all would continue to encourage those activities.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Minister, how can schools be encouraged by having their budgets cut for this item?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: They did not have budgets in the first place.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They were allocated money. Schools received letters last week telling them that their funds had been cut because of this program cut.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The schools have always done some community service, even before it was made compulsory.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How much money is the minister cutting from school budgets?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The total cut to the education budget is \$3 million.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will the minister provide me with a list of how much money each secondary school in the state will lose as a result of this cut?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We do not have that information with us, but we can provide it by way of supplementary information. That completes the history.

[Supplementary Information No A17.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: My understanding of the minister's answer is that there were a number of students who did not do their community service, and therefore could not get their certificate of education. Does the minister have a figure for that; and if she does, does she have it by school?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have that information by school, but I can give some percentages now. At the end of 2008, 38 per cent of year 11 students had not completed their 20 hours. I guess that some had done some of those 20 hours, but had not completed them. Eighteen per cent of year 11 students had done fewer than five hours. It was quite a large number. I am advised that most of the community service is done in years 10 and 11, not in year 12 because year 12 is such an extraordinarily busy year.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As the father of a 2008 year 12 student, I understand! Is it possible to find out by school, or at least school district, the number that did not complete the hours?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The department has figures by school; it knows what percentage is completed by school.

[10.00 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This could not be done within the next 10 days because the information must be sought school by school. If the member puts her question on notice, we can get that information.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is that information not kept centrally?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: One of the things that has happened in schools over the past few years, which I think is a fantastic thing to have happened, is that, more and more, schools are responsible for these things, and a lot of information is not kept centrally. It would be duplicating storage of information for starters. If the member would like that information, I can guarantee that —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I narrow down the request so that perhaps it can be achieved in 10 days. Can I have the information school by secondary school for the east metropolitan district and for the zone that covers the western suburbs please?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask whether that is possible. I do not want to promise something that is not possible.

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is easily achieved. I could whip around in a day.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: To clarify, the member wants the information for west coast and east metropolitan.

The CHAIRMAN: The member wants information on the western suburbs, I think.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Whatever zone covers Dalkeith and Nedlands.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is only one school. Is the member talking about Shenton College?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is that the only school in that region?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Shenton College is the only school. The next closest schools are Churchlands Senior High School and Perth Modern School, if the member wants the information from those three schools. They are the three in the area the member is talking about.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I also want the information on the schools in the east metropolitan area.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will say what I think the member is asking for and she can correct me if I am wrong. She is asking for information on the high schools in the east metropolitan region and those three schools in the west coast district. Exactly what information does the member want?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I want to know what percentage of students were able to complete that requirement in 2008.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was introduced in 2007 for year 12 students this year. They were year 10s in 2007 and year 12s this year.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Year 12s graduated in 2008. What percentage of the year 12s —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was not required in 2008, member; it is required for this year's year 12s. I was alerted a few months ago that there was a difficulty. This is the first year it was to be a requirement.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: In any event, schools have been doing it and some schools have met the requirement. I am advised that some schools have almost completely met the requirement and they met it in 2008. What were the figures for those students who graduated in 2008?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was not required for the students graduating in 2008.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Despite the fact that it was not required, does the minister acknowledge that many students completed it anyway—that it was actually done?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member is interested in how many year 12s in 2008 did compulsory—but they were not required to do it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They did it at schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member wants to know how many students did it voluntarily.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The director general is nodding; she knows what I am talking about.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Are you asking for year 11s in 2008 —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: — or year 12s? Does the member want to know how many year 12s in those schools undertook community service in 2008?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will have the figures for both years if that makes more sense.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will do the best we can to get the information, but I am not sure why the member wants that information. It does not fit in with this issue of compulsory community service. That is fine; we will do the best we can for whatever hours we can for year 12s in 2008.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the minister saying that it would be appropriate to ask for the number of year 11s who finished it?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, because they are the ones who were required. I think that would be of more value to the member.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Okay; I am happy to have that information.

[*Supplementary Information No A18.*]

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: That completes that question, Mr Chairman.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There is one final piece of information I would like. Obviously the three per cent efficiency dividends will have an impact on school budgets. How much money will secondary schools lose due to the efficiency dividends?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is the member asking an overall question about secondary school budgets? I will ask Mr McCaffrey to answer that question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Mr McCaffrey tells me he does not have school-by-school details with him.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Perhaps I can have a global amount now and the school-by-school amounts by way of supplementary information.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We do not have it broken into school sectors.

The CHAIRMAN: Will members please come through the Chair when they ask additional questions. It is getting a bit all over the place here.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry, Mr Chairman.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will have to provide the member with that information.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has undertaken to provide supplementary information in answer to my question. My question is: how much money, globally, will be saved due to the three per cent cuts to school budgets for 2008 compared with those in 2009? Can I also have the figure for 2010 because that will show the full three per cent efficiency cut, and can I have that information on a school-by-school basis?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think the member originally said secondary schools.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have just said secondary schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Does the member want a figure for each secondary school in the state?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will accept best endeavours.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Best endeavours is the promise in taking on board this question for supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A19.*]

Mr P. ABETZ: The fifth dot point on page 349 refers to significant changes to demographic and social structures. This is a question regarding the funding for chaplains. It does not appear in the figures, obviously, because the information is very condensed. What level of funding is in the budget for school chaplains?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: School chaplain funding, of course, was part of an election undertaking. There is already some funding, and I will get the details of it in a moment. A major undertaking was to increase the funding for school chaplains. If my memory serves me correctly, it is \$10 million over four years in addition to what was already received there. It is up to each school to decide whether they want a school chaplain. I will ask the director general to explain the arrangement because the department does not employ chaplains. There is a contract to YouthCARE, and through YouthCARE chaplains are employed. I see this as a very important part of pastoral care for those schools that wish to employ a chaplain. I am sure that some great work is done at many of the schools in our electorates by chaplains as part of the pastoral care system. Students need someone they can talk to; sometimes it is a teacher, sometimes a principal and sometimes a school psychologist. With the advent of chaplains in schools over the past decade or more, we have seen that chaplains also can play a very important role in the lives of many young people. I will ask the director general to get that information.

[10.10 am]

The CHAIRMAN: There is a bit of confusion about supplementary information A18. We have supplementary information A18 as what percentage of students in year 11 in schools in the east metropolitan area and the western suburbs can complete the community service component in 2008. Supplementary information A19 is how much money will be saved in 2008, 2009 and 2010 through the three per cent cut.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: Is everyone happy with that?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can I just correct that? Mr Chairman, you said “the western suburbs”. We actually named three schools: Shenton College, Churchlands Senior High School and Perth Modern School.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay. The member for Joondalup.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The director general was going to complete the answer to that question.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The government provides an annual grant of \$882 600 to the Churches' Commission on Education, which trades as YouthCARE. This money is given to YouthCARE for the purposes of administration and operations. The department, therefore, is not the employer of school-based chaplains. It has been an annual grant. We have a service agreement for that \$882 600. On top of that, as the minister has said, there are government election commitments of \$2.5 million or thereabouts each year for the next four years.

Mr P. ABETZ: Is additional funding available for schools in lower socioeconomic areas that have difficulty raising funds for their chaplains? It is partly funded by grants, but the community also needs to raise funds. Is there specifically targeted funding to help with that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The Department of Education and Training does not get involved in that funding. As I said before, the department does not directly employ chaplains. What happens—I am sure that we have all seen it—is that funds are raised through local churches and other organisations. In fact, in my electorate the local authority provides some funds towards chaplains. Of course, we provide funding for student services teams within schools; that is, schools' funds go into pastoral care for the students.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I go back to the half-cohort issue that we mentioned earlier; the minister said that she would return to it. I give the example of a school that could possibly take 40 students into year 8 next year because of the half cohort, and there would be 40 students in years 9, 10, 11 and 12 over the next five years. Schools are asking that the staffing formula be set aside during that time. Under the current staffing formula, that school would get only 1.3 staff for that year group, and that is quite clearly not sufficient to teach 40 students. Can the minister tell us what will happen with the half cohort and what will happen with the staffing formula over those five years? I know that she has previously said that the schools will not lose permanent staff, but there are a lot of staff under contract that the schools may lose. Can the minister tell us what is the intention over the next five years for coping with the half cohort and for staffing schools appropriately so that they do not have to drop services and lose teachers?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for Joondalup for the question. It is a very important one and one that a lot of effort is going into at the moment. The half cohort is not a new issue. It has been with us for some time and has its antecedents in a 1993 task force chaired by Hon Barbara Scott. A review was conducted of pre-compulsory education in Western Australia. We had the change in the school starting age, which led to a change of six months, as the member will recall. That meant that there would be a half cohort in year 1 in 2003. That was announced in 1996 by the minister, so there has been a lot of time to work through these issues. I think it is fair to say that that has been very well managed through the primary years; it has not been easy in some instances. We have been working through this issue for next year. It is the continuation of what has come before. As the member has said, those students will enter year 8 next year. I am very conscious of the sort of situation that the member has described in the school in his electorate. I know that we will continue to manage it well. If we have managed it well for nine years, we will continue to manage it. It is our intention to maintain staffing levels as they have always been maintained. If there are particular issues at schools, they will be dealt with on a school-by-school basis. The planning for that has to be done on a daily basis from now on, because it is not possible to anticipate every situation in every school. It is the sort of situation that is being dealt with in some district high schools now and is being managed with extra staffing if required. The programs available to students in schools will be maintained, but it can be looked at only on a case-by-case basis, and that is exactly what will happen. I will get the director general to give some more details about the matters that the member has raised.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: Schools are staffed according to a formula. As is often the case, we have enrolment fluctuations; and, depending on the enrolment, a school is staffed in accordance with that formula. As on any other occasion, a group of students might leave a school, and the school is given sufficient staff to deal with the number of students at that school. For example, if lots of children move for some reason, as in Ravensthorpe, the staffing formula is adjusted. Schools always have allocated to them the number of staff they need to deal with the group of students in front of them. With the half cohort, as the member rightly pointed out, there will be fewer students in year 8, so the staffing formula for each school will be adjusted to provide enough staff for the students at the school. Each school will have sufficient staff to maintain programs for the number of students at that school. That is how the staffing formula works, and that is why the minister is able to say that programs will

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be appropriately maintained for students at each of the public schools. The staffing formula will provide, as it does in every school, sufficient staff for the number of students at the school. The simple fact is that if a school has 40 students, it needs a certain number of staff; if a school has 160 students, it needs a different number of staff. Given that the staffing allocations in secondary schools are different from those in primary schools, the schools will have enough staff to deliver the programs that they are required to deliver.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: As the minister has said, this has been going on since 1993. I think it was 1997-98 when the then minister, the now Premier, put it in place in primary schools, and it is now manifesting itself in high schools. Principals, teachers and parents are very concerned that they will lose teachers next year because of this hiccup in the system, which is really what it is coming through as. They may not be able to run classes and the subjects that they ran previously because there is no moratorium on the staffing profile for the next five years. In five years, when it works itself out, we will have to re-employ those teachers. I know that the minister keeps saying that there will be no loss of permanent employees, but lots of employees who are employed on a contract basis can be dropped from the school system. As the director general has just said, because there is a reduced number of students, there will be a reduced number of teachers in schools. How many teachers, either permanent or contract, will we lose over the next five years? The minister has said none. How many will we lose out of the system, because we will have to try to recruit them again in five years? On top of that, what disadvantages will there be for students in this half cohort if subjects are dropped because there is an insufficient number of teachers at the school because of the staffing formula? Principals are asking for a moratorium for the five years. Why can it not happen?

[10.20 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is important to understand that no student will be disadvantaged in these programs. That is the underlying policy of this government. At the same time, there will be lower numbers but the staffing procedures and policies in place will continue. However, I emphasise to the member for Joondalup that we will be looking at schools on a case-by-case basis, as we do now in district high schools where extra staffing allocations are made if required. For example, if a district high school has 10 year 8s, it organises its program according to the needs of those children and the subjects it wishes to offer. From time to time—quite often in fact—a school such as that would get extra staff to make sure that an adequate and full program is provided to the children. That is why I keep saying that it is necessary for us to look at each school individually to consider the needs of the school and the children. It is very difficult right now to give specific answers to the member's questions, because we do not know what the enrolments or needs will be in many schools. I assure the member that we will be looking at those schools on a case-by-case basis to ensure we maintain full programs in those schools. In year 8 there is a general curriculum as opposed to the specialist curriculum in years 11 and 12. All the general subjects that are offered in year 8 will be, of course, honoured in year 8.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I have a further question. The feedback I am getting from principals in the northern suburbs is that they are getting fluffy answers that actually do not tell them anything. That is exactly what we are getting in this place. The minister is giving us answers that are not telling us anything. Parents, principals and teachers actually want to know if they can have a moratorium on staffing or, if there is going to be extra staffing, what they will get. They want that information categorically out there, not just some fluffy answers, such as "We do not know." Students need certainty, the parents need certainty and certainly teachers need certainty.

I have also asked the minister how many teachers may be lost from the system and how those teachers will be recruited in five years when the level comes back up again.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Schools can be assured that they will have enough staff for the general program in year 8, and that if somehow they fall outside the formula, they will get extra staff to ensure they can provide that program. There are therefore no concerns for students in year 8. I agree with the member that there is an issue about staffing and that a number of people employed this year who are not permanent may not be employed next year. That was always intended to be the case. However, there was no funding in the previous government's budgets in the past few years in anticipation of that.

What is interesting about staffing, and it is something that consumes a lot of my time and a lot of time of the director general and others, is that the projections for teachers across Australia—not just Western Australia—indicate that by 2013 there will be a major shortage. Therefore, a number of things are happening at the same time. We want to encourage people into the teaching profession, because in 2013 we know that across Australia there will be a major shortage. However, at the moment we have what the member for Joondalup called a hiccup with the half-cohort, which creates an added issue for us to deal with, and I am as conscious of those issues, as is the member. I am sorry that principals in the northern suburbs regard the answers as fluffy, but I assure the

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member that this issue is being dealt with on a daily basis so that the bottom line next year is that students in high schools will be provided with the programs they should be provided with, and will not have a lesser program if they are in a half-cohort. That is an undertaking and is the policy of this government.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I have a further question. Some schools—it will happen—may have very few year 8 students. One school has been reported to me as having possibly eight year 8 students. What strategy is the minister putting in place to support a school like that? The natural assumption is that those students would be sent to another school, and that is what parents are worried about.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are a number of options, and the member has mentioned one. It may be that the students would be combined with students in a neighbouring high school; that is an option. However, the member should bear in mind that there are already schools in this state that have very low numbers—fewer than 10—and they are still provided with an adequate program. From my personal experience, I would like each parent and every family to be counselled for the best placement of those children. We may well need to look at combining—I am talking about students now—so that we can get the best program for these individual students. I add that the director of schools is working with every school, as are district directors, so that we get the best results for children.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I have a further question about the scenario in the metropolitan area. I know what happens in the country and it is unavoidable because of distance, but if a metropolitan high school gets eight students or a very low enrolment in year 8, and the best strategy is to bus them to another school and amalgamate them, a cohort year will be missing in that school for the following five years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I know. It is a major issue; there is no question about that.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: What is the strategy for dealing with that issue? Surely, after all this time, there has been some thought put into how to deal with it. Will the department close a school that loses the one-year cohort? It is a concern.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is a major concern; I agree with the member for Joondalup totally. That is why we are discussing it now. We would not be discussing it unless it was a major concern. Much of the detail of it will unfold only in the coming months and is just beginning to unfold. I will ask the director general to add some comments about the work that is being done with schools.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: As the minister said, we are working with individual schools. The issue that the member points out is one that concerns us equally: if a year 8 cohort is small, will the subsequent cohorts be small? We have done a lot of demographic work in each area around secondary schools to indicate the number of students coming along behind that year 8 cohort, which is half. In most secondary situations there is a strong cohort behind. Of course we cannot guess where parents will send the smaller numbers of students, but by and large in most secondary schools there will be a strong cohort to come behind. However, it is true to say that in the metropolitan area we have a small number of small secondary schools that would be small anyway. Therefore, it is not as though a small cohort is a new issue. Obviously it is exemplified in this current arrangement, but we have some small schools and we work with them now. We are always involved, and with other government agencies, in demographics and forecasting so that we are assured of the viability and the sustainability of those schools going forward. As the minister rightly points out, we are looking at the year 8 half-cohort in individual schools on not only a day-by-day basis, but also the subsequent impact that it will have for schools moving forward. That is part of the work that we do on an ongoing basis, as the minister said earlier, because we want to make sure that schools are not only effective but also operating efficiently; therefore, with small numbers we always have to have an eye on how we plan forward for those schools.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I read that the State School Teachers' Union of WA estimates that there will be 500 fewer full-time equivalent employees teaching next year in secondary schools because of the half-cohort. Is that an accurate figure?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to answer.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: Our forecasting shows the potential for 500 fewer FTE employees required in secondary schools next year on the basis of roughly the half number of year 8s. Obviously we will need more teachers in primary schools. It is important, though, that we acknowledge that schools themselves have been given greater authority over their funding to meet their own unique circumstances. Schools, therefore, right now work through their own process, and some of those fixed terms that would normally be attributed to staff in schools as a result of the formula, as happens from year to year, will be picked up through other sources of funding. We are also developing right now, and we will introduce in July, an opportunity for some secondary teachers who would like

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to make the transition to primary teaching, and that is open to permanent and fixed-term teachers. Obviously, people are not forced to do that but from year to year we always have a group of people who are interested in making that transition. Therefore, it is hard to be exact; the forecast says 500 full-time equivalent employees, but it depends very much on workforce planning, resignations, retirements and the like. However, that is a figure that was also made public last year.

[10.30 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will also add to that answer. Of course, with a full cohort in primary schools next year, there will be increased demand for primary school teachers. Therefore, we will have an issue not only with secondary teachers but also primary teachers. I do not think there is any anticipation that there would be a shortage of a great number, but encouraging some of those people who have been involved in lower school teaching, particularly people who are now in secondary schools, to consider perhaps upper school primary teaching is an interesting career move for some people. Every year some people want to do that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Therefore, the minister expects that 500 reduction in FTEs to roll over the years for that half-cohort until it reaches year 12, and it will be 500 a year. Given that there is now a higher level of student retention in year 12, will that actually increase the reduction in teachers in future years? That is the first part of my question. Is it anticipated that there will be a reduction in options for this half-cohort as it gets to its senior studies?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will answer the second part of the member's question first. It is government policy that options and programs for students will not be reduced; that a half-cohort and a decision by government to change the school entry age should not affect the programs that are offered to those children. That is an underlying principle and I will watch that very carefully. I will get the director general to comment on the first part of the member's question. I have a document in front of me—I am not sure of the date of it—that was certainly published when members opposite were in government. It is entitled "WA teacher demand and supply projections" and it talks about the 500 fewer employees. Therefore, it is an ongoing issue—it is not a new issue—that the previous government was dealing with and that we continue to work on.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: With respect to the number of FTEs beyond 2010 that is surplus or not required for that period, it is hard to get an exact figure; therefore, it has to be a forecast. I think new factors that will reduce or soak up some of that surplus include that more students are coming into the public school system with more than 4 000 additional students in public schools in 2009—an increase that we have not seen for a long time. Under national partnerships, we will get additional funding from the commonwealth for a variety of programs. As the member says, in terms of student retention, participation has certainly increased, and because of the combination of a lot of those factors—we would expect an increase—we would anticipate in our forecasts that would assist in the use of the 500 FTEs that at the moment, in accordance with our formula, will be excess.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Before we go on, are we going to agree on a break time some time in the next half-hour? Maybe quarter to 12—quarter to 11?

The CHAIRMAN: Quarter to 12—that is a bit of a long bow, education minister!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have been told that if we go past 11.00 am, we do not get a break; that is all.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am quite relaxed about it. If the minister wants a break at quarter to 11, we will break at quarter to 11 and resume at 11.00 am.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Okay; I thank the member.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the member for Willagee had a further question.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think the minister has provided the response that the number of 500 teachers will actually be fewer.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Just on that, I ask about the situation of schools that are low in student numbers and the strategy to actually maybe transport them to another school or whatever might happen. We have many, many schools that have very, very large numbers of students. I think that once we get above a certain number of students in a school, it can also cause problems for discipline and teaching and all those sorts of things. For schools that are well and truly over in student numbers, is there any plan to actually work those down to other schools that have lower numbers and are within a reasonable distance? I know there are no boundaries and things like that anymore, but it seems stupid to have one school with 1 200 to 1 700 students and, within a couple of suburbs, to have another school that is struggling to get student numbers. We build new facilities at the biggest

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school and then we eventually close down the smaller school. It just seems nonsensical, so is there any strategy to work that out?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Unfortunately, there are continuing demographic changes, of course. School size is a fascinating subject and we have done some work on that in the past eight months. I have had various research papers provided to me that I am still looking at. It would appear that an optimal school size for a senior high school is about 1 200 students in terms of efficiency, behaviour management and a range of things. However, it does vary, of course, based on where the school is. In some circumstances it might be better to have a much smaller school if there are large numbers of disadvantaged children whom we want to provide with special programs and so on. Therefore, we have to be very conscious of school size in our planning. We have boundaries for schools but sometimes the demographics get beyond us, or the school has special programs. For instance, Churchlands Senior High School had 1 701 students, I think, at last count, but it has a very large music school of almost 400 students. It not only draws on its local area but also takes a lot of students from outside for the music program, so we have those sorts of situations in which the school is perhaps a little too large, although that school works well at that level. I will get the director general to comment further on the issues that the member has raised because they are very important.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The control around relative school size in the instance the member points out—a small school against a larger school—is provided through what we call local intake areas. Quite a lot of schools—particularly, I guess, preferred bigger schools—have declared what is called a local intake area around them, so the students within that boundary are entitled to enrol at the school and anyone coming from the outside is governed by the rule set of the local intake area. We would not give additional accommodation to a school for the purposes of taking students outside the intake area. Therefore, a school is resourced in terms of, obviously, dollars, staffing and infrastructure for the number of students that it has, and we are bound to provide that service for students in the intake area. I think the example the member gave was of students coming from another area and that we keep building on one school site to the detriment of another. In terms of boundaries, the rule set is that students can come across the boundary if the appropriate learning program can be provided and if indeed there is sufficient accommodation for the students who are already in the area and who may come into the area; we must have some leeway. Only on that basis can students be accepted into a local intake area that is not their own. That is how the relative size of schools is maintained. Some schools have specialist programs; therefore, on top of their ordinary enrolment arrangement, they have statewide enrolment for their specialist programs. The department controls the size of those, usually under a gifted and talented education program arrangement.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Both the Premier and the Treasurer have said that in meeting the three per cent efficiency dividends all departments across government would cut areas such as their public relations and media budget, and that the budgets for vehicles, consultants and travel would be reduced. However, in detailing the three per cent efficiency dividends, the minister has made no mention of cuts to public relations and media, consultants, travel or vehicles. I understand that there may well be some cuts in those areas. Will the minister detail for this estimates committee what budget cuts will occur in each of those areas?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The 10 per cent central district office operating budget reduction, which was one of the five listed on page 348, includes those cuts. I do not have in front of me a breakdown of the public relations and media budget, vehicles and consultant travel. However, there is an across-the-board 10 per cent cut that includes those items. I can ask Mr McCaffrey to comment on that if he has the information with him.

[10.40 am]

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: We have something like 500 cost centres that we deal with through our budget process. Our approach to budget reductions such as the member has outlined has been to take a global cut across a cost centre in operating costs, which picks up not only travel and consultancies, but also photocopying—all administration costs. To back that up we have very strong policies on how and where people can travel and under what circumstances they can travel.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Have those policies changed since the cuts?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: No; they are consistent right across the board. They are part of the government's travel policy. We expect our cost centre managers, who are generally at director or executive director level, to manage their budgets in an efficient way. We do not need to take X number of dollars off everyone because in some cases it could be \$200 or \$300 or \$3 000. Our approach has been to look at it globally. We ask our cost centre managers to manage their budgets in accordance with all our policies.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer the member to the line item “Election Commitments” on page 347 where it says “Media and Marketing, Advertising and Consultants Savings”. This is, I think, the separate cut to which the member is referring. Those cuts are \$721 000 for 2008-09 and \$1.4 million for 2009-10, with a similar figure for 2011-12 and 2012-13.

I think the member will find that the announcement about vehicles has happened more recently—although I will need to check—and will not be a part of this process. In fact, Mr McCaffrey tells me that the department has not yet received direct advice about that matter, but that it is expected next week. It is a very recent announcement. Two of the three things the member mentioned are covered in the line item “Media Marketing, Advertising and Consultants Savings” and are part of a general 10 per cent reduction in central office and district offices, which covers items except for vehicles—a decision that is still in the making.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: In his answer about travel, Mr McCaffrey indicated there has been no change to the department’s travel policy. If there is no change to that policy, I fail to see how the department will achieve a reduction. Rather than specifically cutting travel and public relations and the like, the response from the education department, the minister’s department, to a global cut of the nature of \$1.443 million a year is to apply it across the cost centre.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No; it is separate.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am concerned that the savings may end up being on things other than what I have listed. For example, photocopying was one of the items mentioned by Mr McCaffrey. The central office may achieve the savings not by cutting so much of travel and consultants but by cutting other areas of the central office budget. Although that may of course be acceptable to the people at Treasury, I do not think it meets the intentions of the Premier or the Treasurer in making those announcements.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are two items. The first is the 10 per cent central and district office operating budget reduction, which is part of the three per cent that we went through earlier in the day, and the second is the “Media and Marketing, Advertising and Consultants Savings” item under “Election Commitments” on page 347. There are two different areas. I understand that in the 10 per cent central and district office operating budget —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has quite clearly pointed out that the public relations and media marketing line item is listed over the page; however, travel and vehicles are not.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Vehicles are still to be dealt with. It is a very recent announcement and is not a part of these figures. It will come on top of this. I understand from Mr McCaffrey that he is still waiting for a Department of Treasury and Finance directive about that. It will not be a part of this process.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Will there be a further cut to the education department budget as a result of vehicle reductions? Is that what is going to happen?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It will depend on the government’s position, which still has to come through to the department. However, the overall policy is that the number of vehicles will be cut. Clearly, there is a need for vehicles. People in the Kimberley and other regions need vehicles, and vehicles will be supplied. However, that will be worked through in the coming months when the directive arrives from Treasury and Finance.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, we agreed we would have a break at 10.45.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I have a further question.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Midland will have a further question straight after the break.

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

Meeting suspended from 10.45 to 11.00 am

The CHAIRMAN: We have a quorum.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Before the suspension, we were talking about the savings that are to be made by the engagement of consultants. I understand that over the past few months or so, some consultants may have been appointed to assist the department to find the required three per cent cuts. Is that the case? Have any consultants been engaged to assist the department to find cost savings?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not aware of any consultants who have been engaged. I ask Mr McCaffrey to answer the question in more detail.

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Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I am not aware of any consultants being appointed. We approached this matter through our corporate executive in conjunction with our key directors and executive directors, as I mentioned before. A lot of the work was done from December onwards. I am not aware of the appointment of any consultants. I certainly have not appointed any.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: My question relates to the commonwealth-funded programs under “Financial Statements” on page 357. I refer to the Building the Education Revolution program, which I must admit has caused some confusion and panic among many of our school communities. This is a fantastic commonwealth government program that has been appreciated by schools in all communities, but there are some problems with its implementation and the time constraints placed on it. Will the minister explain to the committee what the process is for the schools that receive this funding? For example, the South Perth Primary School is about 100 years old and has received \$200 000 for maintenance and almost \$3 million for four new classrooms and an art, music and undercover area.

The CHAIRMAN: Although that is a very good question, we are dealing with division 28, services 1 and 2.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: It is under division 28 on page 357.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay; the member may continue.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Getting back to the point I was raising, some schools, such as South Perth Primary School, have very small areas. South Perth Primary School has been told that it will be given four new classrooms. Although this is welcome, the parents and citizens association has some concerns because it would like to have custom-built classrooms. Apparently, someone from the department said that there is a catalogue of 10 classroom formats, for example, and asked people which one they wanted. Could the minister explain the process? Is there an opportunity for some of these schools to have a little more say in what sort of classrooms they get and where they will be situated on the school site? As I have said, schools around Western Australia have really welcomed the funding. However, I am sure that the speed with which decisions have to be made has placed a lot of pressure on the department. Could the minister walk us through the process, because I do not think that how this is happening has been placed on the public record. There is also the massive workload placed on the department to implement these improvements.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for South Perth for raising this issue, which is, of course, a really important one and one that, in a sense, took us by surprise. The Building the Education Revolution program will no doubt make a huge difference in our schools. There are three major streams to the funding: firstly, Primary Schools for the 21st Century funding, which has over \$1 billion going into our primary schools. The member gave the very good example of South Perth Primary School, which I will come back to in a moment. Secondly, there is National School Pride funding of \$98 million for Western Australian public schools, which is basically maintenance funding, I think am correct in saying, and grants up to \$200 000, depending on the enrolments in the school. Thirdly, there is a stream in which I am very interested, and I hope very much that we get our share of it, which is the Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools program, which involves \$1 billion to be spent across Australia on 500 science laboratories and language laboratories. I expect that in Western Australia we would get somewhere between 50 and 55 of those if we were to get our true share. However, that program is competitive, so we are competing with other high schools across Australia for those labs. The member is quite right; I think for many people there was some confusion. I am not sure there was panic, although there may have been in individual schools because of very strict, tight timelines.

I am not sure about the problems of implementing the program. I will pass that over in a moment to Mr Thom to answer. The timetable has been very tight. I would like to put on record my thanks to the department people for all the work they have done—the member mentioned the enormous workload. Individual schools, of course, have been involved in their own applications to the commonwealth as well. Decisions about those applications were made at the commonwealth level, but schools could not have done that without the support of the central office.

As for schools such as South Perth Primary School and the old schools that the member mentioned, it is interesting that having visited now well over 70 schools, it is often the old schools that have survived really well, such as the hundred-year-old South Perth Primary School and West Leederville Primary School, which celebrated its 110th anniversary last year. Those schools were built to last, whereas schools built in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s were not built to last. One of the problems that have been pointed out to me when I have visited old schools such as South Perth is the lack of flexibility in classroom spaces and the need to have flexible spaces. I think that getting four classrooms at South Perth Primary School will make a huge difference to the

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delivery of education and for students and teachers to be able to engage in working together. There are problems with small school sites. However, I think that the hard work, and perhaps the panic and confusion that was initially evident, have now subsided because much has been put in place, and we will see an enormous benefit in the years to come, particularly in primary schools. I will ask Mr Thom to comment on the specifics.

[11.10 am]

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Through Mr Chairman, before the minister hands over to the adviser: minister, the point was raised with me, and it is probably worth considering, that with a small school site like South Perth—there are others in the city—which cannot be expanded because the surrounding land is too valuable, we might have to one day consider having two-storey schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand that that may well be the way to go, and it has already happened on some school sites. A two-storey school has been discussed in my electorate of Floreat, for instance. I will pass to Mr Thom to comment.

Mr J.W. Thom: Building the Education Revolution, of course, has been a very large program in a very short space of time. We have attempted to communicate very strongly with the schools as much as possible. The commonwealth's major website has been very helpful in enabling the general public, as well as schools, to access quite detailed information. The stream of funding known as National School Pride is providing South Perth Primary School with the full quota of \$200 000, as the member mentioned, for general maintenance-type items. That, I think, will make quite a difference to the school. It has also put an application in for new classrooms through the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program. That program will entitle it to \$3 million in total. When I say "entitle", the commonwealth allows a little flexibility plus or minus, depending on the situation.

We have tended to push difficult sites like South Perth and other really tricky ones to the third round of applications. I should explain that the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program consists of three rounds of application and funding. The first round of applications, which notionally covered about 20 per cent of Western Australian schools, closed on 10 April, and the federal minister announced the successful schools a few weeks ago. Those projects will commence shortly, and must be completed by 20 December 2010.

The second and third rounds will follow—they will close on 15 May and 10 July respectively. As the third round is open until 10 July, we have tended to reserve the more complex sites, such as the inner city schools with site constraints or those that need the heritage architecture to be matched and that type of thing, to the third round. One of the requirements of the commonwealth at the outset was that each state was to provide standard template designs, which we did. The standard templates were to try to expedite projects so that there was not the need to spend a great deal of time on the fine architecture on an individual basis across the education system. That has been very helpful, but at the same time, with schools like South Perth it is probably not applicable, so we have had to tweak things to suit the situation. By and large, though, the standard designs are being used across the board. I think the point to be made is that the speed is about the creation of jobs—it is a national stimulus package—and because of the time constraints, we have not gone through a lot of the normal consultation that goes on preparatory to designing and building new facilities, but we are sticking with the standard templates.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I have one further question through the minister: have some schools that have smaller areas been able to go to different templates? Have there been some exceptions?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I shall ask Mr Thom to answer that question.

Mr J.W. Thom: As I was explaining, we have put the tricky sites into the third round of applications so that we have time to work with both the school community and the architects about their requirements, to try to design something specifically for those special situations.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Through the Chairman: would South Perth be in that category?

Mr J.W. Thom: Yes.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I have some questions, minister, notice of which was sent through on Monday. The first lot of questions relates to page 349 of the *Budget Statements*, where the need for parental involvement and community engagement is mentioned.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have those questions. I have one lot of questions that was sent through from the Leader of the Opposition's office, but I do not have those ones.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I can pass those; I have a copy.

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Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Did the minister get those from the Leader of the Opposition's office?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, they were my questions from the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The letterhead at the top of the paper states "Leader of the Opposition".

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They were my questions from the Leader of the Opposition's office. They are separate; they were submitted by me, through the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Does the minister not have a copy of my questions?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have not seen these questions. I do not have them in my folder. We will do the best we can, and if we need to get more information, we will do that for the member. I do not know what has happened to the system, but I do not have them. Before the member begins, where were the questions sent to?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I sent them to the Leader of the Opposition's office, and I understood that people there were to send them on to the minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, I do not have these questions.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I will ask for some information in any event. As the minister is aware, many areas have a major problem of children presenting —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Before the member begins: playgroups come under the Department for Communities.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: No, that is not correct. Challis Primary School is under the minister's portfolio.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, I have been there.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: That school has a supported playgroup, which receives funding from a project officer for outreach work, but the basic funding for the operation and the teacher engaged in the supported playgroup is actually provided by the Department of Education and Training.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Let us work our way through the questions and see how we go.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is both my understanding and the school's understanding that even though the funds for the outreach work are provided by a project officer, the teacher is actually engaged by the education department. Is that not the minister's understanding?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What age children is the member referring to who are on the outreach program—three-year-olds?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The program covers zero to three-year-olds. Is the minister not aware of that program operating in schools? I think the minister has been out to visit Challis, so she is aware of the program.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have been to Challis, but my understanding of Challis was that the funding came from a number of sources.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Okay. The minister is not aware of the program then. Firstly, can I be provided supplementary information on what involvement the minister has? Secondly, I also want to get clarity on what the department's or the government's view is of these programs. My very real concern is that these programs that have been set up and are being lauded around the country as models are under threat from the education department, which is telling schools not to expect funding for these programs as they are not something that the education department considers as part of its remit. I want to get some idea of what the minister's view is. Given the appalling National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results, notwithstanding the additional moneys that have been going into literacy programs, it is quite clear that we have to do something for the zero to three-year-olds. Schools under the minister's charge are doing these things, but what level of support will the education department provide?

The CHAIRMAN: Will the minister take that as a supplementary?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I want a response from the minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am very happy to respond, and then if there are some specific questions the member wants to ask, of course we will provide supplementary information.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: But can I have a philosophical answer now?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Of course.

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The CHAIRMAN: Will the minister take that as a supplementary?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am going to answer the question that has just been asked, but then there are some supplementaries that we will sort out in a moment. Is that okay?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I know the member is aware, because she has been at various gatherings where I have spoken, that I have a very strong personal philosophy about education beginning even before birth. This is the thrust that we see coming through the commonwealth national partnerships, and I am absolutely delighted that it is one that we are now discussing in Western Australia and working our way through. It is fairly new to us in terms of funding and so on.

The member will be pleased to know that at least 100 primary schools in the state, off their own bat—a bit like the start of Challis Primary School—have seen that there is a need. One half day a week Harvey Primary School has a gathering of parents, a playgroup, and they exchange information. The Challis situation is much more formalised. It has done a fantastic job there and I see that as a demonstration for other schools to see the work it has done. Philosophically, I totally support looking very closely at and supporting birth to eight—the age range we are looking at—to cover the early years, working with parents, early literacy and language development in young children before they get anywhere near a school. I recognise the importance of parents in that period and the need for as much of a seamless transition into school as possible for both the parents and the children. We are often dealing with parents who, themselves, do not have very highly honed literacy skills and they need support in many ways. We want to be able to provide those children with the best possible opportunities as they move through school. We are all aware of the research being done, particularly UK research, that says that if we spend \$1 early in a child's life, we will save \$7 later on. It is worth our while looking at this and doing it well, but it is very early days.

[11.20 am]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I do accept that the minister has that view. But my question is: why is that not a view being shared by the department; what discussions has the minister had with the department; and why are departmental officers going out to those schools that are attempting to run these programs and saying, "You're operating well beyond your remit; this is not the responsibility of Education"? I know the minister understands the argument and supports it; we now need some capacity for that. How will we link the minister's philosophy with what actually happens in the schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In a sense, it is early days. Given the national partnerships that have just been signed and agreed to, we are moving into a phase across the country that will support the things that the member for Armadale and I want to see happen and that we have been talking about briefly now. That is one reason. There is certainly an understanding of the philosophy and there is a will to do it. We now have to work out, through national partnerships and other ways, how we will fund these things. That is the next phase that we will come to.

In terms of a policy and a broad view, I totally support our looking at the early years and seeing what resources we can put into that. We have established the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning within Education, which is just getting on its feet. This week Brenton Wright from South Australia, who is looking across government departments, is starting to look at this to see how we can best provide the services we need to provide to young children. Brenton Wright did a similar review in 2005 called "The Virtual Village: Raising a Child in the New Millennium", which was a report he did for J. Lomax-Smith and the South Australian government. He is a former senior director in education in South Australia and is a very well informed person who has done a great deal of work in this area. He is now looking at how things work in Western Australia. I hope that, within the next two or three months, he will come up with some recommendations on how we might best proceed in Western Australia. I think we have been behind in this area and we need to get ahead.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We will get further behind if the education department closes those facilities currently in existence.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to make comments about that. Senior members of the department understand my point of view—the policy that is being formed. It is very new for us to be looking at this and we are moving as fast as we possibly can.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: I am certainly not aware of any officers of the department seeking to close down such programs, so I would be happy to hear about that.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: They would be closed by not funding them.

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Ms S.A. O'Neill: I am not aware of that. I had not received some of the member's questions. We do not have dedicated funding for playgroups as such. That has been the responsibility of the Department for Communities, but, as the member pointed out, it is true that schools such as Challis and Neerigen Brook Primary Schools understand the research and the advantage provided to young children by engagement in years zero to three, and have done so. As the minister pointed out, a number of schools have engaged in that. It is not a policy position or direction from this department to stop funding or to close them down, so, as I said, I will be happy to investigate that. In saying that, however, we do provide funding in a number of ways, including supporting the Department for Communities in our Best Start program and some pilot programs in the zero-to-three space. We are fully supportive of this work and have backed the research. Aboriginal community kindergartens already provide for some three-year-olds. As a department, although we have not been appropriated for zero to four, as the member pointed out, we have already gotten into the area of zero-to-three provision. This will be part of the examination that the minister referred to for the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning. It is true to say that it has not been a dedicated line item—certainly playgroups have not been. It has not been in our remit. Schools have gotten into this very often using their own resources, community resources and resources they gain through other departments and interest groups—grants and the like. As the minister and the government, through policy, make decisions about our responsibility for zero to three, if we are able to, and if that is what is decided, we will consolidate some of those programs. They are very successful. Schools would continue to run them if they thought it was necessary—it has been necessary in many areas—and if it fitted in with the program and the profile of their students.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is there a line item for the three-year-old Indigenous programs? Is that money increasing, because schools in my area with 18 per cent Aboriginal students and 20 Indigenous children on waiting lists cannot get a response to their funding applications?

Ms S.A. O'Neill: We have 28 community kindergartens and a number of funding applications awaiting. Obviously, we need to practise our own due diligence for what we can afford and whether we can expand into the additional community kindergartens. By and large, though, where there is great need we would want to respond to it, obviously, because of the needs of the students coming in, and, as the member rightly pointed out, literacy and numeracy will be well supported. They are often supported by local funds, but we are undertaking some analysis of those applications now.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Does the department have a line item for the three-year-old Indigenous program?

Ms S.A. O'Neill: Yes, it does. We will give greater consideration to this also as part of the national partnership agreement. It has a very strong focus on the wraparound services.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Will that money increase or decrease?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We anticipate it increasing under the national partnership agreement.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: But the state government contribution will not increase.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is a co-contribution. I also add that five Indigenous family and child centres will be set up as part of the commonwealth's thrust in this area.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: There is only one in the metropolitan area, I think.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is one in the metropolitan area, which will be in the Swan district. The exact location is yet to be determined.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I ask that the detailed questions be answered as supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the minister happy to accept them?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, I am. I want to check that there are two such questions.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: There are two sets of questions: one set is about the supported playgroups and the other is about the three-year-old Indigenous kindergarten program. I have questions that I will ask later.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member for Armadale please explain those questions for Hansard.

[11.30 am]

Mr J.E. McGRATH: On a point of order, I think the process in this place is being eroded a bit. A lot of these questions can be put on notice to the minister, which is the normal process.

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The CHAIRMAN: Member for South Perth, that is not a point of order. The minister has agreed to take those supplementary questions. Can the member for Armadale please read out the questions?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Mr Chairman, can I just comment? I understand the point that has been made by the member for South Perth, but in this case there was an attempt to have this available today.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, is this a point of order?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes; it is part of that point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: I have ruled out that point of order.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a point of order just to comment on what the member for South Perth has said. I understand that he made a sensible point.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I have made a ruling.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Okay; I am happy.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister has chosen to accept the supplementary questions of the member for Armadale. Can the member for Armadale please read out those questions?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Do I need to read them all out? How many supported playgroups, zero to three, are in receipt of department of education funds? What funding is provided in 2009 to Challis and Neerigen Brook Primary Schools for zero to three-year-old supported playgroups? What is the minister's policy in relation to department of education involvement in the zero to three years? Has any money been allocated in the out years for the support of playgroup programs; and, if so, how much?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Before the member goes on, I need a definition of what she means by "supported playgroup".

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: A supported playgroup is when a teacher is present modelling learning behaviours for the parents.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: So, the teachers are involved in the program?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Yes, involved in modelling behaviours.

[Supplementary Information No A20.]

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member read the second supplementary question?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: What funding is allocated to the establishment of a three-year-old Indigenous kindergarten program? What schools currently receive funding for such kindergartens? What are the criteria for receiving funding? What schools currently have applications for funding? When will a decision be made on those applications?

[Supplementary Information No A21.]

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to the first dot point under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 349, particularly the development of initiatives to increase student achievement levels. Obviously, the former government made a decision to have year 7 students remain at primary school. Would the minister consider revisiting this decision?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for Kingsley for the question. This question was dealt with by the previous government. I think a decision was made in 2006 that year 7 students would remain by and large in the primary school setting. Since then, a number of things have occurred, but in particular there has been a change in the non-government sector whereby all Catholic schools are now moving their year 7s into high schools so that the high schools will have years 7 to 12, rather than years 8 to 12. The majority of non-Catholic private schools also have year 7s in high schools. This is an opportunity for us to revisit this decision, and it is important that we do. I know anecdotally from a large number of primary schools that I have visited and others that have written to me that it is having a major impact on enrolments in year 7. I am undertaking to look at that issue again. I think we have to continue to look at these issues. For instance, with the half-cohort and the movement of children into year 7 at local non-government schools, there are no year 7s at a school in my electorate this year. This is occurring in a number of schools across the state.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Will you shut the school?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, I will not shut the school; it is 110 years old. Why would I shut it? It has been going beautifully for 110 years.

It is an area that I think we have to continue looking at on the basis of both enrolments and the quality of education provided to students in our schools. If at least half the year 7s will be 13 years of age, there are some strong arguments for asking whether they are best placed in a high school or a primary school. That question is still being asked of me by a lot of people, and it is one that we have to consider. Also, the question that still arises is: now that the primary school setting and curriculum are appropriate for those children, would they be better off in a high school at which there are specialist teachers and specialist facilities, particularly for science? That is the point that is constantly raised with me. We might be able to provide more appropriate schooling for year 7s if they were in high school. One of the very good reasons that it was not proceeded with earlier is the cost of it, and that is a major consideration in looking at any major change such as this. I do not have those figures in front of me, but when it was considered two or three years ago, it was \$835 million over four years, which is a great deal of money. There are a number of matters in terms of flexibility. An issue was raised earlier about a possible K-12 school. Such a school would have an advantage in being able to use its specialist teachers in its primary school area if it wished to do so. There are a range of organisations that we can look at for schools. It is a major concern that has been raised with me, because we now basically have dual systems: we have a private system that has year 7 in high schools and a public system that has year 7 in primary schools. I think it is an area that we must revisit to make sure that we have made the right decision. It may well be that in the future we make a change.

We also need to examine the results of national testing in year 7. In most other states, year 7s are in high school. There is a difference in the results of year 7 students across the country and across jurisdictions. It may well be beneficial in that area as well to have our year 7s in high schools. It is an area that I have begun to examine and will continue to examine in great depth to see whether there is a need to change the decision that was made for good reasons two or three years ago. The landscape has now changed, and we now have a dual system in which private schools and Catholic schools have year 7s in high schools, and government schools, in the main, have year 7s in primary schools. Parents are very concerned about that. They often find that although they are not exactly forced to take up a position for their child in year 7 in a private school, they are told that if they do not take up that position, a position will not be available for their child in year 8. In many parts of the state, students are leaving year 7 in our primary schools in droves to take up positions at private schools. It is a very difficult decision for many parents to make, because often their children have been at the school since kindergarten and they want their children to see their primary years through for good reasons, but they find that, in a sense, their children must leave at the end of year 6 to take up the position that they want in a Catholic or private school.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the table on page 349. One of the desired outcomes is quality education for all Western Australians. What is the policy on enrolling homeless children?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is there a dot point for that?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is listed under the goal of outcomes-based service delivery.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The question was about enrolling homeless children. I ask the director general to answer that question.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: We do not have a specific enrolment policy for homeless children. Obviously, as a public schooling system, we take all students who wish to enrol. I do not have the figures with me, but I understand that we have some independent minors. In terms of homeless children, we have students enrolled who have guardianship through the Department for Communities and the Department for Child Protection. They are enrolled in the primary sector as they ordinarily would be. Obviously, when a student enrolls, that student enrolls with a parent or guardian. If the student turned up as an individual, we would seek guardianship to assist that student to enrol. However, as I said, I am aware of a couple of independent minors in their seventeenth year who are enrolled, as they are entitled to be.

[11.40 am]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: What would be the minister's reaction if she were told that as recently as a couple of weeks ago the child of a homeless family sought to enrol in a primary school in the Wanneroo area and was refused because the child had no fixed address?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I would be extremely concerned about a situation in which any family was refused enrolment for that reason. We must have procedures in place to handle that situation. I will ask the director general to answer.

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Ms M.M. QUIRK: Before she answers, given that there is some increasing prevalence of homelessness at the moment, is it the department's intention to promulgate a special policy or at least direct existing procedures down to schools so that they know to handle these matters with a level of sensitivity and not to further marginalise these kids?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for raising the issue. I will make sure that we look into the issue and the ramifications of the issue that the member has raised to make sure that there is a clear policy and a clear understanding in schools when they are faced with this situation.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to the item under "New Primary Schools" on page 356. There is an allocation of \$159.7 million for the line item "New schools — To be determined". I do not know whether the allocation is reflected in the forward estimates, but I will ask my question in three parts and then seek the minister's response. First, over the next five years is the minister intending to build a primary school at Bennett Springs Drive, Beechboro? Secondly, if the answer is no, why is the minister choosing not to do that? Thirdly, what is the estimated population required to trigger the construction of a new school for a developing area?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have the details on Bennett Springs Drive, but I will get one of the officers to answer that question for the member. Generally speaking, a number of factors are taken into account when planning schools. One factor is working with the state demographer on the demographics, which interestingly even in the same area can change from year to year. We therefore continually look at the demographics. Another factor is watching how subdivisions progress. A range of issues are looked at in planning schools and in rebuilding old schools, as the member has noted already in his electorate with Bannister Creek Primary School. I will ask Mr James Thom to answer the specific question about Bennett Springs Drive.

Mr J.W. Thom: As the minister said, new schools are decided on the basis of demographic pressures, enrolments and the like. There has been a longstanding policy of not naming schools too far ahead because there can be a sudden unforeseen shift in population. The decisions for nominating primary schools are usually made two years ahead. I expect, therefore, with the balance of the amount in the budget for schools yet to be named and likely to be opened in 2012, that we will be providing advice to government towards the end of this year so that a decision can be announced early in 2010 for the usual two-year forward program, or a time frame of that nature.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have a further question. In respect of the policy question, does the minister have any comment about the formula used to determine when a suburb or location requires a new school, particularly the expanding outer suburbs?

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

Mr J.W. Thom: In the expanding outer suburbs the formula that is used in land-use planning and then in schools planning is that sites—usually a four-hectare site for a primary school—are reserved in subdivisions for roughly every 1 500 housing sites. Therefore, every lot of 1 500 residential sites will have a primary school site reserved in the structure plans. Secondary schools run on the basis of about one new secondary school for every four to five primary schools, as a general rule.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have two questions. One is about unallocated money. I have a very local question and I can get the answer by way of supplementary information. Is there money in the forthcoming budget either allocated but not listed—which is the trend for the new government in the way it deals with this budget—or unallocated for further improvements required to Melville Senior High School?

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

Mr J.W. Thom: As the member knows, quite substantial improvements have been made to Melville Senior High School, with a combination of money including school money. Those improvements have made quite a difference to the ambience of the high school. The school will also benefit from School Pride funding through the federal program Building the Education Revolution, which will provide additional upgrades.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is a relatively small amount of money: a couple of hundred thousand dollars. The school has a need for several million more.

Mr J.W. Thom: Yes. It was designed only as a wash and polish to address maintenance items. That is the idea of the School Pride stream of funding. I do not have any further provision in the budget for Melville at this stage.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Could I ask for an examination of the requirement for further improvement at Melville Senior High School?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is the member asking me?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am sorry, I am asking Mr Thom through the minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will undertake for that to be looked at for the member.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Might I ask then what was the process that determined that Applecross Senior High School needed a complete building replacement at a cost of \$56 million?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: A number of old high schools —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: And what was the time line of the decision making there?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I visited the school —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: With the local member.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: — with the local member. I am trying to remember whether it was the end of —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Who now supports the minister's government; is that the one?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I visited the local school with the local member; in fact I visited, I think, five of her schools one day—just like the member for Willagee visited schools in my electorate and just like the former minister did —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: But I was not relying on the minister's vote to support our government in the Parliament.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: — and just like the Premier did when he was the minister. It is a very usual thing for ministers to do.

Mr P.B. WATSON: A good payoff!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will be visiting schools in Albany with the member for Albany before too long as well.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Will the minister be giving us \$56 million?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I visited —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There are a lot of places and schools around Western Australia that need the money before Applecross. The minister knows it and so does everybody else in the department.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I visited the school and in fact —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: So what was the decision making and how was the prioritisation undertaken to allocate \$56 million for Applecross over and above schools such as Melville, which I just asked about?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Mr Chairman, I have a six-year-old grandson who has been taught at school that when one person speaks, the other person listens. Every time I have opened my mouth to speak, the member for Willagee has spoken over me. If he wants to continue, that is fine —

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I am the Chair.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: If I require lecturing from the minister, I will write a letter and ask her to do it.

The CHAIRMAN: Members! The minister has the call.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I visited the school with the member for Alfred Cove—I cannot remember whether it was in December or early this year—along with four other schools and I was actually quite appalled at what I saw at Applecross.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: You should come to Governor Stirling!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Governor Stirling Senior High School, as the member for Midland well knows, is going to be rebuilt.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We will get to that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will get to that.

[11.50 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The time lines are interesting. Was the baseline the minister's visit to Applecross?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: Following the visit, some work was done on several schools—not physical work, but work to inform me about those schools. In the final decision making about funds being allocated to schools, it was determined that the school would have, I think, a staged rebuild.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Determined by whom?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Through the normal processes of discussion.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The normal processes are that the department prioritises what schools are being replaced —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There is a capital works review —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Do not talk over the top of me. The department prioritises which schools need rebuilding or improving. Was it the department's impetus as a department that Applecross needed a complete rebuild or the minister's?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It certainly was not mine. As the member knows, there is extra funding in election promises and other funding that has been available. There has been no cap on funding for capital works at all—in fact, there is additional funding. The decision was made through the normal review process.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Was there an election promise to replace Applecross Senior High School?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Not that I am aware of.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, there was not. I cannot recall Applecross Senior High School appearing on the list of priority schools for replacement.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Applecross Senior High School, along with a number of other senior high schools, was built in the 1950s. The schools have not stood the test of time, as the member would be aware. It is a school that had in its physical plant enormous problems, certainly with flooding in some areas of the grounds. I remember—it stood out for me—that the entrance to the school and the administration area of the school was quite awful. As one of our premier high schools, I think, it had not had any work done on it for a long time. The science laboratories were hardly recognisable because of the condition they were in. With review, the decision was made to replace the school in a staged manner, and that is what will happen.

[Mr M.W. Sutherland took the chair.]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Returning to the three per cent efficiency dividends listed at the top of page 348 of the *Budget Statements*, when the minister commenced outlining what would occur with those three per cent efficiency dividends, she made the claim that it would not affect day-to-day classroom activities. The minister then went on to list a lot of areas, such as reducing the number of teacher assistants and the like, that will actually have a direct impact on day-to-day activities at schools. I draw the minister's attention to the article in today's *The West Australian* in which the principal of Ballajura Community College said that because the \$100 student subsidy will not be paid to the college, it stood to lose \$156 000 in student subsidies. This is significant and will clearly have an impact not just at that school but also I would expect at all secondary schools to some extent. The article also pointed out that the amount of fees collected at schools such as Ballajura that have a greater number of students who have difficulty paying their fees is much less than what is collected at schools like Churchlands Senior High School. I note for the record that it is my understanding that both Churchlands Senior High School and Ballajura Community College have similar student numbers of, I think, about 1 700 students. Ballajura Community College managed to collect about \$91 000 in fees; Churchlands Senior High School managed to collect about \$250 000 in fees. With the cuts that have been made for the three per cent efficiency dividend, disadvantaged schools that already struggle to collect the same amount in fees as a school in the minister's electorate collects will be further disadvantaged by having more money taken from their budgets. How can the minister say that it will not affect their day-to-day activities?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The term "day-to-day activities" is the member's words, not mine. I talked about classroom activity —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I actually jotted them down as the minister spoke.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is face-to-face classroom activity that will not be affected by the three per cent cut.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: "Day-to-day classroom activity" were the words I jotted down.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: One thing that the member needs to be aware of is that schools such as Ballajura Community College and Churchlands Senior High School get different resources because of the difference in

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their requirements and the different needs of the schools. Therefore, Ballajura would get a much larger school grant than Churchlands, so there is already recognition that a school like Ballajura Community College would need extra resources than a school of equal size, such as Churchlands Senior High School.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: However, the impact of the minister's decisions with the three per cent efficiency dividend will rip more money out of Ballajura than it will out of Churchlands.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to talk about the specifics of the grant. My understanding is that the calculation in this morning's newspaper was not correct, and perhaps Mr McCaffrey might like to comment on that.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: In terms of the resourcing that schools receive, in recognition of the comments the member made about Ballajura and students who perhaps come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the staffing allocations to the school, the general recurrent grant or funding and the funding that comes from the commonwealth are all differentially resourced. Therefore, they are already loaded with a multiplier or factor in recognition of the unique needs that schools might have to accommodate for students who are in their care. Some schools do collect fees at a lower rate, as the member has already indicated, but the school is already funded so that those particular needs of students can be accommodated appropriately. Behaviour management and discipline funding, literacy and numeracy funding, additional funding for retention—schools would receive additional funding in a range of areas that, in fact, schools now get in a flexible way to attribute to the sorts of areas that they need for students to engage fully in a program.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Does Mr McCaffrey have some details?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I think there is a bit of context around these issues that is worthy to put on the table. In addition to that extra program funding—as a number of people in the chamber are aware, we differentially resource our schools according to the students' needs—which has been mentioned —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am aware of that, too. I am specifically asking about the student subsidies and the school fees.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Okay. There is a difference in the number of students who receive the student assistance scheme, which is the support provided for those parents who are health care cardholders. When the figure of \$156 000 was mentioned, I certainly took a look because part of this proposal is to increase the student assistance subsidy from \$135 to \$235, which immediately means that the school will receive that extra \$100 irrespective of what happens. The point that I would like to put on the table is that the school at Ballajura had an operating surplus of uncommitted funds of \$450 000 last year and it also has \$1.2 million in the bank, so I was a bit confused when I saw that article about how it will affect programs because clearly the school has a great deal of resources that it has not yet allocated.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Did the minister not earlier say that the government will take some of that money back under one of its other cuts?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: That has already been taken into account and the school lost very little. It was one of the schools at which we added back the school salary pool funding because it had some programs it wanted to complete.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can the minister tell me what percentage of school fees are collected from each secondary school across the state?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That information is held by the schools; it is not held centrally. Therefore, it is one of those questions whereby the information is available school by school and could be found, but if the member is going to ask for supplementary information, I think it might be better on notice because it will be impossible to get that information from every school in 10 days.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How many secondary schools are there in the state?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is the member just asking about secondary schools? I thought she had asked about all schools.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I asked about secondary schools. Is it about 60—how many?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: There are 90 senior high schools.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Are they all government schools?

[12 noon]

Chairman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr John McGrath; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Alan Carpenter; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Frank Alban; Mr David Templeman; Ms Lisa Baker

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the minister able to provide me details of the percentage of school fees collected and how much that is in dollar terms for those 90 schools? That will allow me to make appropriate comparisons between schools such as Ballajura, Churchlands and Lesmurdie—they were listed in the paper—and other schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: When the issue was first raised, I thought the member was referring to all 779 schools in the state and I was a bit concerned about responding in the space of a few working days. However, we can certainly attempt to provide that supplementary information.

I will also add that when adequate levels of school fees were not collected in the past, school grants were topped up. I think that has only ever had to occur in a very small number of cases—that is, four.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the minister suggesting that that will continue?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We will monitor this very carefully because clearly this change will need to be monitored carefully. I will keep an eye on those things. In the meantime, we can supply the member with the requested information about the percentage of school fees and the amount in dollar terms collected for senior high schools in the state.

[Supplementary Information No A22.]

Mr P.B. WATSON: I refer the minister to the reference to \$100 000 for Flinders Park, just over halfway down page 356. A school oval and administration block was promised during the last election. Will the minister tell me what that \$100 000 is for and how it will be distributed?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think that was part of the Liberal Party's \$50 million in election promises. I will ask Mr Thom to provide the details now.

Mr J.W. Thom: In order to ensure we get good value for money from the combination of this funding stream and the federal Building the Education Revolution funding to which the school is entitled, our people are consulting with the school community to determine the priorities for that school before finalising the works program for that money. At this stage, having got the allocation of funds, we will be talking to the school to ensure that the outcome fits with the school community's priorities and measures against funds obtained through the BER funding.

Mr P.B. WATSON: That dedicated money had already been committed for use on the oval and a new administration centre. Where is that money going to now? It is no good saying that the department will talk to the school. That election promise was for designated money. I want to know where it is going.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand that the breakdown of that \$50 million undertaking was to be discussed with each school community.

Mr P.B. WATSON: But, minister, that money was designated. The Labor Party made an election promise that was matched by the Liberal Party. We said that the money was to be for the administration building and for the school oval.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It may be the case that Labor promised that money and that it was matched by the Liberal Party.

Mr P.B. WATSON: And the Liberal Party matched it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not match it; somebody else did! It was matched. I understand that school communities will be consulted on their priorities in the breakdown of that \$50 million commitment. I think that is the process that Mr Thom was talking about. If the priority is a school oval or administration block then —

Mr P.B. WATSON: Does that mean individual promises are not being taken into account?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not aware of the detail of an individual promise, but I undertake to look into that particular school's case for the member. As a general rule of thumb, I understand that consultation with the schools will take place to identify their priorities. Schools will be a part of the decision-making process. However, I will look into it for the member and let him know.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I thank the minister. I have a further question. I refer the minister to new primary schools and the \$16 million for a new Yakamia Primary School on page 354. The feedback I have had from the school

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community is that Yakamia is getting a brand-new school that it did not ask for—it asked for an upgrade—and the new school will have fewer facilities than the old school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The rebuilding of Yakamia was certainly a part of the \$300 million election commitment. Obviously, I do not have at my fingertips the details about what the member for Albany has just suggested. I will ask Mr Thom to comment, and if any other information is required, we can get that for the member.

Mr J.W. Thom: To my knowledge, we are replacing the school. I will need to get more details to respond to the member's question today. I understand it will be a staged works completion to prevent disrupting the education process. I gather that the school now has facilities that will not exist in the new school; is that what I am hearing?

Mr P.B. WATSON: That is right.

Mr J.W. Thom: Do we know which facilities the school will not have?

Mr P.B. WATSON: The parents and citizens association feedback is that many of the new rooms will be smaller and that the open-air covered assembly area will be smaller than the one proposed for the old school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand that the plans are not yet with an architect. Is that correct?

Mr J.W. Thom: No; not yet.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think the P&C might be concerned when no concern is needed and that it might be jumping the gun a bit. If a brief has not yet been written for the architect, it seems a bit early —

Mr P.B. WATSON: Minister, \$545 000 has been spent; obviously, that will be on planning.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is being spent or has been spent? I do not have that information.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Has been spent. Obviously, that money has been spent on planning and the P&C is getting feedback.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If Mr Thom does not have the details today, we can follow up on this issue for the member for Albany.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Is that in the form of supplementary information?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It might take longer than that to follow up. Perhaps the member for Albany and I can work together on this issue.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Okay; I am happy with that.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: I refer the minister to the second dot point on page 350 about support of community expectations of staff conduct and probity. Will the minister please tell us what strategies are in place to support community expectations of staff professional standards and behaviour in schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for Morley for his extremely important and fundamental question. Community expectations are that within our schools teaching staff and others will behave at the highest level that we could possibly expect of them. Members will recall a 2006 Corruption and Crime Commission report and the comprehensive departmental review and reform recommendations that followed. Those recommendations addressed the way in which complaints and allegations of misconduct should be handled. The upshot of that was the establishment of the department's professional standards and conduct division, which is both a proactive and reactive division. It is proactive in the sense of providing professional development, training of teachers and other staff and staff resources. It is reactive to complaints or allegations of misconduct. In addition, the WA Police and the Department of Education and Training have signed a memorandum of understanding whereby information that may relate to child protection issues can be exchanged. To give an example of how carefully the department and the new directorate have been working on this matter, in its first two days, Operation Richmond, which commenced in June 2008, identified a person of interest employed in the department who was subsequently arrested. That case concerned the detection of child exploitation material, child pornography, on a computer. Following that, through the work of Operation Richmond and other activities, WA Police has charged a further five teachers employed by the department with being in possession of images of child exploitation. I give that example to show the work that is being done—work that began under the former government with that CCC report. The comprehensive departmental review led to the setting up of the professional standards and conduct division to replace the old complaints management unit. Many complaints were made about how that unit was run. An almost constant stream of people comes through my department complaining about that. As a result of the professional standards and conduct division, we have seen a complete overhaul of the management of allegations of misconduct, and we have also seen the proactive work that has been done on standards. An

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example of the result of that good work is the charging of six people for issues relating to child protection. That is the sort of thing that the community wants us to be doing. I understand that recently the Corruption and Crime Commission has recognised the work that the department has done and the progress that has been made to improve its procedures in this area. I congratulate the department on the changes that have been made since 2006.

[12.10 pm]

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the boarding away from home allowance on page 347. Last night I received a call from a lovely young lady in my electorate who was very inquisitive about the allowance for this year. She lives in regional Western Australia and wants to come to Perth to study. Will the minister advise us how the \$7.5 million allocation for that allowance might assist her to realise that dream.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Providing support for parents and children who live in rural and remote areas is very important and gives the children the best opportunity for their education. The \$7.5 million allocation is spread over four years and increases the boarding away from home allowance for isolated children from \$1 215 to \$2 000 per student, which is a remarkable increase in the monetary support provided to children who need to leave home to further their education. Those children attend both public and private schools. The students who attend public schools more often than not board at the residential colleges in regional areas as well as the residential college at the old City Beach High School site. They are beautiful accommodation premises. Many of the children have the opportunity to go to what is now Perth Modern School. They would not have that opportunity unless funding such as this was made available to them.

The allowance is available only to a resident of Western Australia who is qualified to receive the commonwealth government's assistance for isolated children boarding allowance or the second home allowance, which is available through Centrelink. There are two ways that people can qualify for the boarding away from home allowance for isolated children. The increase in the allowance was, of course, an election campaign commitment the Liberal Party gave in 2008 and it is jointly supported by the National Party through the royalties for regions scheme. This is something that the members of the National Party support. The funding helps to ensure that all children, no matter where in Western Australia they live, have access to a quality education, regardless of their isolation. The feedback from the Country High School Hostels Authority indicates that the increase in the allowance will make boarding away from home much more affordable than it was previously. It is an almost \$800 a year increase. This year, parents will pay only \$606 rather than \$1 325, which they would have paid in 2008 if their child was boarding in a residential college that was run by the Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mr M.J. COWPER: This young girl is planning to study year 12 in Perth, with a view to going to university. Is there an opportunity for the allowance to be extended to tertiary education?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The state government does not provide funding for tertiary students. The commonwealth government is the funding source for tertiary students, and allowances are available to country students who wish to study at universities. I can provide the member with some helpful information on that matter.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to the fifth dot point on page 349. What is being done about whole school approaches to both behaviour and management improvement and also cyberbullying?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The issue of cyberbullying has been raised on many occasions over the past few months. We are very fortunate in Western Australia because Professor Donna Cross is involved in a major three-year research project to look into this issue for us. The extent of cyberbullying should not be underestimated. I understand that in the United States, 50 per cent of all children either have been or will be cyberbullied at some stage in their lives. That means they have been bullied on the internet, by email or particularly through the use of a mobile telephone. It is a major issue for us because any sort of bullying is a terrible thing for a child to have to bear. Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day. The student does not have to be at a school site to be cyberbullied but can be sitting at home in the safety and comfort of the child's living room and receive a bullying message on a mobile phone while watching television. We are determined in Western Australia to make sure that we minimise the prevalence of cyberbullying and to have good policies in place to achieve that. I will give the member another idea of the extent of the problem. In the United Kingdom, 25 per cent of children are believed to have been cyberbullied at some point. We think that about 10 per cent of all children in Western Australia have been cyberbullied. It happens to not only older children, but also younger children. Large numbers of children in year 4 have a mobile phone and cyberbullying starts at about year 3, but certainly is occurring by year 4. The work Professor Donna Cross is doing will help us to not only understand what happens,

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but also work out programs that may well prevent cyberbullying. We certainly do not want cyberbullying in Western Australia to escalate to the extent that it has in some other countries.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to “Works in Progress” on page 354 and to our favourite school, minister, Bannister Creek Primary School. I will ask some questions about matters relating to Bannister Creek. The first question is about the former Kinlock Primary School, which is currently leased by Dalma College. What is the government’s intention with that site? Will the college be permitted to extend its lease? If not, what are the government’s redevelopment plans? The Ferndale Primary School site is currently occupied by Bannister Creek Primary School while the new buildings are under construction. Does the government have a plan for the future use of this site? What community consultation has the government planned regarding the future use of these sites? Can the government guarantee the protection of remnant bushland on these two sites? This is particularly important for the former Ferndale Primary School site because it is within the Bannister Creek catchment area.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Has the member written to me about Kinlock Primary School? It has been brought to my attention.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am seeking a briefing on the matter from the department.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand that the lease for Kinlock Primary School will run out at the end of the year—I am sure Mr McCaffrey will correct me if I am incorrect—and that Dalma College is aware of that. The asset will be sold and there is no possibility of extending that lease. However, I would be quite happy for the school to contact me; if we can help it, we will certainly do that. I understand that the school is building on a site of its own. There will be a year or so when it will not have a home while it is building. We want to assist the college. That matter relates to another division but we will deal with that. If the member makes sure that I get a note from either the school or the member about that, I will make sure it is followed up. I have had an informal conversation with the school about it because the Department of Education Services has already drawn my attention to that issue. We will see what we can do to assist them, if we can at all, but I would certainly be happy to do that. I do not have any information about the future of the Ferndale site. I will get one of the officers to comment on that. I have just been told that it is to sell that site as well.

[12.20 pm]

The issue of remnant bushland is a very important one, and one I dealt with many, many years ago in my electorate. I can understand the sensibilities and thoughts of the local community. We can take that up for the member. Can the member tell me the extent of the bushland?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is particularly at the Ferndale site. There are quite a large number of stands of trees on the site, and of course it is adjacent to Bannister Creek, so it is quite important. The Kinloch site is less intense, but the Ferndale site has quite a large area of remnant bushland.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I suggest that the member drop me a note about that, and I will do what I can to follow up about it. I am very sympathetic to local communities when it comes to things like that. I have noticed in subdivisions these days that a lot of care is being taken to maintain as much of the natural vegetation as possible. A very good example in my electorate is at the Edith Cowan University site, which is a beautiful university campus that is soon to be covered with houses. A lot of care has been taken there. I think that rather than cutting down everything that is green and upright, these days a lot of care is being taken to retain vegetation. The department certainly has a focus on that as well. I will certainly follow that one up for the member.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I also asked about what community consultation the minister is planning for the use of the site.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is something I will pass over to Mr McCaffrey.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The proceeds from these sites were factored into our budget about three years ago. It was to help pay for a number of amalgamations that were done at the time, of which this was one, as the member is probably aware. A government process that has been in place for a number of years now is called the property asset clearing house. All properties surplus to government needs, no matter which department they are held by, go into that process. If somebody else in government is not interested in that land, it goes to tender and then LandCorp has a chance to get involved. We are now finding that once it goes into the LandCorp world, consultation and planning aspects are all subject to those acts that LandCorp must comply with on a day-to-day basis. I think there is an emphasis there on how those natural heritage bushlands are looked after.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The most likely outcome then is that this land will end up going to the Department of Housing for it to deal with through its normal procedures.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not know the answer to that. Mr McCaffrey?

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Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Not necessarily. As I said, if LandCorp is not interested in taking on those properties, they would go to open tender. Every commercial operation would have an opportunity of putting its hand up for any of them.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I want to get some clarity on the total quantum of the impact of the three per cent efficiency dividend and draw people's attention to page 348. It states there that the estimated actual total savings for the three per cent cuts in 2008-09 amount to over \$22 million, and there is an additional \$93.642 million for 2009-10. My calculations seem to indicate that compared with the budgeted amount for 2008-09, the Barnett government has made a reduction, which has had an impact on this year's budget of over \$115 million. Is that correct? I note there are similar three per cent cuts in pay—which I know the minister has said she is not dealing with as part of this estimates committee—of \$12 million, comprising \$4 million already cut out of this year and \$8 million cut out of the next year. Why on page 357 under "Financial Statements" does the fourth dot point claim that the three per cent efficiency dividend is a deduction of only \$75.7 million, when for education alone the budget estimate total is \$93.642 million?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr McCaffrey to answer this question.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: In the total the member is referring to, the decrease of \$22 million applies to 2008-09. Then in the following year there is a further cut of \$71 million relating to items 1 and 2. Therefore, the total is reflected in that table of the four-year impact of the three per cent reduction, so it is not cumulative, as the member suggests, but is part.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: May I draw the minister's attention to the figure of \$93.642 million, which is listed on page 348 as the budget estimate cut for the three per cent efficiency dividend.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: That is the full year of the total three per cent, of which already in 2008-09, \$22 million has been saved. Therefore, the increase for 2009-10 is \$71 million for items 1 and 2 and another \$4 million for output 3, which gives a total of \$75 million, which is mentioned in that table on page 357.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: For education, over the period of the forward estimates, including 2008-09 and the cuts that have already taken place there, which are listed for each year, what is the total amount being cut over the period of the forward estimates between 2008-09 and 2012-13?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The total cut—including, if I may, output 3, because I have only got that table—over those five years is \$415.995 million, so nearly \$416 million.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is for education, not including training.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr McCaffrey just said that it included training and that he had only the joint figure. I think the minister is right, because that is the calculation I came up with.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If I could just clarify for the member, it is \$415.995 million for education and \$38.301 million for training, the total for which is \$454.296 million. Does that answer the question?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is exactly what I was asking.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I refer to page 352 and the asset investment program. Can the minister advise me, under the new primary schools program, which areas have been identified as having potential for private commercial involvement?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The area of PPPs, as they are called, is one that other states have been engaged in for some time. In Western Australia it is not so. I understand that this is not new and that the previous government had asked the department to look into this as well. In very small ways that I have seen already, the engagement between the private sector and public schools is quite interesting, and one that I think needs to be encouraged. It is certainly the sort of thing I have seen. BHP Billiton has wonderful partnerships with schools in Newman and Port Hedland. Employees from that company benefit and the company is prepared to put back into the schools.

[12.30 pm]

Memorandums of understanding are being entered into between universities and schools; again, these are new partnerships that are developing all the time. In a moment I will ask Mr McCaffrey to comment on this because it is early days for public-private partnerships, but it is certainly something that governments around the country—not only in the education sector, but in other areas—are considering and engaging in. New South Wales and Victoria, in particular, are ahead of Western Australia on this, and I shall ask Mr McCaffrey to give members some detail on the sorts of public-private partnerships that have already been put in place in those states. It is

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early days for this in Western Australia, but it is something that the previous government had started to consider and this government has continued to look at. I shall ask Mr McCaffrey to add some detail to what I have said.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I cannot add a great deal more, but as was pointed out, we engaged someone who had had experience in New South Wales in looking after public-private partnerships. From memory, that person had overseen the construction of 23 new schools. That person was appointed to give us an idea of how we could maximise those opportunities in Western Australia. One of the major points that came out of that study was the willingness of commercial enterprises to get engaged in public-private partnerships for projects costing over \$100 million. One of the issues we have been looking at is how we would be able to aggregate and bundle up projects to generate that extent of funding.

It was pointed out that the other issue we needed to take into account is the demographic and the location of schools. As members have seen through the process of estimates, we have a number of schools right across the state that we are working on. We have already started working with Building Management and Works on bundling up other projects across other government agencies to try to get some of that happening. It is early days, and we will be exploring that over the next 12 months. We have a dedicated officer working in this area, and we think there are some opportunities.

One feature in other states that is not a feature in Western Australia is the day labour cleaning staff in our schools. That needs to be addressed, and that is one of those issues that is continually raised when we talk about public-private partnerships. I should also say that I have had discussions with Minister Collier, who is very keen to look into the TAFE sector to ascertain how we could work collaboratively across those two sectors and try to pull the bundle together.

We are moving in the right direction, but it is a bit early to say exactly what the interest will be in Western Australia, and only time will tell with those other factors after we find out more about them.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I have a further question. Have any new schools, such as the Yakamia Primary School in Albany, been identified as potential schools for a public-private partnership?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have a question on this topic. In answering on behalf of the minister, Mr McCaffrey referred to engaging someone to look into this idea. Will that be an employee of the Department of Education and Training, or a consultancy?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand it is an employee of the Department of Education and Training; it is a dedicated position. Is that correct?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: It is being done internally.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is an existing employee.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There will not be any consultants involved?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, it is an existing employee.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That leads to me to ask about the funding for these types of projects. Can the government give an assurance that there will not be government borrowings used to fund a PPP? Because the argument for using a PPP is that it allows the private sector to innovate, but if the state government is going to fund the project, why would it not run it itself?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is obviously beyond the scope of my position. I listened to what the member asked, but it is really a question for the Treasurer, and he will be in the other chamber this afternoon.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: Minister, I refer to the second dot point on page 349 of the *Budget Statements*, which relates to early childhood years education, an issue of particular importance to me. Minister, what are the merits of the preprimary year being the first formal and compulsory year of schooling?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for that question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Can I just raise a point of order, Mr Chairman? That appears to be a question that is not actually pertinent to budget estimates, it is a matter of policy: what are the merits of doing something? It does not appear to be a budget estimates question.

The CHAIRMAN: Just repeat that, please, member for Morley.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: The second dot point on page 349 of the *Budget Statements* states —

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... evidence identifying the importance of early childhood years in building a successful foundation for schooling ... hours will be increased from 11 to 15 hours per week ...

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The previous budget in 2008-09 contained an initiative to continue to encourage people to enrol their children in kindergarten and preprimary. Whilst compulsory education starts in kindergarten according to the act, a large portion of our children attend kindergarten and preprimary, and it was certainly the policy and an initiative of the former government to encourage parents to have their children attend kindergarten and preprimary, as it is for the current government. It is a very relevant question, given that a large percentage of children attend school in preprimary for the first time.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Rockingham has the call.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Mr Chairman, I have not answered the question that the member for Morley asked. We were talking about whether or not it should be answered.

Mr P.B. WATSON: That is okay; we are happy!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not. The member did ask a question.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister for Education has the call.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Children attending preprimary in Western Australia these days are, as all members know, six months older than they were a decade ago. There has been a shift in the age of those children—six months closer, in fact, to the compulsory entry age. It is a very pertinent question and one that we should be examining, as to whether or not year 1, as the first compulsory year of schooling, is the appropriate year, or whether or not it should be earlier than year 1.

Mr Chairman, it is worth noting that over 95 per cent of children enrol in preprimary centres in Western Australia—a huge number of children—which really shows that the campaign to encourage early education has been pretty successful in this state, and that parents see the benefit of their children going to school in the preprimary year. Preprimary, a decade ago, was not full-time; it is now full-time, five days a week, which means that it is regarded as a full-time year of school for children, and one which we want parents and children to take up.

As I said, schooling is not compulsory until children go into year 1. In New South Wales, children attend kindergarten and years 1, 2 and 3 as years of formal schooling, and if we consider that magic point of testing in year 3, almost all New South Wales students would have had one year more of formal schooling than children in Western Australia. Now that we have changed the school entry age by six months, we really need to monitor that. It needs to be ascertained whether children in this state are disadvantaged because they only have three years of formal schooling—as opposed to four years in some of the other states and territories—before that important point in their education when children are assessed nationally in year 3 to see how they are progressing. This is an issue that I have drawn to the attention of the director general and others in the department, and we are looking into the curriculum and how it is delivered in preprimary, to see if children in this state are disadvantaged by the difference in the number of years of formal schooling.

[12.40 pm]

If we decide down the track that preprimary school is to become compulsory, it will be largely cost neutral to the government because 95 per cent of children are already in preprimary school. It is something that we as a government—as did the previous government—accept as being a very important part of schooling for children and that is why we now have a full-time year. It became full time only in 2002. Some early consideration is being given to these issues. One issue is whether we want to see preprimary as a compulsory year and a formal year of schooling. One thing that is very important if we go down this track is how much it will advantage Indigenous children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is early days but it is something I am looking at very closely with the department.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My question relates to page 359 and is in 10 parts, of which some notice has been given. Do I need to read it all? It reads —

Can the minister please provide:

1. What is the current number of education assistants (FTE), cleaners (FTE) and gardeners (FTE) employed by the Department of Education?
2. What is the number of education assistants (FTE) by level?

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3. What is the average salary of education assistants, and what is the average annual salary of education assistants by level?
4. What is the number of cleaners (FTE) by level and what is the average annual salary by level?
5. What is the average salary of cleaners, and what is the average annual salary of education assistants by level?

Does the minister have this question; do I need to read it all out?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will check whether the question I am looking at is the same one. Does it refer to page 359?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is about the total cost of services.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think I have it. Can I just check? It reads —

1. What is the current number of education assistants (FTE), cleaners (FTE) and gardeners (FTE) —

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is the one.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have that. Does the member want us to go through it one at time, with the member for Rockingham reading a question and then me giving the answer? I have it all here.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will read them as quickly as I can.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If we start with No 1, I will answer that, and we can work our way through so that they make more sense.

Mr M. McGOWAN: How long does supplementary information take to come back? The minister can table the answers.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand nothing can be tabled today.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask the questions and the minister can answer. That sounds great. In FTE, what is the current number of education assistants, cleaners and gardeners employed by the Department of Education?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The information I have tells me that the current FTE paid on 14 May 2009 is 5 710.6 education assistants, 1 441.05 cleaners and 601.94 gardeners, on that payday.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is the number of education assistants, FTE, by level?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Level 1, 1 857.86; level 2, 882.53; level 3, 2 892.98; Auslan, 54.35; braille, 8.48; and special psychological education resource assistants, 14.4, giving a total of 5 710.6.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is the average salary of education assistants and what is the average annual salary of education assistants by level?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Teacher education aides award: teacher aide primary, average base salary, \$35 125; average base salary and allowance, \$35 326; average total salary \$35 618. Teacher aides award: teacher aide, preschool, Aboriginal education worker, average base salary, \$35 268; average base salary and allowance, \$35 695; average total salary, \$35 962. Teacher aides award: secondary, average base salary, \$39 082; average salary base and allowances, \$39 178; and average total salary, \$39 544. Teacher aides award: teacher aide education support unit and education assistant, average base salary \$37 824; average salary base and allowance, \$38 271; average total salary, \$38 649. Auslan teacher aides award: Auslan education assistant level, average base salary, \$41 860; average salary base and allowance, \$42 276; average total salary, \$42 276. Teacher aide award: education assistant, level 3, \$39 137 for the base salary; average salary base and allowance, \$39 265; average total salary, \$39 346. Teacher aide award: teacher aide education support centre —

Mr M. McGOWAN: How about I read the rest of the questions and the minister provide the answers by supplementary information?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will not supply it by way of supplementary information, but I will provide it if the member puts it on notice.

Mr M. McGOWAN: All right, I will read out the rest of the questions now, then. I will let the minister finish the one she is on, first.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is the member sure he wants me to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It seems to me to be easy to provide supplementary information. I do not understand what the difference is.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand it cannot be by supplementary but as a question on notice.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is a classic supplementary question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We gave the minister notice of it; it is straight forward. It seeks information; it is hardly controversial.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I was informed before we started today that these questions would be answered best on notice, but I will provide the information as supplementary information

Mr M. McGOWAN: That would be great. I will read out the rest of the questions so that there is no confusion about what the questions are.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Of course.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is the number of cleaners, FTE, by level and what is the average annual salary by level? What is the average salary of cleaners and what is the average annual salary of education assistants by level? What is the number of gardeners, FTE, by level, and what is the average annual salary by level? What is the average salary of gardeners, and what is the average annual salary of education assistants by level? What is the current funding in the forward estimates, by year, for pay rises for education assistants? What is the current funding in the forward estimates, by year, for pay rises for cleaners? What is the current funding in the forward estimates, by year, for pay rises for gardeners? Thank you. That will be provided by supplementary information.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are on only the first of five divisions to be completed by four o'clock. I am very happy to keep going on this.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think we just had agreement that that will be provided by supplementary information.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes, it was.

[Supplementary Information No A23.]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am happy to continue with this division, but I need to inform officers from other departments.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We will break shortly for lunch.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They will not be on before two o'clock.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I know they will not be on before two o'clock. That they will not be on before three o'clock is really the issue.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Quite likely. It is a reasonable expectation that we will get onto tourism by three o'clock and the others some time between two and three o'clock.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Education usually takes nine-tenths of the time.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am aware of that, but I need to make sure that other people are here.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I refer to page 350 and the key performance indicators and the literacy and numeracy performance that the department expects. I note with some surprise that it is expecting literacy for year 3s and year 5s to be going backwards compared to what happened in 2007-08, which I think is a bit disastrous. I would like a comment on that. More importantly, I will give the latest NAPLAN results for, say, year 5s. At Grovelands, only 67 per cent reached the national standard, which is not high; Gwynne Park, 68 per cent; Neerigen Brook, 59 per cent; Westfield, 44 per cent; Willandra, 78 per cent; and Challis, 77 per cent. These are very low results, particularly at Westfield, where clearly 56 per cent of children failed to meet even the national standard. Are we reviewing the way in which we are teaching these children? What special assistance will be put in place to deal with this massive failure in basic reading and writing? We recently heard evidence in a public hearing of a committee that the failure rate should not be much more than about three per cent if the pedagogy is correct. What are we doing to address this massive failure in some of our schools?

[12.50 pm]

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member for Armadale has asked probably the most crucial question that could be asked in education at the moment. I would like to say at least two things initially. Firstly, we have to deal with the immediate situation, while at the same time we have to review and look at what we are doing to make it better. In order to deal with the immediate situation—it was not an election promise, but it was an area that I believed we would want to put some funding into—we announced in December a package of support that is part of an early, but comprehensive, strategy to boost literacy and numeracy standards in Western Australia. I will run through those items that we have initially looked at boosting in early learning.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is there funding in this budget for this package?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Will the minister provide us with details of that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will run through them now to give the member an idea of the approach that has been taken. It is a \$4.67 million package. An amount of \$1.5 million has been allocated over four years to provide primary school principals with mentoring and professional assistance to implement a whole school approach to literacy. We see a real need to help principals to deal with their approach across the whole school. In that way, all staff will be reading from the same page, as it were, and will be working together and developing their strategy together, so that they do not find that one thing is happening in one year group and something else is happening in another classroom. That is very important. Clearly, principals and staff have needed that support. A lot of this is about supporting staff to get it right in the classroom. An amount of \$1.2 million has been allocated from now until 2010 for a pilot program or demonstration program to use paraprofessionals to provide support for teachers to help individual students develop essential literacy and numeracy skills—that is, support for those people who are not trained as teachers but who are in the classroom and can do a lot to help particular children who need help. An amount of \$750 000 has been allocated to develop for teachers a resource kit concentrating on grammar, punctuation and spelling. An amount of \$600 000 in recurrent funding has been allocated to support specialist Getting it Right teachers. Specialist teachers will get more support. An amount of \$500 000 has been allocated over four years to work with universities to develop professional learning programs and resources for teachers. As an aside, what is interesting is that I understand that the University of Western Australia is looking to appoint someone from early childhood learning to its school of education. The national effort and the sorts of things that are happening in the state are starting to have an effect on tertiary institutions, which I think is a great step forward. This area is being recognised as one that more effort must be put into. An amount of \$120 000 has been allocated to maintain a website and provide publications for parents and carers to help children with literacy and numeracy. Support will be given to parents as well, and modern communications through websites are one way of doing that. Of course, there were other supports and publications under the previous government. We are continuing to assist parents in supporting their children. As the member knows, it is not something that happens just in schools; it is part of family life if children are to succeed in this area. Very early on we saw the need to put an effort into this area. There is more to come, but that is the first step. I hope that more will be done.

I recommend the Loudon review that was commissioned by the previous government. For the first time we have taken up the recommendations of the Loudon review. While we are doing those things, we also need to review what we are doing and how we are doing it in classrooms. I will pass over to the director general to give the member an update on those things.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: All the new initiatives that are being put in place are very much focused on intensive intervention for those students who have not performed well not only against the minimum national benchmark, but also generally in class. We are moving into a much more intensive intervention support model for those students aimed obviously at maximising their individual literacy and numeracy skills. We have also moved much more into an explicit teaching model. As the minister pointed out, we are providing teachers with resources in grammar, punctuation, spelling and number skills, and, as such, that is very clear from the results of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy test, which represents the essential skills that students need for their progression. We make no apology for ensuring that Western Australian students were prepared for the NAPLAN test, because the NAPLAN test, although it is only one test on one day, represents the essential skills that children need for success.

In terms of pedagogy, we are moving more towards individual case management. We have education intervention plans and more intensive support for particular students. We have a pilot program called Charting the Course, which is more of a demonstration site. That program looks at identifying children who are struggling against the minimum standard and providing them with more intervention, very often through a guided reading process for literacy, and provides professional learning for teachers. All those things together, including the

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resources that we have already made available, are a more intensive intervention approach to struggling students, case management and preparation for not only those tests, but also the full range of work they need to do. We are also developing the on-entry assessment tool, so that intervention and support can be provided to young learners, as the member pointed out earlier, in preparation for their success. All those things together, which will be represented in a five-year plan, are building on the good pedagogy and good work that teachers already undertake but are sharpening their attention for intervention.

Mr M.J. COWPER: My question was similar to the previous question. In the spirit of cooperation with the opposition, I will forgo my question and pass it on.

The CHAIRMAN: That is very gracious of the member. The member for Cannington.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I was not listening to the member for Murray-Wellington. I apologise.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: He was being gracious.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Very good. I refer to the line item for the total cost of asset investment program on page 357 and the funding amounts beneath that item. The minister and I may have to refer to other works in progress on the three previous pages. I want to get a picture of where funding is coming from. In the table on this page, the total cost of the asset investment program is set out and then the funding amounts are listed below it. One line item is for commonwealth grants, and the various amounts are listed in the table. I am trying to ascertain whether the figures for the commonwealth grants include, as I read it, the money for the federal government's Building the Education Revolution program. Is that right, minister? Is the commonwealth putting another \$875 million from that program, which is on another page, into the asset investment program?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will get this clarified in a moment, but my understanding is that the investment in the current year is \$666 million from the commonwealth and it is almost exactly \$400 million from the state.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: My note indicates that it is \$9.75 million for the 2008-09 financial year, \$666.202 million for 2009-10, \$416.746 million for —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is this commonwealth money?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, the commonwealth money from the Building the Education Revolution program. It is included in the asset investment program, but it is not identified in the table as being funded by the commonwealth.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will get Mr McCaffrey to clarify that for the member.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: As part of the changed funding arrangements with the commonwealth, commonwealth grants used to come to our department as a net appropriation. In those circumstances, it could be expected to see those funds reflected there. They now go straight to the state Treasury, and those funds are appropriated back out as part of an appropriation. In that top line, the \$194 million jumps up to \$1.018 billion, \$743 million and \$227 million. It is starting to show the tapering off and the impact in 2009-10 of the BER. It is a different way that all Treasuries around Australia are dealing with their commonwealth funding.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Cannington.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Before the break, I had been asking some technical questions about the figures on page 357. One of those questions was about the Building the Education Revolution funding. It has been explained that the practice now is that that funding is not shown as a commonwealth grant in the accounts for the Department of Education and Training but rather is shown by Treasury as income from the commonwealth, and the funding is then allocated to the department's budget. Is there any other money that is shown as own-source expenditure in this budget but that is actually related to commonwealth-directed expenditure?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr McCaffrey to answer that question.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: We are still getting some direct commonwealth grants, but the Building the Education Revolution funding has come into the accounts of state Treasury. The member will note on page 357 that for 2009-10 there is an allocation of \$59.2 million. That money would also cover some of the other projects that are listed here. Under the arrangement that we have with the federal government, a lot of rules have been put in place. I cannot remember exactly which of those rules would apply here, but when the commonwealth makes a major contribution—over 50 per cent—towards a project, it is deemed to be one of those projects that is listed

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here. We also use that money to top up other projects just to make sure that we can cover the complete works that need to be done.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: So, in addition to the \$59 million for 2009-10 that is shown on page 357, and the \$666.202 million that is shown for the Building the Education Revolution funding, are there any other moneys that are not shown in the budget papers that have been given to the state by the commonwealth for the investment program?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The \$59 million is the source of funds. Those projects for which that money has been allocated are embedded in the total works.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I understand that. What I am saying is that in 2009-10, there is \$59.217 million for various projects across the investment program, and there is \$666.202 million for the Building the Education Revolution. Are there any other moneys that are not shown in the budget papers that have been given to the state by the commonwealth for education spending? I am not talking about grants. I am talking about specific purpose payments to the state for the investment program.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Not in addition to this funding, no.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is it also the case that the actual expenditure in 2008-09 was \$90 million less than the budgeted allocation for investment? In round figures, \$300 million was expected to be spent, and the allocation was roughly \$390 million. Is that the situation?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Is the member referring to the \$297.7 million?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: That picks up pretty well the expenditure in that financial year. However, the member will notice that we have an estimated total cost, and because works in progress, completed works and new works are included in this particular section, we will be looking to spend some of that expenditure in the earlier years. Some detail is provided on page 354 about which projects that extra money will be spent on.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am not sure that my question was clear enough. I do not have the 2008-09 budget papers here, but the budgeted expenditure for capital works would have been closer to \$400 million rather than closer to \$300 million, so there has been an underspend by the department. Underspends happen for a range of reasons. However, there has been about a \$90 million underspend on the investment program for 2008-09.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I now know what the member means. Part of that underspend was, as the member has pointed out, actually a re-cash-flowing of some of the projects that we needed to push out. That was due partly to the economic audit that was undertaken. There were also some items within our original capital works program that were not technically asset-based, and some of those were expensed, if I can use that terminology, to bring them back into the recurrent budget. Those are the two factors that have contributed to that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: So from my calculations—correct me if I am wrong—when we deduct the Building the Education Revolution money and the commonwealth grants, and we get the balance that the state government is contributing to the program, the actual figure for expenditure on capital works is actually going to fall every year over the forward estimates. It starts at \$400 million, and it then goes down to \$364 million and to \$245 million, and it eventually gets down to only \$124 million in 2112-13. Why is the government intending to reduce its effort on investment in the education portfolio by two-thirds over the next four years?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Over recent years, the capital works program has probably been at a much lower level than the \$400 million that we are now talking about. For example, in 2007-08 it was about \$258 million. That expenditure has gone up and down over the years, depending on the projects. It is also tied up a bit with the way in which the forward estimates are fabricated. In every budget round, the adjustment that is made to our capital works program is not made until the final year—in this case, 2012-13—so we would be expecting in 2112-13 to be given another injection of funds. That is because although we do identify the number of schools that we think we would need to build, that may change according to the demographics, which we monitor on a regular basis, as that final year arrives, and that gives us a better indication of exactly how many new schools will be required, and in which areas. To give an example, we might be proposing to open four new primary schools in 2013, but at the beginning of 2012 the demographics might show that given the growth in certain areas, we need to adjust that figure. Therefore, the tendency for as long as I have been appearing before the estimates committees has been to include only those schools that we have a pretty good indication will be required, and to then make an adjustment to the forward estimates. That process is reviewed on an annual basis. We go through the strategic

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asset framework that the government has in place to identify our cost and demand pressures, and capital works is part of that process.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I take it from that that the state government is intending to increase the overall level of borrowings of the state—that is, increase the overall deficit—to fund additional school activity, and that that decision is not reflected in these budget papers?

[2.10 pm]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is a question for the Treasurer.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: With respect, it was an answer given to me on behalf of the minister. The minister's position is that new schools will be built, but their cost is not reflected in the forward estimates. If the minister wants to clarify the answer, I am happy with that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think that what I heard Mr McCaffrey say was that there is a possibility that might happen.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I return to my original question. Why does the government intend to cut its capital expenditure on schools by two-thirds over the forward estimates? That is what is in front of us. As my brother, who is a farmer, might say, "If Aunt Martha had balls, she would be my uncle." We are actually talking about what has been presented to us, which is a two-thirds cut in the capital program by this government. I am attempting to understand why the government wants to cut two-thirds of its capital program from the budget.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think the member will find that the answer lies in the Building the Education Revolution program. I will again ask Mr McCaffrey to explain that.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I have tried to point out that it is on a demand basis. I was trying to provide an example of what may happen. It has been varied over a number of years. For 2010, we will only be opening two new schools, and the following year we think there might be four. It is not so much that there is no will to fund. The issue of how the government of the day is to fund it is a question that Treasury would be looking at. We would only be in a position to advise Treasury through developing business cases based on need, by saying what we think the education system needs to deliver education for children where they are living, and we will go through that process on an annual basis. The four-year estimates are an indication of what is anticipated at this time. It was quite well articulated as part of the election process that the government was to embark upon a \$300 million building program over the next six years. As in every other year that I have been involved with the budget process, those matters will be considered by the government of the day.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I want to turn to the area of employee benefits, in particular housing in regional and remote Western Australia. I know that that is done through Government Regional Officers Housing. Is there any increase in the amount allowed for GROH housing other than the cost pressure of rising rents? How many more GROH houses will the Department of Education and Training be taking on in the course of the next year and the out years? Is there any proposal whatsoever to further subsidise teacher housing in rural and remote areas; and, if so, what is it and how much will it cost?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not hear a page number or a reference.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If the minister looks at page 362, she will see a line item for employee benefits. The department receives money as part of the education budget to cover that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not hear the page; I do not think the member mentioned it in her question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I cannot see anything in the issues and trends section, so I assume that the department is not doing anything in this area, and I am trying to find out whether that is correct.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is churlish. I refer the question to Mr McCaffrey.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister cannot tell me anything off the top of her head that she is doing in this area, so she should not call me churlish.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: We have been looking at housing across the state. We were able to put up a successful submission as part of this budget round to get some extra funding for the upgrade of GROH. The other thing that we are aware is happening is that the federal government has provided, as part of its stimulus package, funding to improve housing in regional areas. On the matter of the subsidy, I am not sure where that is up to, but I am aware that it has been suggested.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There is either additional money in the budget or there is not.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: The undertaking about subsidy was part of the royalties for regions process, and is best asked of that minister. I am not aware of where that is up to at this point.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: So the minister can say that there is no money in the education budget for that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It would not necessarily be in the education budget if more housing is being provided.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is all the rest of the GROH money in the education budget or not?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The subsidy that is paid to GROH is in the education budget.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is there any additional money there?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I would like to ask the minister about three points on the list of capital projects on page 356. The first is the allocation of \$10 million for the Churchlands Senior High School music auditorium expansion. Can the minister explain the decision-making process that made that a priority over and above schools such as the one I mentioned before, Melville Senior High School? I do not recall it being a priority in the past seven or eight years. I know that Churchlands is very well appointed. Can the minister explain how that became a priority for \$10 million of spending in this and the next financial year?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member for Willagee will know about Churchlands Senior High School because he visited there and had a very nice lunch cooked for him by the students some years ago when he was the Minister for Education. Every other minister from the current Premier onwards has visited Churchlands Senior High School and seen the concrete pad that was laid for the second stage of the music school in 1993. The numbers in the music school are almost 400 now. I do not recall the number in 1993, but it was just over 200. The auditorium seats 240 people, for a music school of 400. There were two premier music schools in the state at one point—Churchlands Senior High School and Perth Modern School. Now John Curtin College of the Arts has taken over that role, and I think it is appropriate that we have at least two specialist music schools, both of which could be described as jewels in the crown of the Department of Education and Training. If I were to take the member on a walk through those facilities today, he would find firstly, as I said, that the auditorium is not sufficient. The music school has not been completed in all those years to cater for those students. The music staff sit in a very small space that was cordoned off by the music parents to make a space for them at the back of the stage. There is very little secure storage for instruments. The green room is used as a classroom. There are insufficient small rooms for individual instrumental instruction. This has been going on for 18 years. There is money in this budget to make sure that that music school is completed after all that time.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It would be fair to categorise it as a personal priority of the minister, would it not, as opposed to anything that was presented to her as a necessity by the department?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That was presented to me every year for 18 years. Of course it is a priority, and it was also a priority for the Premier when I discussed with him.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thank the minister. So it was not from the department. The department never put this up as a priority; it was the minister and the Premier. This leads me to the second point—the Premier's electorate, I assume. Under the allocations for additions and improvements to primary schools is the line item for schools in Cottesloe. It is a simple allocation to schools in Cottesloe of \$300 000. Can the minister explain what that is?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will do my best to explain to the member for Willagee. The election promise of \$50 million to improve schools included, in that list, \$300 000 for schools in Cottesloe.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In the suburb of Cottesloe, or the electorate of Cottesloe?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The electorate of Cottesloe, as I understand it.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does the minister think there is something a bit wrong with that process?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was for all to see during the election campaign, when that commitment was made.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is an absolute disgrace.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is part of a \$50 million —

[2.20 pm]

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Can the minister give another example anywhere in the budget of where that form of prioritisation has taken place?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will answer the last question the member asked.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will ask the questions and the minister will answer them.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member for Willagee might not like the answer, but I will finish it. There is a recognition in that election commitment that schools in the electorate of Cottesloe are very old.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: As opposed to schools in other electorates.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am sure there are a lot of old schools in Western Australia. Very little work has been done on those schools over the years. Like other school communities, decisions will be made within the communities, in consultation with staff, on work needed to be done on those schools.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Are there any other schools that had a similar allocation?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a long list here, which I will read if the member would like me to, of schools identified in the \$50 million allocation for works to be done in those schools. Some schools have been allocated up to \$5 million. Others have been allocated small amounts—\$150 000 or \$100 000. It was an election commitment by the Liberal Party.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Those schools are identified by school. This is the only instance of a group allocation identified by electorate.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It reflects an election commitment by the Liberal Party.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: My final point is very brief. On page 356, under “LNP Election Commitments—School Capital Improvements—to be determined”, there is an allocation in the out year 2012-13 of \$279 000. I take “LNP” to mean Liberal-National Parties. This item is about three lines above the “Schools in Cottesloe” allocation. The allocation will sit there until 2012-13, a pre-election year. Why will it take so long to determine how that should be allocated?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is worth pointing out that a huge amount of money through the BER will be spent on schools. Until that is sorted out and we see where the needs are and where the projects will go, it would be foolish to decide how to spend that \$279 000.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Further to the subject of schools and works in progress, on page 354 there is allocation for Governor Stirling Senior High School replacement. An amount of \$63 million was allocated in last year's budget. I notice that the estimated expenditure to 30 June 2009 is \$550 000. If the minister looks at page 865 of the 2008-09 budget papers, she will find that Governor Stirling was allocated \$2 million for that financial year. Why was only \$550 000 of that allocation spent and where did the other \$1.5 million go that had been allocated to Governor Stirling? Was it reallocated to another school or was it given back to Treasury?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will get Mr McCaffrey or Mr Thom to answer this in a moment. I am sure that the member is as pleased as I am that \$63 million is there for Governor Stirling.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am distressed about it because the forward estimates do not add up to \$63 million.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: After the change of government there was a capital works review of all capital works over \$20 million. That is the reason for part of the delay in progressing the project. It is part of the staged build. There has been no change to the election commitments or forward estimates for capital works in the education budget because of the BER. It was suggested that the BER meant that the state was spending less money. The state is maintaining its commitment. In terms of timing, I will ask Mr McCaffrey and Mr Thom to provide the details.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: What about the \$1.5 million that was not spent?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask them to explain that to the member.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The minister has pointed to the process of the economic audit. We were required to go through an exhaustive process of justifying why every project in our capital works program should stay there if it was over \$20 million. That process took time. Therefore, it was necessary to push out the project. As was always planned, it was a staged build and because of the site limitations —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is not correct. The site limitations were such that it had to be done all at once. Because it is a small, constrained site, it cannot be done in stages.

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Mr P.J. McCaffrey: That is not how it was planned or funded in the forward estimates.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the minister aware that, because this is a small and constrained site, the current plan is to move years 8 to 10 to the old Midland Primary School site and the years 11 to 12 to Swan View? Is it acceptable to have all Governor Stirling Senior High School students relocated for any longer than two years?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The decision about how to manage the rebuild of a school is made by the department with the best knowledge it has. It looks at the circumstances of the school, the build, the staging and what facilities are available to house the students.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The facilities are there. I am as outraged as the member for Willagee that schools in other electorates which were not priorities and which do not deserve the refurbishment and renewal that it was acknowledged Governor Stirling requires have been pushed up the list and funded. This school has been defunded.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Midland, the minister has the call.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I advise the member for Midland that this school has not been defunded, and she knows that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is spread out over six years. It is two years off the forward estimates.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is my understanding that it was always going to be built in stages. I can only go on the best advice I have. The decision was that it was to be staged.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It cannot be staged. It is a tiny site. Students cannot be on site and while the school is rebuilt around them. If it is staged, children will be off site for five years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The proposal to relocate is just that—a proposal. Decisions have not been made.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This government will muddle around with this and we will be lucky to see it by 2015.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I know the member is passionate about it and I know it is a school in her electorate, but there are difficulties with the site.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This time last year it was at the top of the list. The difficulties are surmountable. The difficulty is that it has been spread out over two years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: For how long did the Labor government leave this?

The CHAIRMAN: Members, we will move on. I give the call to the member for Rockingham.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My question relates to page 359. I am interested in the “Total Cost of Services” of \$4.1 billion and the expenditure under the Public Education Endowment Trust. Can the minister provide a list of what the money in the Public Education Endowment Trust has been spent on?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have that information. I am more than delighted to provide the answer by way of supplementary information. One of the major projects is the cyber bullying project. It is very worthwhile and is a great project.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I would like a list of the expenditure from the Public Education Endowment Trust since the election.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That information will be provided by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A24.*]

Mr M. McGOWAN Mr Chairman, considering my question lasted 30 seconds, can I follow up that question?

The CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

Mr M. McGOWAN: On page 347 of the *Budget Statements*, I refer to the heading “Election Commitments” and the line item “Better Behaviour in Public Schools”, for which \$9.7 million is allocated this year. Have other programs been cut to fund that?

Mr P. ABETZ: On a point of order, that is a totally different question from the one that the member for Rockingham asked. I thought there was an order for following through questions. It is not a follow-on question.

The CHAIRMAN: I have given the call to the member for Rockingham. He asked one question and he has a follow-up question. There is no point of order.

[2.30 pm]

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is unrelated but it is a very important question, and I am delighted to answer the question asked by the member for Rockingham. I think the member is asking whether the election commitment includes what is known as behaviour management and discipline, or BMAD, money—is that correct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am asking if it is being funded from BMAD.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, it is in addition to that funding. For 2009-10, \$39 million will be spent on behaviour management, which includes \$16.6 million of BMAD money and the election commitments. In 2010-11, \$35.6 million will be spent on those two things, for 2011-12, \$37.29 million, and for 2012-13, \$37.92 million, making a total of \$144 250 000. There are a number of things that I know the member, as the former minister, will be very interested in. The behaviour management centres were started under the watch of the previous minister, and the government will extend the number of them in this budget. The primary school centres are in Geraldton, Bunbury and Kalgoorlie. There is already a secondary school centre in Kalgoorlie. There are other secondary school centres in Bunbury, Geraldton and Port Hedland. Some preliminary work has been undertaken to review the progress of the behaviour management centres, and the indications are that they have been reasonably successful, as the member knows. We are now looking at a more detailed assessment of the centres. During my early months as Minister for Education, having visited schools and spoken with the union, a subject that came up consistently was the need for help in the area of behaviour management. We saw this as important. Some of the commitment goes towards additional support for psychologists and school chaplains, as well as behaviour management centres. As the member knows, I am very keen to see more and more emphasis on early intervention, so there will be an extension of parenting programs to assist parents in managing their young children. To answer the member's question again, the base allocation to schools—the very important money that schools are given to give them flexibility in the area of behaviour management—is intact, and this is additional money. It is a major commitment, following on from the initiatives started by the member for Rockingham, that the government considers important to continue, but with an emphasis on early intervention and support for teachers. For instance, I saw some recent statistics for students with emotional and mental health problems. A very high percentage of students—something in the region of 13 per cent or 15 per cent of students at any one time—experience such problems. There will be 25 more psychologists trained in mental health first aid, which is considered to be a very good program. It assists both students and the schools, teachers and principals who are dealing with these issues. This is very much an extension of the work that was begun under the previous government.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: I refer to the first dot point on page 349 of the *Budget Statements*, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. Reference is made to a particular focus on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. Can the minister please outline whether any consideration has been given, when designing schools, to the way children—particularly Indigenous children—learn?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: One of the issues that struck me when visiting schools throughout the state is the design of schools. I recently opened the new Fitzroy Valley District High School, which was designed and mostly built under the previous government. It is a wonderful design for a school whose students are mostly Indigenous. One of the things I have noticed over the years when visiting schools in remote communities is the usage of the traditional box classroom, which I think is totally inappropriate for those children. We have to pay a lot of attention to the design of schools, particularly for Indigenous students, but also for other students, so that we provide an environment that best suits learning. Modern schools built in the city with flexible spaces for learning and teaching are much more conducive to learning and to teachers working together than is the case with the old box-style classrooms that are so often seen in remote communities. I am very keen to look at the design of schools, particularly for Indigenous children, to make sure that they are being provided with the best opportunity for learning. I remember visiting one classroom, sitting down at the desk and realising that I could not see out of the window. Small Indigenous children, for whom space is so important to daily life and the way the world is viewed, were sitting in a little box and were unable to see outside. I think we can do much better than that, and we have to spend a lot of our effort thinking about school design in the future. The new Fitzroy Valley school takes many things into account, including the surrounding area. The walkways around the school are very wide and are designed to follow the flow of the Fitzroy River. The school is also appropriate to the climate. The community has been very involved in the school, and we need to have schools in which both children and members of the community can gather, perhaps in multipurpose areas. We will see some of those ideas emerge from the national partnership for Indigenous students. It is very important to their learning.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the same point—the issue of new schools and their construction, particularly on greenfield sites in new suburbs. A problem that has emerged is that, because government departments are not subject to the planning guidelines of local governments, there is widespread broadacre removal of vegetation,

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and I can provide the minister with a couple of examples in Mandurah. There often follows a tree replanting regime. If however, some detailed mapping of potential sites for new schools was undertaken in consultation with local governments, and remnant vegetation—particularly that which could provide shade for children in the future—were maintained, we would not have a situation in which there are broadacre levelled areas on school sites. I am interested to know what relationship the department has with local councils in this regard. An example is an older school that was built in the 1990s, the Halls Head Primary School.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think that is a new school!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: South Halls Head Primary School is another example, to some extent; it was opened last year. Both school sites are located in areas that had quite extensive, good quality vegetation. Much of the vegetation was understandably cleared for the building envelopes, but there were areas of mature tree growth that, had they been more carefully mapped and designed, could have provided shade for children. I am interested in the connection between the department and local councils during the planning stages of new schools, and the removal of vegetation that really need not be removed.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This is an issue that was raised this morning by the member for Cannington; we talked about remnant bushland on a couple of old school sites in his electorate. These days, I think the member would find that there has been a change in approach and attitude; the department's processes are much more sensitive to the local environment. I would be very disappointed if the attitude of "cut it all down and start again" still prevailed. I sense that it does not. I understand that it is not the case any more. For a school built in the 1990s, yes, they may have gone in, mowed it all down and started again, and planted trees. These days I think we will find that the planning is much more sensitive to the environment and to maintaining mature trees for the very purposes that the member said. I will ask Mr McCaffrey or Mr Thom to talk about the relationship between the department and local authorities.

[2.40 pm]

Mr J.W. Thom: I believe that we have a pretty good working relationship with local governments across the board. That is probably a gross generalisation, but we attempt to maintain a close working relationship with all local governments. I participate on a peak organisation, the Western Australian Local Government Association, which particularly focuses on things like the sharing of resources between schools and local governments. Coming back to the question of design, these days there is greater sensitivity to vegetation. The only rider I would put on that is that we have a duty of care, if I can express it that way, in relation to trees that are known to drop branches. We need to be careful about building placement. These days, in master planning a new greenfield site, the remnant vegetation would be the first consideration before we decided exactly where to place all the buildings. Sometimes there are difficulties, such as at Baldivis, where the site is extremely small compared with the normal allocation of sites of, say, four hectares for a primary school, where it becomes rather difficult to preserve vegetation. In general terms, by working with local governments we attempt to ensure that vegetation is preserved.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Is it true that ultimately the department, as with other government departments, does not statutorily need to be compliant with any local law or local policy of council? For example, the City of Mandurah has a remnant tree policy that encourages the retention of significant trees. My understanding is that that policy could be overridden by the department in its planning of a school because it is a government department that is developing it. I would be interested in the minister's comment on that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am sorry, I did not hear the member's question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I apologise for breaking into the committee's proceedings.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Was the question about overriding local councils?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Or being able to override a local council law or local council policy that may be aimed at —

The CHAIRMAN: Member, although that is a very good question, I cannot see how that is related to the budget. I give the call to the member for Kingsley.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will take advice on that. I will either get back to the member or he may want to ask me formally.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I refer to page 347, the section under "Major Policy Decisions" about election commitments. The third line relates to a sports leadership program. What is included in that program?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: This particularly relates to Bunbury. The program is currently operating in the Bunbury education district. I was not sure whether it was a particular school or the district. It encourages students who have leadership skills, are talented and possess above-average sporting ability. As the member would know, there are now a number of government high schools that have specialist sports programs, but this particularly looks at leadership skills in students in this area. A figure of \$100 000 has been allocated over four years for the continuation and expansion of a program that is already in place. The focus, as the member would appreciate, is on the health and wellbeing of young children—not just elite sports, but general wellbeing and physical activity.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer again to page 349, the first dot point, which relates to improving teacher quality. I am interested to find out how many graduate teachers who were taken in this year have not been employed yet or not placed yet. In the graduate intake this year, has anybody not been placed yet?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will get the director general to give the detail and the number. There was a lot of interest about this earlier in the year as the schools were starting. Not all graduates were placed. It would be very unusual if all graduates were placed at the beginning of the year. As the year progresses, as people retire, change jobs, resign, or whatever, placements are made with graduate students. By the end of the year usually, almost all graduates have been placed. I am not sure what the figure is today, but I will get the most up-to-date information for the member from the director general.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: As at 19 May we had 1 351 graduate applications. Of that number, 727 are now placed and 624 remain unplaced. That is relatively consistent with where we would be at this time in another year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not sure whether we have got these figures either. Certainly in the first term there were fewer retirements than would normally be expected. Given the current economic situation, it is not surprising that that has occurred. I have not heard any figures on that for a few weeks. The figure may well have changed over that period. We suspected that that might happen. Early on, it certainly was the case. I ask the director general to give that detail.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: As the minister has indicated, usually by the end of the year most graduates are placed. I can say, for example, that in 2008, 1 131 graduates ended up being placed. It is not uncommon at the start of the year for all graduates not to be placed, but, during the year, the graduates are placed. In recent years we have seen much greater restriction by graduates about where they are willing to go. I point out that 21 per cent of graduates will make themselves available to teach in only one district; 45 per cent in two districts; and the number goes on. We had only a handful of graduates throughout the whole year who were prepared to go anywhere, which is quite a different trend than we have had previously.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am a bit surprised by the minister's and the director general's comments that it is usual not to be able to place graduate teachers in recent years. Surely the comments over the past couple of years have been about a shortage of teachers and there being numerous vacancies that have not been able to be filled.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The comment was that the usual pattern that we have seen over the past few years is that during the course of the year graduates are placed. We would not expect them all—and we do not expect them all—to be placed at the beginning of the year. That has been the pattern over the past few years and again was the pattern this year. Some graduates are placed at the beginning of the year, and, as the year progresses, most are placed —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That has happened for 20 or 30 years. I thought the past two or three years had been a bit different in terms of the shortage of teachers.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the director general to add to that.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The point I was making about where people's preferences lie—we have had enough graduates to fill jobs over the past couple of years—is that it is a mal-distribution in that they are not necessarily prepared to go to the places where the vacancies are, nor are they necessarily trained in the specialist areas that we need.

[2.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: My question relates to page 350 and the “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” and the targets this government is attempting to achieve across the various year levels related to reading, writing and numeracy. When we look at year 3 reading, year 5 reading and year 9 writing, the aim is for a reduction in students reaching the target benchmark of between five and 10 per cent in each of those years. I find that unusual. For instance, in the case of reading for year 3 students, in 2007 the former government achieved 94.3 per cent achievement of national minimum standards, yet in 2009-10 this government is aiming for an 88 per cent achievement of national minimum standards; therefore, a reduction of roughly six per cent in the number of

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students reaching national minimum standards. That reduction is repeated in the following years. Could the minister explain why her target is lower?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is not that the targets are lower, it is that we are comparing apples and oranges. A note against that item is explained on the next page; that is, the figures under 2007-08 are compiled using the Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment program, whereas in 2008-09 we used the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy test. They are different tests and we cannot compare them, because it really is apples and oranges. That is why those percentages are different. If Western Australian students were doing the WALNA test, we would expect the same sort of result as was predicted and budgeted for in the budget papers previously. They are different tests and therefore different expectations. I understand that some people would argue that the NAPLAN tests are more rigorous than the WALNA tests.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Could I ask the time frame for moving through these divisions, Mr Chairman?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We are nearly finished this division, if that assists, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: It does. I suppose that will go to three o'clock on this division.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is this minister the minister responsible for the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am responsible for RREAC, but through the Department of Education Services.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I understand Mr Don Boyd is now the former director of rural and remote education. Why is that so? Is the minister now advertising the position and, if so, what is the time frame and how much money will she save, if any, by employing someone else in that position; and what is the future for rural and remote education under the minister's leadership?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not sure that it comes under this division; however, I am quite happy to answer the question. RREAC comes under the Department of Education Services. As it turns out, Mr Boyd was on a three-year secondment from the Department of Education and Training and a sizeable proportion of his salary was paid for by the Department of Education and Training. His secondment came to an end—I learnt of this last week I think—so he will be returning to duties in the Department of Education and Training. If there are questions about the committee and the future of the committee, I would be happy to answer them under this division, but it does not really come under this division.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask during the next division, then.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: On page 356 there is a list of additions and improvements to district high schools, which shows a sum of \$20 million for Bullsbrook. As the minister would be aware, the Bullsbrook District High School was previously upgraded, and as I recall the total cost of that upgrade was more than \$20 million; I think it was \$30 million. My recollection is that the former government committed the full amount. My recollection might be incorrect. However, I wonder what that \$20 million will buy and does that reflect the commitment this government took to the election?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will give my best understanding, and get Mr Thom to give more detail on it. My understanding is that the primary school—as the member for Rockingham has just stated—was upgraded previously to the tune of \$10 million. I am not sure if it was as much as that. There was a commitment for \$30 million from the Liberal Party going into the election. I assume that the Labor Party made the same commitment; is that correct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That commitment has been considered, and after examining the requirements of the school the decision was made that \$20 million is required to upgrade the secondary part of the district high school.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The plan was to either to upgrade or, in effect, to replace what was there. The cost to upgrade was roughly \$20 million and the cost to replace everything, considering it is a very old school and quite decrepit.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am aware of the school.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Therefore, the Liberal Party committed \$30 million, whereas the former government committed \$20 million. Is it correct that the minister has cut \$10 million out of that project?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 27 May 2009]

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: No. I will need this to be confirmed, but as I understand it the upgrade of the primary section of the district high school has been completed and \$20 million will now be spent upgrading or replacing the balance. Another \$20 million will be spent on it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does that replace the entire remainder of the school?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask Mr Thom to comment on that.

Mr J.W. Thom: The upgrade completed at Bullsbrook related to the design and technology area; money has been spent there. Aside from that, the \$20 million project will be for the facilities, the administration plus the learning areas for years 8 to 10.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that a complete rebuild?

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

Mr J.W. Thom: Depending on what the member means by a rebuild; we will be demolishing the existing decrepit classrooms, rather than rehabilitating them, and building fresh classrooms.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will some remain?

Mr J.W. Thom: Depending on their condition, I would think so; and certainly the D and T area has already been rehabilitated.

The appropriation was recommended.

[3.00 pm]