

Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr David Templeman; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Mr Ian Britza; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Day; Mr Paul Papalia; Dr Tony Buti

SCHOOL EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [8.03 pm]: It is a great honour to rise tonight following those magnificent valedictory speeches. I will take a moment to gather my thoughts. The speeches were from the member for Churchlands and the member for Bassendean, my old cricketing pal in London from the 1980s—a dashing cricketer he was then. I reflect as well on the speech from the member for Pilbara and recall my cycling ventures with him and the 150-kilometre ride we did together just a few months ago. He came off the bike yet was able to continue the ride. Of course, I acknowledge the member for Balcatta’s speech and the wonderful example he has set to us in this place with the leadership he has shown and the mentoring he has provided. It is indeed an honour to be following their speeches tonight.

However, in talking to this School Education Amendment Bill 2012 that is before us, I note that it contains some very important elements. It amends our education system to give us a compulsory education period that will be 13 years long. That, of course, is a good thing.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): There is a dull roar in the chamber. If you want to speak, can you go outside so that we can listen to this in relative silence?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. They are commendable aspects of this legislation and something I am pleased to support. I think though that we need to make sure we are investing in those early zero to 6 years phase. That is where we need lots of investment so that when children begin their 13 years of compulsory education, they are ready for that formalised education system. It is absolutely essential that children arrive at school ready, confident and relaxed in the atmosphere—socialised and used to it. Their minds should be open to it and they should not get left behind from the start. Unfortunately, I see that among young people in my electorate—children who are not ready for school and from there the downward spiral begins. That is a part of this legislation that I am concerned about.

Something I want to reflect on in this second reading contribution is something I do not think we give enough attention to in Western Australia—that is, the teaching of languages and making sure that in this 13 years of compulsory education we lay the foundation for people to have a satisfactory education in languages. I recognise that there are many learning styles, especially when it comes to learning languages. Probably only a fairly small percentage of the population is geared towards learning a language in that pure classroom situation. For many of us, there are other ways of learning a language. This is something that is absolutely critical. We have to move away —

I wonder, Mr Acting Speaker, if it would be reasonable for you to call the house to order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Thank you.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I note that the Minister for Transport is a man prone to levity and not interested in this particular discussion. But I think it is very serious in Western Australia that we have a history of not treating language education seriously enough. It is a mistake to say that the rest of the world speaks English and we do not need to learn other languages. The federal government released a white paper “Australia in the Asian Century” on this very issue recently. Dr Ken Henry is the lead author of that paper, which looks at Australia’s role in the Asian century. It is a very important issue of which language education will be an important component. Before getting into the issue of Asian languages, which are necessarily the discussion around Australia’s role in the Asian century and what that entails, I want to talk more broadly about the benefits of language education. I have to say that one of the richest experiences in my educational experience was the opportunity to learn another language. I say that because we cannot separate learning another language from learning another culture; the two go together. When we learn another language, we learn another culture. That, in itself, is a magnificent thing because we then have the opportunity to step out of our own culture and learn another culture, and we can even then look at that other culture and our own culture through different eyes. That is one of the beauties of learning a language. People, of course, will point to more utilitarian and more cost-benefit reasons for investment in language education.

There are many good reasons, such as from a business or commerce perspective; to enable Australia to engage fully in diplomacy; to enable us to engage fully in international discussions around the arts; and of course we should be conversant in other languages and we should be confident in other cultures as well. There are, of course, those reasons. I will dwell on the first point about the importance of languages in commerce. This is an example I have used in other debates. Quite recently—only a few years ago—Woodside made a terrible mistake.

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It paid \$100 million to the Mauritanian government because it was pursuing some oilfields some 60 kilometres off the Mauritanian coast. It handed over \$100 million. This was at the same time as there was the oil-for-food scandal and the Australian Wheat Board scandal going on about the money—\$300 million—that was being paid to the Iraqi government under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Woodside paid \$100 million to a Mauritanian regime, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and then there was a sudden regime change there. It got very little press, but it was a huge error on the part of a company that simply lacked the linguistic and cultural fluency to understand what was going on in Mauritania. When I have spoken to other people who work in this part of the oil and gas industry and who understand how things operate in that part of north western Africa—Mauritania—they say that if officers or employees of Woodside had been culturally and linguistically at ease with the Mauritanian community and had had some base language to communicate with, this mistake would not have arisen. It would not have arisen if they had recognised the official language of Mauritania. Although the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is principally an Arabic-speaking country, the French language is the language of most business in that country. What a shame, therefore, that Woodside employees did not have that capacity to engage. It could have avoided the situation of paying over \$100 million for no good reason at all.

There are other things emerging, of course. I have heard Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister and as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and now Senator Bob Carr as Minister for Foreign Affairs, talk about the number of Australian and Western Australian-based companies that are active in francophone West Africa. I hope for them that they have the right recruitment strategies going on and that they will be able to perform well with those host countries; that they will be able to understand their needs; that they will be able to deliver projects that not only can give a profit to the shareholders of those companies, but also will be able to improve the quality of life for people in the western African countries that they are looking at and contemplating things like iron ore projects and all sorts of resources developments. It is an expertise base that Western Australian companies often have, but they have to have that cultural fluency.

I want to get back to this issue of making sure that language education is in our education system and that it goes with cultural fluency. I mentioned earlier that I am not sure that the classroom situation is the ideal one for all people. What we do need to make sure of is that we have exchange programs and that wherever possible there is the opportunity for students to go on exchanges. This is widely practised in Europe. There is a whole genre of French films about the experiences of young people going on language exchanges to England. There are all sorts of humorous anecdotes about their experiences with the stodgy food and the way of living there, but they come away with at least some degree of confidence in the English language. We can look at other countries where the level of bilingualism and multilingualism is absolutely remarkable. It is almost taken for granted that a Dutch person will speak a good level of English. It is incredible that Switzerland has four official languages—Italian, French, German and Romansh. Swiss people invariably speak at least a couple of those official languages and they speak English. So the whole thing of multilingualism is something that we do need to be working on.

I get back to a point that I made earlier that people say, “Oh, we don’t need to learn other languages because everywhere we go people speak English.” I do not know that that is necessarily true and I think we are looked down upon when we front up to international fora with that attitude. We come across as being—I will not go quite as far as to say philistines—uneducated and somewhat lacking in a worldly perspective. I think that is because people realise that there is this necessity for someone’s education to be a rounded education; for it to be an experience that gives them an opportunity to learn another language and learn another culture; and for them to step out of their own culture and look at it from another perspective. That is the sort of rounded education that we must make sure Western Australians have into the future

I think it is all a matter of confidence as well. It is true that some people are not brilliant linguists and that some people struggle with language. I think that is my case. My limits have probably been reached in becoming fluent in one other language. But some people have an enormous capacity for learning languages. It is not unusual to run into people who can speak four or five languages. In travelling around the Mediterranean basin it is not unusual to meet people there who speak multiple languages. That is very lucky for them and it is something that they can use to great advantage. So it can often be a confidence thing. What we have to do is make sure that the foundations of these opportunities are available, such as the opportunity that is available to the students at Thornlie Primary School in my electorate. Thornlie Primary School has chosen the Italian language to be its second language of choice. It is important that people do not get burnt by the experience of learning another language and that they do not come away from it thinking, “The last thing I want to know is the Italian language or any other language. I just can’t do it.” We have got to make sure that people come away from that experience with confidence thinking, “Okay, yes, I think I can pick out the sounds and pick out the words of any language.” That is all in the quality of the education, the delivery of the experience and making sure it is supported by not

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just a classroom situation, but also some exchange opportunities. That is in fact why the Asian languages provide us with a wonderful opportunity.

In travelling to Europe, obviously, there are costs because of distance for young people. It is much harder for an Australian to travel to Europe than it is for a young English student to travel to France or Germany to learn a language and to get some sort of basics there. But many young Australians do travel. They go to Bali on holidays, for instance, but how many actually have exposure to the Indonesian language? In this place I think only the member for Cannington speaks Indonesian.

Mr I.C. Blayney interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: And the member for Geraldton is putting his hand up. That is a positive sign. But I think we need to be building on that and making sure that there is a series of educational learning opportunities around languages and that they are firmly entrenched in our education system. It is vitally important.

As members know, I have a passion for cycling. It was the case that young Australian cyclists could develop their career only by going through the European cycling teams, and so through that they would have to learn Dutch, French, Italian or Spanish. That was just part of their survival in a professional cycling team. But now we have seen a good thing: we have seen the rise of an Australian team, the GreenEDGE team; there are other American teams dominating at the moment, such as the Garmin team; and there is Sky of course and a number of other English-speaking teams. Therefore, it is with regret that I have heard some young Australian cyclists say that it is good that they do not have to learn languages anymore, because they have come from a background in which their primary and secondary school training in Western Australia has not given them confidence with languages. They have headed off to these teams and, given the choice between a non-English speaking team and an English-speaking team, chosen the English-speaking team because they do not have that basic confidence in their ability to pick up some of the basics of a language and then build on that as part of their professional cycling career. That is a shame.

This issue of confidence in languages and having that ability to know the process of learning a language is incredibly important when we start to look at Asian languages. I would go so far as to say that at some point in our school years, particularly in our younger years, it does not matter which language we learn. It does not matter at all; the fact is that people are going through that process of learning another language. When someone in their mid-20s suddenly finds that their career provides the opportunity for them to go to China, obviously, learning Mandarin, or perhaps Cantonese, is something that they would want to address. If they have that basic confidence and have been through something of the process of learning another language, they have that potential to learn Mandarin. It is an opportunity. I did not begin to learn French until I was 23 and I have been able to obtain a high level of fluency. That is perhaps not so difficult; I have heard it said that learning Mandarin is perhaps 10 times more difficult than learning French. I can well believe that to be the case. I know from my own experience of spending a couple of weeks with the Speaker and the Clerk of the Assembly in China a couple of years ago just how difficult Mandarin is. Nevertheless, if people have a bit of background in languages and a bit of confidence, they can make some headway with some experience on such things.

It is wonderful to be able to converse in another language, but I think it is even more important that people are able to understand other cultures. That is what is going to make our global community. Understanding other cultures is absolutely integral to involvement in the business community or the diplomatic community or just that general empathy and goodwill that we want in our global village. That is why we need to make sure that we do all we can in our education system to give people that confidence with languages so that they can enjoy the experience and be good global citizens who represent Western Australia well on the global stage.

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range) [8.22 pm]: I just want to make a few short comments on the School Education Amendment Bill 2012.

It was interesting this afternoon to hear the member for Pilbara. Both the member for Pilbara and I are on the board of the Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation. It is interesting to read through this bill about starting education a year earlier and making it compulsory, because I started my education in Wyndham in 1971 at the district high school. The principal of the school at the time, Bob Pollard, who lived across the road from us and became a very good friend of the family over the years and still is today, was the one who picked up very early in my schooling life the fact that I was dyslexic. It was about year 4 or 5 and I had a very bad stutter and also a massive learning disability. He picked that up. It was that earlier intervention I had from starting off, but it took a long time to diagnose that issue. When I look back, I am not proud of my schooling because the frustration of learning, especially reading and writing—which I still struggle with today—meant that I found it easier to distract a classroom and to get thrown out of the classroom than to stay and learn. The actual learning was never

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going to come easily to me and I struggled. I am not proud that by the first term of year 9—back in those days, the first term was May and we had only three terms in the year—I think my father had just about given up on me and being involved with the headmaster because of fights. He took me out and put me in the bakehouse and that is where I stayed. We look back on life and it was interesting today when I was in the courtyard for the University of Western Australia’s 100th anniversary that a member of Parliament asked whether I ever went to university. I said, “I never got near it; TAFE college was about as close as I got to any sort of apprenticeship.” They were quite surprised and said, “Year 9?” and I said, “Yes”. He said, “And you’re a member of Parliament”, and I said, “Whatever you turn your mind to, you can do.” One thing my father always told me in this life was, “The world’s never going to change for you; you have to find a way to fit in and that’s the way you’re going to have to face every issue you look at in life.” I have taken that on board and where I have got to today is basically through that philosophy.

Minister Day has introduced some great legislation and there have been some great debates in the house. The member for Pilbara raised some very good issues in that process. Also, the member for Bassendean, who was my member from 2001 to 2005, talked about the ADHD issue that he is passionate about, and he is spot on. It was interesting to listen to him talk about some stuff, and he has done that over the years. I have seen that issue reflected in kids who I used to go to school with. I remember distinctly days when we were in the classroom and the teacher would come and pull out half a dozen of us to take us off to remedial class, which was in the library or somewhere else. The kids were all in a similar boat; something was different about each of us. But the member for Bassendean is right about their attention span. Back in those days, there was no medication, and the member was dead right in what he was saying, that it was easier in some way to medicate them and to get them to calm down than it was to look at the actual problem they had. Minister, I want to throw my support behind this legislation and I think it is a great idea to start working on that and to also start looking at the process of trying to do early intervention.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [8.25 pm]: I congratulate the member for Darling Range for sharing that with us. I think it is important that people recognise that, despite the difficulties the member has just explained, people can achieve. I pay tribute to the member for Darling Range because I think that is a very brave and courageous thing to do in this place. I always thought he was a nice fellow and I know that he is very, very highly regarded, by the way, by all members of this place, as he should be.

First of all, I open by saying that I strongly support the School Education Amendment Bill 2012 that is before us. Members would know that I, of course, was a teacher in a previous life. In my time with the education department of Western Australia, I was always, and have always been, in awe of our teachers in the state. I must say that I am particularly grateful to and certainly appreciative of those educators in our state system who are involved in the early years.

My son Jack Templeman now attends kindy at South Halls Head Primary School in Mandurah. I know that when he started at the beginning of this year, he was looking very much forward to what he calls kindy, but quite often calls school. The experience of going into a kindy class is daunting for some other young people his age, but for others it is very, very exciting. I pay tribute to the principal and the staff at South Halls Head Primary School, particularly his kindy teachers, Mrs McKenzie, who he loves very much; Miss Raymond, who has now moved from kindy to teach year 6 and 7 at that school; and his new teacher, Miss Shuard. They are examples of many, many teachers in our state system who are very, very dedicated to the early years—indeed, the foundation years of education. I have even done parent help. I failed cutting up the fruit, but I have done parent help. I took longer than most other people because I thought there was sort of a science to it. But I really am impressed by the examples of teachers throughout Western Australia who are involved in early childhood education in particular. The compulsory year of preprimary that is created by this bill further adds to what I think is the outstanding reputation of Western Australian education.

Having said that, I want to pay tribute to the former Minister for Education, the member for Churchlands. When we lost government in late 2008, the northern area of Mandurah was facing some pressing problems. That area was essentially serviced by only one school, North Mandurah Primary School, which is the school in which I actually finished my teaching career. The growth in the north Mandurah corridor, particularly around the localities of Meadow Springs, Madora Bay and Lakelands, was phenomenal. I did a grievance to the former Minister for Education in 2009 and pleaded with her to come to Mandurah. I said that I would take her through those localities of Lakelands and Meadow Springs in particular to highlight to her the growth there and the fact that there were no government primary schools north of Gordon Road, which is a major distributor road in Mandurah–Peel. To the minister’s credit she came down, along with some members of the department. She gave me a lot of her time. I was able to take her through the localities of Lakelands and Meadow Springs and to highlight the tremendous urban growth that had occurred there over the past five to seven years. We also

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discussed a number of other issues, including, of course, some secondary education issues, which I will not go into. The minister recognised the tremendous growth that was occurring and the fact that the only choice for many families for state primary school education was North Mandurah Primary School. North Mandurah is a great school, but its location, particularly for those living north, is problematic. I said to the Minister for Education at the time that we needed a primary school in Meadow Springs. I want to pay credit to her for listening very, very closely. I think the department’s numbers would have already shown that a new school was needed there.

Meadow Springs Primary School opened at the beginning of this year with over 460 students. At the same time, two schools opened in Ellenbrook with student numbers of roughly 250 and 270, from memory. There was almost the same number of students at the one school, Meadow Springs Primary School, as there were in two new schools in Ellenbrook! In just over three and a half terms, there are now over 700 students at Meadow Springs Primary—there are 700 students at this school that opened this year. It has not even completed its first year of operation and there are now over 700 students. The school was expecting to have about 720 students at the start of next year but it has already exceeded that number. A group of students from the Meadow Springs Education Support Centre joined me for lunch today and the principal there said that the numbers at Meadow Springs Primary School have now exceeded 700 and will exceed 800 at the start of next year. When that school commences its second year, 800 students will call Meadow Springs home on current figures. That does not take into account those who enrol tomorrow and those who enrol from tomorrow through to the beginning of next year. It is quite likely that that school will have 850-plus students to start the year, or maybe even more. The growth is phenomenal. I have never in my teaching experience seen a school population explode like it has done at Meadow Springs Primary School. I think it is unprecedented—I might be wrong—and it is absolutely incredible. What does this mean? Already this year the school has had two major restructures. Those who are parents will know that that means that classes are restructured because of numbers. In some cases it can mean wholesale changes to the structure of classes. They will require up to, if not more than, 16 demountables if these increases continue into next year. Sixteen demountables is a whole new school! This is in less than a year of opening. Of course, more than 10 new teachers have been added to that school since it opened. It is remarkable and phenomenal growth. Where is the growth? The growth, interestingly enough, is in the early years. I understand that there are currently five kindy classes. These numbers have changed, because when I had a meeting only a few weeks back with the principal, Ashley King, the figure was 712. We can see that growth is occurring. There will be up to seven preprimary classes next year as well. This is just phenomenal. In the early years—the kindy and preprimary years—the growth is amazing. In fact, we could almost argue the need for a junior school model.

What does this mean? I have written to the minister, I raised the matter in this place a few months back and I presented a petition, for which some more numbers will come in over the next two days. We need a school at Lakelands; it is as simple as that. The numbers now demand that the department and the minister announce a school for the locality of Lakelands, for which two sites have been allocated. The minister needs to announce that now, because planning for that school must commence as soon as possible. I wrote to all the families, and particularly the young couples, in Lakelands a month or so ago. The petition response has been excellent. I have been down meeting people in the park and doorknocking there. It was amazing the number of young couples with little bubs in prams who came up to sign the petition. They recognise that in a few short years their now babies will be going into primary school, and they want their own school there. Not only do they want their own school, but also they actually have the numbers to demand a new school. Again I am calling upon the Minister for Education to recognise the rapid growth in this part of Mandurah. A school needs to be announced immediately. I have no doubt that the Labor Party will not only promise a school, but also build one if we are elected in 2013. Irrespective of which party is in government after the next election, it is about these young families in Lakelands, Madora Bay and even the northern end of Meadow Springs, who need their own primary school. The numbers demand it; the numbers stack up. We need an announcement immediately because the planning and the community consultation has to take place. There are two potential sites and there are problems with one site in some ways, because it is located —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Member, I just want to draw your attention to the fact that the bill is talking about the need for preprimary. You are getting off that just a tad.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mr Acting Speaker, with all due respect, a number of the students I am talking about are in those preprimary and kindergarten years, and that is the reason it is so critical that we get that school.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member.

Mr J.H.D. Day: The bill is about whether preprimary should be compulsory.

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Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Absolutely. I am fully supportive of that. In preparation for that, I have to advocate on behalf of the young families in Lakelands, the northern part of Meadow Springs and Madora Bay whose children will be affected by this bill, which will make preprimary compulsory. I want those kids to go to a brand-new school, particularly those who are currently travelling south a number of kilometres to the new school that was built at Meadow Springs. I am really proud I got that school at Meadow Springs. I now want to get one at Lakelands. I have the numbers to prove it. The numbers are there in black and white. Now that the minister has provoked me, I might even use consideration in detail to try to nut out those figures even more. I indicate to the advisers in the gallery that I might want those figures if they have access to them. The time for the announcement of a primary school at Lakelands is now. It is not about politics; it is about pure numbers. The school should be announced. The planning should commence. I think we need to talk to the community about which of the two sites is the best location. There are some issues with the site directly adjacent to Mandurah Baptist College on the corner of Catalina Drive in Lakelands. There is a site further north that is also a co-located site for a future high school. I ask the minister to please take on notice the need for the school.

I do not want to see an announcement held off for an election campaign, quite frankly, because if we have to wait to February or March, the school will be delayed from opening in 2014. Announce it now. I will congratulate the government. I believe we are going to support it. I think we should support it. I think the Leader of the Opposition understands the growth figures. Please, whatever the government does, it should get that school planning done. Make sure that that that new school can be planned for and opened in 2014.

I finish by congratulating Ashley King, the principal of Meadow Springs Primary School, and also Gwen Evans, the principal of the education support school that is co-located on the site. This year they have coped amazingly with setting up the school and opening it, and then coping with the tremendous growth that has occurred, as I outlined earlier in this contribution tonight. They are and have been remarkable. When Ashley King was appointed as principal in the second half of last year, from memory, he had a lot of work to do because he started with a greenfields site. It is remarkable that that school was able to be constructed, built and then opened this year with the student numbers it started with, and is now coping with the absolute explosion of student numbers. As I said, getting back to the bill, Mr Speaker, the growth is in those early years in particular. To have nearly 10—I think it is 10—classrooms that will cater just for those preprimary and kindy students is remarkable. It is just unbelievable. That is literally a few hundred students in those early years.

I support this bill. However, in supporting this bill, I use this opportunity to plead with the minister: do not hold off for an election campaign. Announce the school. Let the community know. Let them be consulted on where it should go. Let us get this school built so that we can take off the pressure that is continuing to impinge on Meadow Springs Primary School. Let us get a Lakelands school built and opened so that we can continue to provide fantastic state education to the growing number of families in the north part of Mandurah. I commend this bill and I look forward to the success of its implementation.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [8.44 pm]: I will not keep the house too long with what I have to say. In supporting the School Education Amendment Bill 2012, I have to tell the house about my two children, both of whom went to preprimary school and enjoyed the experience no end. Alex and Henry both went to the old Swanbourne Primary School before it was demolished.

Mr P. Papalia: How old are they now?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They are aged 20 and 22 years. In fact, it was there that my son Henry achieved his highest award to date. That is not disparaging poor Henry, but I must admit he has not got beyond the fantastic award for being the best sleeper in the afternoon—to date. I still have his certificate for best sleeper in the afternoon.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Chip off the old block.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Exactly!

Mr D.A. Templeman: He is certainly following you.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He follows in the family tradition of being the best sleepers. Henry certainly enjoyed his time at preprimary given he slept through most afternoons and did not wake up. It is a wonderful experience for children; it adjusts them for entry into primary school and allows the socialisation of children at an early age, which is a very important part of growing up.

Acting Speaker, just indulge me for a bit because I will not go on for too long. I will follow on from where the member for Mandurah left off when he spoke about what the number of students going into preprimary leads to. In the area of Cockburn, which is of particular importance to me at the moment, we have Success Primary School and a new school to be built at Hammond Park. Success has a preprimary, and I presume Hammond Park

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will also have a preprimary school. Across the freeway in the member for Jandakot’s electorate, there is Harmony Primary School and Aubin Grove Primary School, both of which have preprimaries attached to them. The big problem in that part of my electorate is the number of children coming through. It is very similar to the issue that the member for Mandurah just raised. They are growth suburbs and schools are being built virtually as fast as the houses are being built. Hammond Park primary school was announced by the previous Minister for Education, Minister Constable, earlier this year. It is being built in an area where the houses are still being constructed around it. That is the nature of the suburbs that I represent and the member for Jandakot represents on the other side of the road.

Success Primary School was completed only just over four years ago and it already has more than 600 students. Success Primary School is approximately only two kilometres away from Jandakot Primary School, which was built in the late 1980s. That, too, has a population of nearly 700 students. We can see how as these schools are built, they immediately fill up. This flow-on effect from preprimary to year 7 is dramatic in the areas that we represent. Consequently, it leads to high schools filling up. At the moment the only high school in that area is Atwell College and it is at bursting point. There are 1 100 students at Atwell College. There is a huge number of demountables at Atwell College. The year 11 and year 12 expansion has just opened, but that still has not taken into account the massive number of year 7 students who attend. There are 11 year 7 classes at Atwell College; hence the reason for the demountables.

I put forward a strong argument to the previous Minister for Education, Minister Constable, and she met with the residents of Hammond Park to speak about the need for a new high school. She heard our complaint with the greatest of sympathy, but the evidence that she has been presented with from the Department of Education is simply wrong. I think the department has the demographics of the area completely wrong. It has underestimated the number of people moving into the area. The area needs a high school. Hammond Park needs a high school and an area in Hammond Park is designated for a high school. Land has been set aside as part of the development process there and we need to move ahead with it. If we do not start the process of building a high school now—remember it takes two to three years to complete a high school—Atwell College will be literally at bursting point. It is estimated that Atwell College can take up to 1 500 people. I think that is a real overestimation of how many children can be crammed into Atwell College. Nearby is an approved development that will be undertaken by Stockland at Cockburn Central south, which will have 1 100 homes. The kids from there will go to Atwell College; there is no doubt about that. The growth in Atwell College will already be taken up by development immediately to the north of the school, and yet, to the south, on both the member for Jandakot’s side and my side of the freeway, it is continuing to grow at a rapid pace. Those children from those primary schools coming up from preprimary need to go somewhere. As I pointed out to the minister at the time, Atwell College will not be able to cope with the entire number of children who are moving into the area or coming out of primary school in the area, and Lakeland Senior High School is a significant distance away from where I am talking about now. It is another state school in the area, but it is a significant distance away and the transportation links between Hammond Park, Aubin Grove and South Lake are non-existent; buses simply do not go that way. I raised the issue with the minister of the day, who was sympathetic to the issue, but he did not commit at all. Effectively, the Department of Education has dismissed the argument completely. I raise it in this place again because it is a critical issue that needs to be addressed by government, in the hope that Labor will win government in Western Australia at the next election and address that. We have to address it; we have no choice. If we do not win government, the current government will have to address it in any case. It is an issue that must be addressed and I bring it once again to the attention of this house.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [8.53 pm]: Over the centuries people have instinctively known that what happens in early childhood has long and lasting effects on an individual, and those early influences can set the course of their future life. This is often encapsulated in the adage attributed variously to the Jesuits or specifically to St Francis Xavier: give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man. In the twenty-first century I think we have confirmed through extensive research that what happens to kids in the earlier years can have consequences right through the course of their lives. The research also suggests that intervening in early childhood or even when mum is still pregnant is the most effective phase to impact on the future development of the child. Young children develop through their relationships with important people in their lives. Some research conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2009 indicates that in the area of family relationships, Australia is lagging behind other developed countries. A number of criteria were used to assess this. Firstly, accepting that for most children and young people, families are the fundamental social unit, the research considered how many times children ate the main meal of the day with parents several times a week and out of all the OECD countries Australia ranked 21 out of 27 countries. Similarly, on the question of whether parents spent time just talking with their children more than once a week, Australia ranked 18 out of 27. Children’s sense of belonging was also tested. Children’s feelings about school

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reflect their interactions with peers and their wider social environment. In that rating Australia did considerably better, ranking 11 out of 29, although it is interesting to note that in the context of Indigenous Australia, Australia ranked 29 out of 30, and I think that disparity is very telling. Research spearheaded by Western Australia’s own Professor Fiona Stanley argues very forcefully for early intervention. Her team has found that increasing proportions of our children and youth have diseases such as asthma, diabetes, are obese, and have intellectual disabilities and psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. The research also found that there had been no reduction in the percentage of children born prematurely or underweight or in those diagnosed with physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy, but there had been increases in the range of behavioural problems such as attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity and substance abuse. Finally, there were increases in aggressive juvenile crime such as assault and rape. All of these impose a huge economic toll and social costs on our community.

American Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has quantified the economic cost of failing to invest early in our kids’ needs. His study found that through to the age of 40—this is in US dollars, which are pretty well equivalent to Australian dollars—there was a return of \$17 for every \$1 spent. That is an extraordinary return on investment. He advocates spending money early. These calculations show that the outcomes of not investing, including poor literacy and numeracy levels, lead to fewer job prospects as adults, increased crime levels and costly imprisonment, and higher levels of chronic disease. What we are debating is really a no-brainer, purely in economic terms, if for no other reason. We would think that with kids starting school earlier, impediments to learning should, of course, be identified earlier, which is all good. However, the shortage of child health nurses is a very real and acute problem not only in my electorate, but also throughout the northern suburbs. I recently asked the Minister for Health: What is the average waiting time for an appointment for a child health nurse to see newborn baby in the North Metropolitan Region? What is the average time for a child health nurse to conduct a follow-up visit to a baby in the North Metropolitan Region? Of the recently announced additional child health nurses, how many are allocated to the North Metropolitan Region? The minister answered in October saying —

Average waiting times for an appointment for a Child Health Nurse ... to see a newborn baby are not available. Upon receipt of a birth notification, a CHN contacts the family and offers a home visit appointment, with almost all offers being made within 10 days of the birth. Within 21 days, over 90% of newborns have received this initial check. This period is within the prescribed policy timeframe. There are a number of reasons why the minority of families do not receive a visit, including refusal of the offer.

The minister then went on to answer the question about follow-up visits. He said —

... at the request of the family if they have concerns about the health, development or wellbeing of their child, or are experiencing their own health or family troubles that may affect the wellbeing of their children. The second universal appointment is scheduled when the baby is 6–8 weeks old. This is within the prescribed policy timeframe.

So there has been a subtle shift in that, because we have gone from that second visit being compulsory, to being at the family request. I think most of us in this place would appreciate that it is probably the families who most need to be followed up in terms of the wellbeing of the child who will not be self-nominating or seeking that second appointment, and that is a major concern and that is where there are waiting lists. I commend the government for allocating an extra 9.5 FTE child health nurses in the north metropolitan area, but it is simply not enough.

The second visit is, as I said, crucial, because it indicates early on whether the child is putting on weight and being properly cared for. As I said, these answers suggest that the second visit is optional. Members might think I am digressing—before you tell me I am digressing, Mr Acting Speaker—but today I had a conversation with a teacher that showed that this lack of child health nurses has a major educational impact. She was saying that she has identified a number of kids in preprimary with speech and hearing defects, and they are waiting a considerable time to see the child health nurse, who then refers them to a speech therapist. She said that one pupil in her class was referred in February this year, and he will get an appointment in January next year. Therefore, that child will enter school at a considerable disadvantage. His learning will be significantly delayed and impeded because that disability that that teacher had the skill and experience to identify has not been addressed. The teacher knows that if that problem is not addressed expeditiously, it could hamper that child’s education. It all goes hand in hand, and when we talk about having kids in school earlier, it must be on the understanding that the supports are there so that the teaching staff can ensure that children have the best

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educational opportunities available. Simply putting them in preprimary to give them a good start without that added support is a major issue.

I next want to talk about something that the previous two speakers mentioned, but I have to say that we have not put our heads together and discussed this matter; namely, the considerable lag, I believe, in planning for future schools, particularly in the new part of my electorate, mainly east Landsdale, where there has been massive growth. Most of the surrounding primary schools are at capacity—most of them have about 800 children—and the only proposal for new schools is, according to the Minister for Education, an early childhood annexe proposed to be constructed on a south Landsdale site to open in 2013. It is intended to take the kids in preprimary, or grade 1 or 2 even, out of the existing schools, which will free up places at existing primary schools, and put them in the early childhood annexe. When they are old enough to move on to another school, they will then have to be placed back in one of these already crowded schools. That seems to be moving deckchairs on the *Titanic*. There should be a better, more comprehensive plan, and certainly I know there is capacity for another primary school, but unfortunately it is not yet in the forward estimates, although it is well overdue.

The last thing I want to talk about, which is perhaps digressing a bit, is that I had another phone call from a parent today whose daughter is currently in year 11 at Girrawheen Senior High School. She planned with teachers her year 12 subjects, and year 12 will start in a couple of weeks. She was initially told that she could not do her nominated subjects because they all clashed, so then she chose an alternative subject only to be told within the last few days that that subject would not be offered due to funding. That has caused this individual student much distress. She may well have to pick up a subject like chemistry, which she did not do in year 11 and which will mean considerable expense to her parent. So, again, our kids are being sold short because of a lack of resources and funding.

Labor, of course, supports this bill, but my caveat on that support is the fact that there is no point in putting kids in a situation where it is impossible for their learning opportunities to be optimised. That will require the added support of things like child health nurses, occupational therapists and speech therapists, and whatever those kids need for the best start to their education.

MR A.P. O’GORMAN (Joondalup) [9.05 pm]: I, too, rise in support of the School Education Amendment Bill 2012, and I congratulate the government on finally bringing a bill like this to this place. Earlier this evening, the member for Churchlands mentioned in her valedictory speech that in her inaugural speech 21 years ago she talked about early childhood education and getting children into school as young as possible. That reminded me of my daughter’s first day at school. She is now 31 years of age, but when she turned four, we happened to be living in Ireland in a little country village called Cratloe. We took her down to the school the day she turned four to inquire about enrolment, and the principal of that school actually said, “Why don’t you just leave her here for a few hours and let her see how she adapts?” That was the day she turned four! We were very young parents at that point—I think I was about 25 or 26—and we were very concerned, but we left her there with complete strangers and went home. When we went back at lunchtime, which was about two hours later, and she saw us pull up in the car, she immediately started crying. We thought, “Oh, no; she’s been having a really bad time.” But she was crying because we were showing up to take her home! The biggest problem she had was that she wanted to have her lunch there with the other boys and girls she had met at the school. We had to turn around and travel the four or five miles back to the house we were renting to get her lunch and take it back down to her! So she started her formal education the day she turned four.

She went into what was called junior infants in Ireland, which I think equates to preprimary here, and attended that school from 18 October—her birthday—until early June. We packed up and came back here on 16 June. But once we got back here and found ourselves accommodation and settled in, we went to the local primary school, which was Eddystone Primary School, with the intent of enrolling her. We were told, “No, she’s too young.” Then we had to turn around and explain to this five-year-old that, unfortunately, she was too young and could not go to school, which was a huge dint to her self-confidence. We had a lot of problems with her fighting with us and whatever else at that time—she still does. Although she is 31, she still fights with us, but I do not blame it on the school! We could not get her into the school and we could not even get her into kindy because it was full. We had to wait until the year she turned six before we could get her into Eddystone Primary School, where she settled very well and developed her social conscience and learning capabilities. That showed me that the earlier we get our children into formal schooling, the better life opportunities those children will have. Thirty years ago Ireland had in place a system by which the day a child turned four, they could enrol at the school and start school from that day on.

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Another strange thing about it bothered us. I was working nightshift at the time and I used to get home by about half past eight in the morning and leave the car running, so that my wife would take the car and drop our daughter at school. Then my wife would go to her school, but she could not get back in time to pick up our daughter from school, so my daughter had to catch the bus. In Ireland families usually have only one car; it is very unusual for families to have two cars. The only way we could get her home was for her to catch the bus. At the age of four she was put on the school bus and travelled with all the other students back to our house.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: That is how it happened. I used to make sure I was out of bed and coherent enough to get this child of four years of age off the bus at 2.30 or three o’clock in the afternoon and keep her occupied until her mother got home a couple of hours later. That was no mean feat. I have the same difficulty with my granddaughter these days. She will be three in February and she teaches me how to use my phone and my iPad. Without her, I would not be able to look at some of my photographs and files. That shows how quickly these children learn. From my experience with the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee when we undertook an inquiry into formative early childhood years, it was impressed upon us that the most important time for a child’s education is zero to eight, particularly zero to four, because that is when their young brains are developing. It was explained to us by one of the chief researchers in the child and adolescent hospital in Melbourne that that is when their brains are being wired. Their brains become wired as a result of what they see and hear around them. If a child is constantly spoken to in proper language, not baby language or language that is dumbed down, and being read to from books that are appropriate to their age, the wires in their brains start to connect. They start to hear the words properly and learn how to form the words themselves. Then they start to rationalise and put the words into sentences. The member for Morley will probably agree because he has a fairly young son of five, and I am sure his son is teaching him things he never thought he could understand himself. I am finding that with my young granddaughter. At the age of three, my granddaughter has great role models. Her grandmother is a teacher, her aunt is a teacher and her mother is a very committed worker in the community who chairs the Landsdale Residents’ Association. They always speak to my granddaughter properly and inform her about what they are doing and they rationalise with her. When I was a kid, my parents never rationalised with me. We did it the way they told us or we did not do it. These days, if our children’s brains are wired properly from the very early stages, we can start to rationalise with them because they can understand. I see this every day when my granddaughter is at our house and she is having a tantrum about not wanting to have lunch. When it is explained to her why she has to do certain things, all of a sudden she will eat her lunch, close her book or play appropriately with her toys. It is really important that our young people are at school getting a formal education as early as possible.

The Community Development and Justice Standing Committee in its report made certain recommendations about bringing other services onto the school site. This is where I am disappointed with the government. Over the past four years it has been making all the right noises about bringing those other services onto school sites, but to date there are 10 in a sort of test program—let us see how it works. I have to say that those 10 sites have been funded primarily by the federal government. It was not this Liberal–National government here in Western Australia that championed it; it was the federal government that put the money up for most of these sites. Our government has had to say, “If we want the money, we have to do it”, and services have been put on selected sites. Thankfully, it has been done on sites that are most in need. Off the top of my head, I think one of those sites is Challis Primary School and there is one in the Pilbara. They are in areas of dire need. The objective is to get these very young children into a formal setting with professionals. I am talking about the teachers because they are very professional in what they do, particularly the early childhood teachers, the child health nurses and other people who know what to look for in early childhood development. If a child is not reaching those benchmarks at the appropriate times, those experts can see it and intervene in those very early days and start to rectify those problems. It is relatively easy to do that because it is a matter of helping to wire the brain properly for those very young children so that they can learn.

That early intervention involves something as simple as making sure the children can hear properly. Earlier this year, the member for Darling Range and a couple of other members organised a breakfast with the group of people who travel to the north west to do hearing tests, particularly at Aboriginal communities. They have found that once grommets are placed in the ears of the children who have not been paying attention at school and some remedial work is done, those children do quite well. That is why it is really important to go the next step and not just make it compulsory for preprimary kids to be at school, but to make sure we are putting services on the school sites that benefit those young children at the earlier possible stage because the longer it is left, the harder it is to repair. Quite often, young Indigenous people cannot pronounce their words properly. People who do not have a better understanding of what they are doing laugh at them and make jokes about them, and that starts to affect their self-esteem. That young person does not want to go to school anymore because people at school

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laugh at them because they cannot hear the teacher and they cannot pronounce their words properly. They cannot pronounce their words properly because from a very young age words sound garbled to them. These services and facilities need to be on our school education sites because schools are probably our most universal service in this state. We have schools in every single community in this state. Whether they are small schools in very remote Aboriginal communities or very large schools, such as those that the member for Mandurah talked about in the metropolitan area, it is vitally important that we make sure these kids get the services delivered to them and, if they have a problem, get it identified and then get it fixed. It is cheaper to fix it at that very early stage than it is when they are 18, 19, 20 or 21 years of age, because by the time they get to that age, their self-esteem has sunk very low because sometimes they cannot hear properly, they do not understand or they cannot get out the words they need to explain themselves. They get frustrated and sometimes become violent and, because they have no education, it is very difficult for them to find a job.

The member for Girrawheen mentioned earlier that research shows that for every dollar we put in during those early formative years, the payback is \$17, so it is a 17 to one ratio. Why would we not do it right at the start? I know it is expensive, but if we look at what we have in this state, we will see that we have many of those services. It is a matter of relocating them and retraining the school communities to focus on our very young children. That is what we can do as a government. As a community, I think it has already started to happen. Many of the 10 or 12 schools in my electorate of Joondalup have started bringing in creches, early child care and before and after-school care, and care for children who are not ready to be enrolled in a school because they are not yet within the compulsory phase. But the schools are starting to provide it.

In my electorate I am pretty lucky. In fact, I am very lucky because I have probably the best schools anyone could pick in the state at the moment. That is because we had very large schools. Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), I know that as the member for Albany you are disagreeing with me, but we would all say that. If any of us in this place did not say that, I do not think we would deserve to represent our electorate. In my electorate I had very large schools. My electorate was one of the fast-growing areas in the late 1980s and early 1990s and we had to fight to get those schools put in. We now have schools that are starting to reduce in population size, so sometimes we have available classrooms—not all the time, but some schools have available classrooms. They have the support of the community and resources through the parents and citizens associations that enables them to deliver some services into those schools. We are starting to see an improvement in some of the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy—NAPLAN—results for schools in my electorate. There is another thing that we are starting to see. Everybody says that education is about the teacher and about the student, but I think it is also about the buildings. I will talk about one suburb in my electorate that prior to the 2008 election we had decided as a government to amalgamate two schools into one. One school had about 80 students and the other had between 150 and 190 students, if I remember correctly, so we amalgamated those two schools. However, the request from the parent body was to demolish one of the schools and build a new school. One school was built in the early or mid-1970s and the other in the early 1980s. The early or mid-1970s one was full of asbestos and was in some respects not much more than a prefabricated building. So a decision was made to demolish that school and move all the kids to the other school while the new school was being built. Since the students have moved to that school, I have just seen an explosion. Last year or earlier this year, I think it was—I am looking to the CEO, Ms Sharyn O’Neill—the school was awarded a certificate for being an outstanding school. So the surroundings also assist in helping that school to lift its grades and to lift its standards, and it has been a fantastic journey for that school. Unfortunately, we have to report that it is now at its maximum capacity. There are as many kids in that schools as it can cope with. If the growth continues, the school will need more capital works for more classrooms, and in the short term that may mean demountable classrooms. It is up to about 370 students, if I am correct.

May I seek a short extension, Mr Acting Speaker?

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I know that it is 10 minutes no matter what, but thanks very much, Mr Acting Speaker.

It is therefore important that we have not only the best teachers, the best opportunities for our young people and all those services on site, but also good facilities. I regretfully have to report that I am a bit alarmed that one of the schools in my electorate has told me lately that the graffiti removal program is not quite as strong as it used to be. It is now only the case—I hope it is wrong—that if offensive or vulgar language or anything like that is scratched in or graffitied on the school property, it is removed straightaway. If it is run-of-the-mill graffiti like tagging, then it is not removed until there is a certain amount of it and it is economically viable to remove it. I hope that is not the case, but that has been reported to me by one or two of my schools. I think that is a sad state of affairs. That is especially so when we bring young people in who should be able to see a school site kept clean of that type of vandalism so that they can actually learn. What should be up on the walls is their work and an

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acknowledgement of their good work in that school. I really hope that if that is the case, that that policy can be reversed fairly quickly.

There is another thing we need to have in and around our schools, particularly for our early childhood people and particularly for our students in education support centres. Teaching those children is one of the toughest things any of our teachers and education assistants have to do. I meet with a lot of them and I cannot understand and I cannot fathom how they show up to work every day. It must be demoralising when they have these young people who need so much help and assistance just to get to school, not to mind —

Fireworks, just because I am speaking—I do not know!

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: The ed support kids are so difficult to deal with. I just have to admire the people who are able to deal with them every day. These kids are also entitled to a good education, and the earlier we start giving it to those young people who have learning difficulties, the better opportunities they will have in later parts of their life. In one of my ed support centres, Joondalup Primary School, the ed support administration runs with the same admin as the primary school. It is very tight and there is little or no privacy for parents who come in to talk about their kids; it is one of those things for which we really need to lift the standard. We want to keep our ed support schools on the same campuses as our primary schools, but we have to provide those parents of children in ed support schools with the privacy and confidentiality that they are due.

Another thing that I want to have a go about, because I am pretty disgusted by it, is making sure that the areas around our schools are safe. Many of the schools in my electorate in the northern suburbs are now starting to erect fences all around the school. That is a great thing because it means that strangers cannot just walk in; they have to go through the designated gateways and things like that and can be seen more easily. But we are still dealing with young children who have little or no road sense. We have parents dropping them off or getting them to school. I have seen this, again with my own granddaughter, that once they get out of a car, they go so quickly that we have to have eyes in the back of our head just to make sure they are safe. Some of our schools are privileged to have the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs around them. We have seen recently a number of Liberal Party candidates out there campaigning to get 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs at certain schools, and when they get them they go out and say, “Look how good I am; I’ve got a 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing sign at the school.” My view is that every student is valuable and we should be doing everything possible for them. We should not be playing this game with students’ safety. We, as the former Labor government—I think under Minister Roberts, the member for Midland, when she was the Minister for Road Safety—introduced the trial to see if these were a good idea and to see whether people took note of them. It has been proved up through this government that people do take note of them, much more so than the static signs on the side of the road or even the signs painted on the road. People do take note of the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing LED—light emitting diode—signs. How important is it and what value can we place on the life of or injury to a young person who does not have a lot of road sense and gets out of a car and gets hit because a car is coming too fast? At least if it is doing 40 kilometres an hour, there may be an opportunity to stop. But if it is doing 50 or 60, there is no opportunity to stop, and people just do not notice the static signs. So this government should not be playing the games it is playing by getting its Liberal Party candidates to go out and canvass neighbourhoods, asking for 40-kilometre-an-hour signs and then going out and beating their chest saying, “The government has come to the party with an extra \$2.4 million for 61 more schools.”

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Order! Member for Joondalup!

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Yes, I am bringing it back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Bring it back to the bill, please.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: It is very important because we are now talking about making sure that every young person gets a preprimary position in a school. That will bring in an extra number of young people to our schools and we must make sure that they have a safe environment. So playing that game is just not fair, it is just not right, and I am ashamed to be in a Parliament where that has happened. I urge this government to actually come out and say that if it is bringing in early childhood education to schools, then it will make the areas around the schools safe by putting up the \$20 million or \$25 million to put in 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs at each and every school in this state that needs it for the protection of our children, and not for Liberal Party campaigning.

MR I.M. BRITZA (Morley) [9.29 pm]: I will take a few moments to speak to the School Education Amendment Bill 2012. When I first came into Parliament, I was put on the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee and the very first inquiry we did deal with the ages from, I think—did she say zero?

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Mr A.P. O’Gorman interjected.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: She said zero. I remember being very quiet and being led by the former member for Armadale, Alannah MacTiernan, who did not let anything escape her attention. I remember that the whole inquiry was an eye-opener. I listened very carefully because my son was only two or three and I wanted to find out what was going to happen when I went to choose where to put him in school. The member for Pilbara alluded to it earlier today and the member for Joondalup also touched on it; there is a difference between schools in their attitude to preprimary.

I am absolutely delighted that this bill is before the house because I believe in it. My son has just turned five and has spent his first year—I do not know what they call it—in kindergarten, I think. He has had two half-days and three full days and has come home extraordinarily grown in knowledge and asking questions. I have learnt, just as the member for Joondalup said, from this. I went back and read our committee’s report and I went over the hearings that we had when the department came to our inquiries and—these are my words, Mr Acting Speaker—made excuses for our children not being where they should be. When we saw the primary school at Challis, it was very difficult to accept and see firsthand how excellently these young children were learning. When my wife and I decided to choose the school where our boy would go, I was very aware that I did not want him playing in the sand singing *Ring a Ring o’ Roses* and just having a couple of little encouragements on the side. I wanted him to not only enjoy his preprimary schooling but also be able to learn and be given the opportunity to expand his mind.

I am in agreement with this bill and I trust that those who are in charge of getting the curriculum before these schools will realise and put into practice the fact that our children are sponges; they are ready to learn. I went to a preprimary class at a primary school in my electorate where the children knew the times table up to 12 and they knew all the flashes. As soon as the teacher asked them to do things, they knew to do it. Their writing was outstanding, and this was preprimary! Did they get a pat on the back? Did they get told, “Wonderful”? They are in the top five or 10 per cent of primary schools in Australia and did they get encouraged with that? No. I am watching very carefully how this school and others like it will be judged by the department. I am watching really carefully because I made the decision that I am not going to keep silent, because our children are very important. When I see some children growing ahead at five years old and others behind, it is discouraging. I am watching it. I am delighted that this bill is coming forward and it has bipartisan support. However, I believe it needs more than that; we need to know that the primary schools are going to be given the right to teach these kids explicit direct teaching to get them to a place at which they will be ready at the age of 12 to go into any school knowing their English, maths and the basics that we take for granted today. I can assure members that I want that for my son and if I want it for my son, I want it for all the children in my electorate.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [9.34 pm]: The School Education Amendment Bill 2012 is very welcome in the house. I note that it focuses on making sure that young children, aged zero to 6 years, in the early years are brought into education and are allowed some of the benefits that the school system has to offer. The education department by and large does an amazing job on a limited budget to educate our children. I see pressure building on education all the time to make the resources cover what work has to be done.

This bill in particular builds on literacy and numeracy foundation skills to help children develop social, emotional and physical capacity. I want to talk a bit about two of those elements. Firstly, I will talk about the need to make sure that children, particularly very young children, are well aware of the world in which they are growing up. Members heard me speak in this house quite recently about the advertising industry and the way in which young children are portrayed in print media, electronic media, social media and games. Wherever members see children’s images, they are bound to also see instances in which there is, in my view, an abuse of childhood in those images. Emma Rush, the author of a 2006 report into the sexualisation of children in Australia, describes the advertising industry as nothing short of “corporate paedophilia”. They are strong words, but look at some of the images of young children that we see so often. This picture I am holding is from the latest edition of *About the House* magazine, which is produced by the federal Parliament. When we look at those images, we really become aware of parents trying to bring up very young children surrounded by some of the images that crash in on them every day. Emma Rush states —

“The implication that eight-year-olds are simply physically miniature versions of 14-year-olds, and that 14-year-olds are simply physically miniature versions of 18-year-olds, is garbage ...

She is right: that is simply not the case. Children do not have the cognitive ability to look at these images and understand what is being portrayed. What we end up with is an increasing incidence of children being admitted for eating disorders, for instance. The children’s hospital in the Sydney suburb of Westmead reported a 270 per cent increase in the number of children being admitted with eating disorders over the past decade. I think it is

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really evident that we will end up with a real problem in society when very young children see these images, because they do not have the cognitive ability to understand the images they see and are not old enough to understand that they do not necessarily need to look like or aspire to those images. That is what we are seeing happen more and more. Quite frankly, I do not know how parents cope with their children’s exposure to these images, and bring their children up to be balanced, sensible adults. I think it is a real challenge. Although adults are able to determine whether something has been airbrushed, is unrealistic or the person’s body has been altered through digital manipulation, children cannot see that. They do not know about that.

This is relevant to the bill in that when we talk about very young children coming to an educational environment, one of the things I think it is really important to let them know about is how the industry itself works in a very simple way, so that they start to understand why they are seeing these images. I will quote Dannielle Miller, author of a book called *The Girl with the Butterfly Tattoo*, who says that protesting and implementing bans may only draw emphasis to the products themselves. She states —

“So we’re advocating that perhaps a more clever approach is education—teaching young people to not just be critical of particular media images and messages, but of what agendas corporations might have. If you understand the agenda —

That is, behind the image —

it takes some of the power out of it.”

In other words, it releases the child to make a better and more balanced decision about what they are seeing. Michelle Scott, the Commissioner for Children and Young People in WA, has put this topic high on her agenda. She has just been asked to do a major piece of research on the sexualisation of young children, and I look forward to what that shows us. I am pretty sure that most of us know that while the Parliament can tackle a problem, it needs to be tackled from multiple angles. We have to get the industry involved in taking steps. We have seen some positive steps in other countries that are well worth considering. The UK government took steps to ban certain types of outdoor advertising. In Israel, steps have been taken to make sure that when an advertisement is digitally enhanced, it is well noted on the advertisement. I understand that 19 editors of *Vogue* magazine have made a decision to not use models who are under the age of 16 and appear to have eating disorders. They say that the use of underage models is linked to financial exploitation, eating disorders and interrupted schooling and contributes to the model’s overall lack of empowerment in the work force. I know that our curriculum is very well defined and quite explicit in many respects nowadays, but one of the important opportunities we have with very young children in an education environment is to give them more information so that they can make more informed decisions. They can grow up healthier and become balanced adults. Education definitely has a role to play in children understanding how all this works—how the industry works, why it targets them, how it trades off them and what to do to protect their own values and themselves, so that they can grow into healthy, strong children and adults.

Before I sit down, I also wanted to say that this is definitely a policy that is looking at investing in zero to six-year-olds. That is something WA Labor is very committed to. This time last year we released “Growing Children Well”, which is our policy for what a Labor government will do for children in the early years. I want to mention the strategies that we have committed to in that policy because they are very relevant to this legislation. We have committed to —

- 1** **Appoint a Minister for Early Childhood** to oversee Western Australia’s early years strategy and to ensure the integration of funding, policy and regulation by the Commonwealth and State Governments.
- 2** **Appoint an Early Years Advisory Group** comprising experts in fields relevant to infants and young children, to review existing programs and assist in developing policies that reflect best practice and address issues of fragmentation of services and lack of co-ordination, as well as to formulate an ‘Early Childhood Plan’ for the State.
- 3** **Establish high level Ministerial and Directors General committees** to meet on a regular basis in recognition that the well-being of children is not the responsibility of one department and to ensure integration to maximise the benefits of enhanced services in the early years.

If it was up to me to make a decision on this, which of course it is not, I would be asking a new Labor Premier to take this portfolio under his belt; it is a very important area for our community and for any government. We have also said that we will —

- 4** **Ensure funding is available to employ additional Child Health Nurses —**

Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr David Templeman; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Mr Ian Britza; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Day; Mr Paul Papalia; Dr Tony Buti

We have heard tonight from other speakers about the huge lack in that area. Whilst the government has made some attempt to fill some of the vacancies, we still have more than 100 child health nurses missing from our system. We have also committed to —

- 5 Provide all first time parents with information** on the importance and basic skills of parenting and how through play and spending time with your baby you help build their social and emotional development as well as critical skills like language.
- 6 Establish a pilot program** based on programs such as Family Nurse Partnerships (UK) and Family Home Visiting (South Australia) to provide intensive support for vulnerable first time young mothers until their child reaches 2 years of age and for longer in some circumstances.
- 7 Fund a campaign to:**
 - Increase awareness of the critical development that occurs in the early years of a child’s life and the crucial role of parents and carers in those years; and
 - Increase awareness about the enormous benefits to individuals, families and society of early intervention and the long-term savings of this approach.
- 8 Establish Children’s Centres** on school or other suitable sites to provide dedicated services including early education and care, child health clinics and dental services, as well as support and education for parents and carers ...
- 9 Ensure high school health programs include** a segment to demonstrate the critical importance of health in pregnancy, including the dangers of alcohol and drugs —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, we are talking about —

Ms L.L. BAKER: Yes, I am certainly talking about the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Are you talking to the bill?

Ms L.L. BAKER: I certainly am, Mr Acting Speaker. I shall finish on the note that the WA Labor Party has made a policy commitment in the area of zero to six-year-olds—the early years. The explanatory memorandum to the bill makes it clear that this is a policy that targets young children and brings them into the education system. This is a golden opportunity to make sure that they are healthy and on the right track. My personal commitment, from the committee work I have been involved in, is that there is no more important time in a child’s life than to make sure that in those early years they are properly cared for, nurtured and educated.

Before I sit down I note that in my electorate is Durham Road School, which is a special needs school. I recently asked the children’s commissioner to visit Durham Road School. This school deals with children with high and complex needs, and it does so extremely well. There is an interesting challenge for Durham Road School. One of the reasons Michelle Scott went to visit Durham Road School was the increasing number of children who are seeking entry to that school. Parents are travelling very long distances, some from as far as Chittering and Mundaring, to send their children to this incredibly beautiful and well-managed school in my electorate. The problem is that the numbers are fast increasing. Their question to the commissioner was: what kind of planning is going on for the future of our children? Developmental and acquired disabilities are increasing rapidly in our population. These children have very high and very complex needs and there are more of them every year. Durham Road School simply will not have the capacity to deal with many more of these children. As the number of children coming into schools increases, there will be an additional increase in the number of children with developmental needs and children with high and complex needs. I would also like to know what planning has been done to ensure that these children are being adequately catered for with their schooling experience.

This is a short bill and I very much appreciate the opportunity to talk about two issues that are very dear to my heart—the first being Labor Party policy on early childhood and the second being the need to look at much more strict and stringent rules around the sexualisation of young girls and young boys, particularly in advertising and the media.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [9.49 pm]: I do not want to take too long, but I want to make some points on the School Education Amendment Bill 2012 and school education in my district. It is a good idea that Western Australia is coming into line with the rest of the country and is introducing 13 years of school. It was a real surprise to me when I moved to Western Australia a long time ago that kids in Western Australia only did 12 years of school unlike what I had been familiar with on the east coast. It is good that Western Australia is now lining up with the east coast; it is good for students and for schools in Western Australia. It makes it easier for families that move around, and it is an improvement for Western Australians.

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr David Templeman; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Mr Ian Britza; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Day; Mr Paul Papalia; Dr Tony Buti

I want to note that this is a further change in a number of other changes that have happened in education over the last few years, including the increase in the compulsory school leaving age by the former Labor government to make children stay at school longer. It is very important for people to understand that the needs for kids to learn at school are completely different from what they were in the past. I will give an example of a motor mechanic. Often, students need year 12 maths to get a motor mechanic apprenticeship, because the vehicles they will be working on are so much more complex nowadays. I think the changes to the description of the final two years in school that is proposed by this bill are sensible.

A number of members have discussed that research shows the earlier we start kids in formal education, the better the outcomes will be. There needs to be a real concentration on those early years, zero to eight. I commend the work of the Canning Early Years Group, which is working with the community to try to improve those first years in school.

We have some very good schools in my local community, but we also have some real challenges, and I will make a couple of points about that. According to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that is provided to all of us from the Parliamentary Library, in my electorate two per cent of the population is Indigenous and 44.97 per cent are migrants. That includes seven per cent who were born in the United Kingdom and a significant percentage from some other countries like New Zealand. In fact, the ABS data shows that the UK, India and China are the three largest source countries for the population in Canning. The data shows that 9.55 per cent of the population are listed as “born elsewhere”, which is a bit annoying because I would like to know about those people who are born elsewhere, but it is hard to get that information. In one way or another, 26.5 per cent of the population in my electorate are migrants who arrived in the 20 years from 1991 to 2011, and the three largest source countries are India, China and Malaysia. I mentioned that about seven per cent of the electorate were born in the UK, but of the recent migrants—those who arrived between 1991 and 2011—it is only one per cent, so there has been a massive change to the nature of the population in my electorate. That means that the schools in my electorate now have to cope with two difficult challenges. The first is the high Indigenous population and the second is the high percentage of people who come from a non-English speaking background. I make the observation that at Beckenham Primary School, with the strong leadership from the principal Raelene Hogg, 28 per cent of the students come from a NESB, nine per cent are Indigenous and 36 per cent come from a background of the lowest quartile of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage. In fact, the ICSEA rating is 958, noting that according to the website the ICSEA ranges from 500 to 1 300.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Can we get back to the context of the bill?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am trying to contextualise the change to the act with the needs of my community. This bill will change the school starting age of students. I am just trying to make the point that there is a very important issue in my community in that it has a high NESB percentage and a high Indigenous population and the social index is relatively low compared with other schools. I have mentioned the figures for Beckenham Primary School. Brookman Primary School has an ICSEA of 901. Fifty-nine per cent of the students come from the lowest quartile, 45 per cent have a non-English speaking background and 18 per cent are Indigenous. Even a school such as Wilson Primary School, which is not in an affluent area but in a more middle class area, has an index of 1 041. Forty-seven per cent of students at that school have a NESB and nine per cent are Indigenous. We are lucky that we have people such as principal Hans Geers at Brookman Primary School and Ray Knight at Wilson Primary School, and strong leadership from Clyde Graham at Cannington Community College.

In making these decisions, it is important that the government acknowledge the particular needs that I have outlined of these types of schools in the suburbs that I represent. When we look at lowering the school age, it is important that the resourcing that is needed for these schools with high levels of disadvantage is properly acknowledged. Even the indexes of my two local Catholic schools, St Jude’s Catholic Primary School in Langford and St Joseph’s School in Queens Park, are 1 003 and 1 052. They both have large NESB percentages. St Jude’s is 34 per cent and St Joseph’s is 37 per cent, and both schools have a two per cent Indigenous population. All the schools, not just government schools, for which the government has principal responsibility, including the Catholic and Christian schools, the Muslim and Turkish schools and other schools in my electorate, need particular assistance because of the difficult circumstances of the community that I represent.

It is good to see that the schools, with their strong leadership, have been making progress. The welcome change of the contribution of the Building the Education Revolution program to refresh the physical infrastructure in schools has been magnificent and is a credit to the federal Labor government. But we cannot get away from the fact that these schools need additional support when compared with that required by average schools across the state. It is my duty to highlight these needs to the minister and to Parliament.

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I will finish with the issue that was raised by the member for Gosnells about language training at schools. The Asian white paper has set out a great agenda, and I think that needs to be looked at from the first enrolment of kids at school. Now that schooling will be compulsory from a younger age, kids will be given a great opportunity to start learning at a young age. It will be important to make sure that that resourcing is available right through school and that there is a pathway for kids to learn languages. I make the point that three of the government schools in my electorate—Cannington Community College, Gibbs Street Primary School and Wilson Primary School—and Rehoboth Christian College all provide Indonesian language training. But none of the high schools in my area provides Indonesian language training. It is important that the government acknowledge the demands that will be created by the Asian white paper agenda. I make the point that it is not just about learning language skills; it is also about learning the culture and getting some sensitivities to the countries we need to engage with.

I will finish on this point. It may seem away from what we are talking about here, but I think you can see the way I am trying to develop this, Mr Deputy Speaker. When I go to Jakarta and look around, I see the Commonwealth Bank, ANZ Bank and a couple of surf wear companies, but I do not see Australian brands in Asia. That will be the challenge. It is easy for us to sell resources into high-demand parts of Asia. It is easy for us to sell food into high-demand parts of Asia. The trick for the future will be for us to sell our branded goods and technology into Asia.

This is an opportunity for us to talk about the need to properly address the challenge set out in the Asian white paper, because we are changing the school starting age and we are talking about what happens in the last two years of compulsory education. In doing that, governments need to allocate resources. This is not necessarily about allocating additional resources; it is about ensuring that the resources we apply properly deal with the opportunities for the future. It would be a tragedy for us to look back in 10 years and see that as Asian economies grew and the intensity on raw materials fell, which is inevitable as the economy increases and becomes more service intensive, the percentage of the economy used up in primary resources went down and we had a smaller share of Asian activity. If we do not have a properly integrated school system that faces Asia and gives people in Australia every opportunity to be successful in our region, we will miss out on a huge opportunity. I think these are important issues.

I acknowledge that the member for Geraldton has worked hard to gain proficiency in Indonesian. I was very lucky that I gained my proficiency in Indonesian in Indonesia, which is probably a much easier way to do it than studying the language here. The other day the member for Geraldton and I were talking about the fact that once we get past the start of learning Indonesian, we find it is just as complex as any other language. To gain proper proficiency is just as complex as with any other language. If we do not have a more Asian-facing education system, we will not have an Asian-facing community. If we do not have an Asian-facing community, Australia will miss out. That is why I support the goals set out in the Asian white paper. That is why I am taking the opportunity to have the discussion about what we are doing with both the first year and the last two years of compulsory education and the intentions of the School Education Amendment Bill 2012. I use that as the opportunity to remind people of the demands. I put on the record the needs of the community I represent, which are great. I am pleased with the leadership. I have not mentioned Lyn Stone at St Jude’s Catholic Primary School or Peter Yensch at St Joseph’s Primary School, but we have some great community leaders in our local schools. They work in a challenging environment and it is to their credit that we continue to see improvements in the outcomes for those local schools.

I have outlined the particular demands in my community and I have outlined what I see as being an important issue with Australia facing Asia, not for the benefit of Asia, but to benefit ourselves to make sure that we continue to gain an increased share of the services and branded goods that will be the future of economic activity in Asia. It will not be in primary resources; the share of primary resources of those economies will fall over time as those incomes rise, just as it has done in Australia, America, Europe and other places. As services increase, it is natural that raw materials become less important. It will be critical for us to adapt to those futures. It is the kids with whom this bill deals who will have that opportunity in the future.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Nollamara) [10.04 pm]: I, too, rise to speak on the School Education Amendment Bill 2012. The Minister for Planning will be pleased to know that I am the last speaker. The bill is about whether preprimary education should be compulsory. It will take effect from 1 January 2013 or, as the bill states —

from the beginning of the year in which the child reaches the age of 4 years and 6 months;

I want to talk about that whole aspect of early childhood education. Although I welcome compulsory education for children from the age of four years and six months, it is important to acknowledge that engaging in schooling or a relationship with schooling prior to that, even for three-year-olds and younger, is of absolute benefit to our community.

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I want to talk about some of the initiatives that are taking place in the electorate of Nollamara. In any debate about compulsory education, we need to ensure effective delivery of that early childhood education. I endorse the Labor Party policy that was outlined by the member for Maylands and recognise Hon Linda Savage, who has worked so hard on early childhood education and wellbeing. I also want to endorse some of the comments made by the member for Maylands about the sexualisation of children. If early childhood education is predominantly gained by learning through play, we have to realise that many of the things that our children are exposed to in play can be counterproductive to their health and wellbeing in terms of their sexualisation. That can be seen in some of the clothing that our children are wearing. The member for Maylands made many important points that this house should think about when we talk about early childhood education, as we are today.

Early childhood education is a cornerstone of the development of our community. I was lucky enough to work with early childhood educators at United Voice, formerly known as the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union. The workers in that sector have always fought for recognition of the vital and integral role that they play in the wellbeing of children in our community. In their roles in early childhood education they have the capacity to influence the wellbeing of children at a very early age. The Big Steps campaign, which is being undertaken by United Voice, is a sector-wide effort to address the wage disparities of some of the most valuable employees in our workplaces; that is, the early childhood educators. I want to bring that to the attention of the Parliament and seek support from this place for those very vital workers.

I quickly want to run through some of those programs that are operating for children in the very important early years in the electorate of Nollamara. For instance, Dryandra Primary School runs a zero to four-year-old pathway playgroup program. It uses a kindergarten teacher. The deputy principal, Jean Blechynden, should be congratulated for putting that program in place. It is a kindy support group that tries to include parents in education when kids are at a very early age—mostly around three years and just before four years. The importance of the program is the involvement of parents. What I have noticed in early childhood education in many of the schools that I have the privilege of representing is that the involvement of parents is a key goal of many of the schools. Once they have that parent involvement—that hands-on education of parents and the involvement of parents—it makes them feel comfortable in the schooling of their children and comfortable with the school. That is why any introduction of early childhood education and compulsory education for children aged four years and six months in this case needs resourcing to ensure that parents are involved. That is not easy in the areas that I represent. The member for Cannington outlined the percentages of children from non-English speaking backgrounds in the schools that he represents. His situation is not dissimilar to my own. Up to 70 languages are spoken at many of the schools in my electorate, so I am told—I assume some of those are dialects of southern Sudanese languages. Without that interaction between parents, I think that that disengagement of parents plays out in a disengagement of students in the long term. I was lucky enough to visit Dryandra Primary School and see the kindergarten playgroup program there. The kindergarten teacher had been doing a project on animals. A delightful thing about this was that a mother of two young children—a Burmese woman I think with limited English language skills—was able to contribute to her children’s education by taking them to Landsdale Farm School on the weekend, which has farm animals. Using technology, she was able to record on the iPhone what they were looking at and record her son telling her what the animals were as he was going around showing them to her—this was a three-year-old child. It was really participative for her; she was very excited to show the kindergarten teacher that she had done this and that she was able to actively contribute to her child’s education at such an early stage. I really congratulate that school for that. It uses the federal national partnership funding to progress that program. That funding of this has a time line—I think it is a seven-year program for this particular area because it is a low socioeconomic area. These sorts of things cannot just be ad hoc based on what funding is available; they really need to be factored into our compulsory education for early childhood. Apart from those involved in national partnership funding, 36 out of 74 schools in WA are engaged in activities dedicated to early intervention in the sorts of issues I have been talking about: getting in, working early with parents and getting that interaction between parents and children. The national partnership funding aims to assist low socioeconomic communities. The national partnership funding conducts literacy and numeracy programs and low socioeconomic programs and the intention is to transform schooling to address the challenges of students in disadvantaged communities and improve the educational engagement of students. The member for Cannington outlined some of those challenges really well when he talked about the measures of disadvantage. Part of that national partnership is based on the belief that principals and teachers working in schools have innovative ideas for improving educational outcomes. That certainly has been my experience when working with the schools in the Nollamara electorate.

I do not think there is one program about which it can be said that it is the one, it is the model and it works. It has been my experience that each school needs to develop its program to fit the needs of its students. For example, Boyare Primary School shares the philosophy that many schools have that a strong academic focus needs strong

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engaged families and this in turn results in improved learning. It does that by using part of the national partnership funding—obviously it is used for different things. One thing it does is subsidise excursions for not only the students, but also the parents. Recently, over 30 parents attended an excursion to the Zoo. For many of those parents, it was the first time they had ever been over the Narrows Bridge. One of the stories I was told about Boyare—I may have mentioned it before—is that on a previous excursion in the school bus to a place near Victoria Park, the name of which escapes me, as they went over that bridge the kids asked whether they were going into a different country! A lot of the families of these kids we are talking about are newly arrived in Australia. They come into a suburb, establish their communities within the area and operate—not in a subsistence way; that would probably be a harsh term—but in a manner that is about establishing and growing their families. I can see that I am being a tsetse fly for the Leader of the House!

Dr K.D. Hames: Ten minutes would be really good.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: That would be rude.

I also want to congratulate Boyare Primary School on the development of its community garden project. Again, that is to involve parents in the educational process with their children. When we talk about these things, we need to be extremely sure —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the member come back to the bill, please?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes; I am talking about the national partnership. I could go on longer so that I can make sure that members know that I am really focusing on the bill, if that is what is required of me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please focus on the bill.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I will focus on the bill. So members can know that I was focusing on the bill, which is about the compulsory education of children upon reaching the age of four years and six months, I was talking about the importance of resourcing and the national partnership funding. I was trying to point out that in terms of national partnership funding, one of the really key things that has been going on at Boyare Primary School is the community garden project, which includes those people who are part of the compulsory education system. I am glad I was asked to come back to that so that I could clarify that point for you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mirrabooka Primary School is the home of the Happy Kids program. That has gone across to five schools in the metropolitan area and has operated in country areas. It is also part of looking at early childhood education and compulsory schooling for those years. It is a really effective leadership peer program. An Edith Cowan University report will be released on 28 November. I particularly would like to congratulate Narelle Black and John Pedrotti on the work that they have done with Mirrabooka Primary School’s Happy Kids program.

In terms of compulsory education, I congratulate Westminster Primary School. It is at the cutting edge of early childhood education. It has had an Indigenous playgroup for a number of years, and it interacts very early on with parents. It has an Indigenous preprimary school, which previously was located off-site, that was specifically for Aboriginal children and the Aboriginal community. It is now on-site. Westminster Primary School won school of the year in 2008, and last year one of the science teachers won the Prime Minister’s science teaching award. What is most exciting for Westminster Primary School is that the community health nurse has been co-located at Westminster. It means that the community nurse can use the access given by having compulsory education for four-year-olds to pick up developmental, behavioural and physical issues with young children and be able to address them as soon as possible so that they can have good outcomes for those children and their younger siblings. It is most exciting that the state government is putting a healthy parenting and education service centre, a hub, at Westminster. The member for Joondalup talked previously about his disappointment that this did not go further into other schools, but certainly I welcome it at Westminster Primary School. It can only be seen as a further excellent initiative at the school.

The Director General of Education, Sharyn O’Neill, is in the gallery. When announcing those hubs, the director general said —

The best indicator of a child’s performance at school is their socio-economic status, so these centres will ensure that children who are most vulnerable get the best start in life.

That is certainly what we want, and that is why we have gone to this situation. The intent of this bill is not simply just to bring down the age; the intent is that the age be brought down because we want to see the benefit of education go to children in our community. That is a great initiative of that school. I note also that Waddington Primary School has an innovative program for students in kindergarten to year 2 through its national partnership funding. We are making the changes in the bill before the house tonight because we consider early childhood education to be very important. How do we do that to meet the needs of the different

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school environments? Koondoola Primary School uses an innovative integrated service centre, which has a psychologist, nurse and community worker, and I understand it is funded by Health. They work with families of newly arrived Australians. A family among the newly arrived Australians from the Burmese community do not always have a common surname, so it can be difficult to fill in the bureaucratic forms required to just live in Australia, such as the forms required to obtain a healthcare card. Teachers used to get involved in those sorts of issues or when there were difficulties with the students. The integrated service centre at the school enables teachers to focus on educational outcomes, while the integrated service centre looks after the wellbeing of the students and the families.

I suppose the most important aspect of all this is that these children are still very young at four years and six months of age. I would not have thought we would want parents to just drop them off at school. Those of us who have had children know the process involved in dealing with children at that preprimary school age.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The bill also deletes reference to years 11 and 12 in the act. In line with deleting reference to years 11 and 12, the final two years of compulsory education, I want to raise the issue of transition from primary school to high school. The Southern Sudanese community believes that at this stage many of their students become disengaged. I want to congratulate Balga Senior High School for using its national partnership funding to provide a transitional class for students at risk of disengaging. It is a major issue that is constantly raised. At a recent meeting with the Deputy Commissioner of Police and the Southern Sudanese community over a dispute that occurred in Balga, the primary issue that was repeatedly raised by the community was the sense they felt their young people had of disengagement from schooling. I note too that Balga Senior High School uses this capacity to engage with the Swan Noongar Sports Education Program and it recently launched the Balga Senior High School Sports Foundation. It involves fundraising for excellence, for inclusion and for the benefit of the community as a whole. Since SNSEP began, it has increased Aboriginal school attendance from 44 per cent in 2008 to 66 per cent in 2011. I commend SNSEP on the good work it is doing in that area.

In conclusion, I want to talk about the importance of schooling to develop a rounded person in the community and note that I was very lucky to experience that from kindergarten through to my high school. I was recently very lucky to go to the Scarborough Senior High School reunion where there was a whole cohort, from people I went to kindergarten with to people I spent my high schooling with. That community showed the benefit of public education in terms of a whole, healthy and well group of people. I commend the people who organised that 30-year reunion.

Dr A.D. Buti: Thirty years?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes, it is a bit scary. I want to thank them very much for giving me an opportunity to share with others the great life experiences we got out of the public education system. Scarborough Senior High School no longer exists in its physical form but it certainly exists in its emotional form through a whole bunch of people, who shared a great experience in a very good public school education system that is shared by many throughout our electorates and throughout the whole of Western Australia.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Planning) [10.24 pm] — in reply: I thank members who have contributed to the debate on the School Education Amendment Bill 2012. By my account, there were 17 contributions in total. Some quite wide-ranging comments were made about education, specifically school education. The essential purpose of the bill is to ensure that the preprimary year is compulsory. There are other consequential changes related to that, but that essentially is the sole purpose of this bill. I understand that about 98 per cent of eligible preprimary schoolchildren attend, so we are talking only about an additional two per cent of the relevant age group in Western Australia.

The member for Warnbro raised the question of how this additional requirement will be resourced. I will cover that more during the consideration in detail stage, which I understand he wants to undertake, but in summary I am advised that because the increase in numbers is not substantial, it will be dealt with through existing allocations and existing staffing in schools.

More specific points were also raised. For example, the member for Victoria Park raised the issue of students in East Victoria Park who are outside the local intake area for East Victoria Park Primary School not being given a guarantee that they will continue at that school in the future. That of course is because of the pressure on numbers. It is important to point out, as I did by way of interjection, that parents were advised about 12 months ago that there was no guarantee those children would be able to continue at the school even if they started off in the kindergarten or preprimary year at East Victoria Park Primary School.

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The member for Pilbara made quite a number of comments about Aboriginal education in particular and concerns about lack of achievement in literacy levels for Aboriginal students. It is important to recognise that Western Australia has made significant improvements in the last three to four years in relation to literacy levels. I am advised that Western Australia is currently regarded as the most improved state in relation to literacy levels for the period 2008 to 2011, as determined by national testing. It is also important to recognise that the Western Australian Department of Education was provided with an international award for the tri-border attendance strategy. That is in the Northern Territory–South Australia–Western Australia areas in relation to the tracking of individual students. It is quite a challenge to ensure that students receive the education we all want them to receive given that some students attend up to eight schools per year. It obviously places significant demands on the system to ensure that they are recorded as being in a particular school and to ensure, hopefully, that they are attending school.

The member for Joondalup discussed the child and parent centres. He seemed to be a bit confused about the funding. All 10 child and parent centres, which were announced a few months ago by the state government, are fully funded by the state government to the extent of \$28.8 million over four years. That allocation is separate from the commonwealth programs for child and family centres. I am advised there are four centres in the north of the state and one in Midland. It is a separate program. Hopefully, that clarifies the issue for the member for Joondalup.

I thank members for their contributions. We will consider other issues in more detail, but hopefully not at great length, during the consideration in detail stage. I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Leave denied to proceed forthwith to third reading.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 4 put and passed.

Clause 5: Sections 5 and 6 replaced —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I choose this clause to discuss various questions that I indicated in my second reading contribution I would be looking to. One question very recently asked of me is about this move. Obviously I am concerned about resourcing, and I understand from the response the minister provided that it will come from within current resources because there is effectively very little change. But changes will occur and it is undeniable that the budget of the Department of Education has been cut in this budget year by \$36 million. That therefore raises the question: when the minister says that the resourcing will come from within current resources, does he mean from within the original budget for the 2011–12 financial year or the 2012–13 financial year, or from the original budget minus \$36 million? How does the minister know that we are capable of meeting the requirements of this legislation with the current budget and the budget cuts that the Treasurer has announced?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am advised that the budget has been allocated to ensure that this program can be implemented. As I said earlier, given that 98 per cent of students of this cohort attend preprimary education at the moment, the additional impact is negligible and it can be met from the resources that are already allocated to the Department of Education. Most schools actually have spare capacity for students of this age group; and where they need additional capacity, that is able to be provided. There are obviously changes made within schools all around the state every year to adjust to either a greater or a lower number of students at particular schools and in individual classes. The change that this particular modification will bring about is only negligible, as I said, in relation to the demand for any additional resources, and that can be met from the existing allocation to the department. The \$36 million that the member referred to will not have any impact on this program, I am advised.

Mr P. PAPALIA: English as a second language students are entitled to access intensive English centres from year 1 upwards, as I understand it. That means that children of parents who have come here from overseas, perhaps for the mining boom or as migrants or as refugees, enter the schooling system and enter the intensive English centres when they reach year 1. With the new change to make preprimary compulsory, will additional costs and resources not be required to expand intensive English centre services to accommodate an additional cohort of children who are not currently accommodated in that process?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: In the provision of assistance for students with English as a second language, I am advised that the services that are available now will continue to be available for students of this age group. There are some specific centres for outreach and for students who are migrants or refugees from other countries. There are one or

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two specific centres for students who have particular needs and who come from traumatic or torture backgrounds, or whose families do. One is in Koondoola, and I understand there is another one.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, I understand that, but currently preprimary children do not enter the intensive English centres, as I understand it. Once they reach year 1 and they are an eligible student—they have been in Australia for less than a year and enrolled within six months of arrival, and they are entering the first year of compulsory schooling—they are entitled to access intensive English centres. For students travelling from outside their host school’s intake areas to attend an IEC, a school bus service or public transport cards are provided. Noting that that is not currently provided to preprimary schoolchildren, because it is not—there are currently children in schools in kindergarten and preprimary who are accommodated by schools that do not have the capacity to teach them English—those children are struggling and finding it difficult already. Noting that is the case, it cannot be said that the current resources that are provided for this service will meet the requirements of an additional cohort.

If the minister wants an example, I can give him one of a specific school. North Morley Primary School currently has three non-English speaking students enrolled in kindy and preprimary. They have been able to make limited progress because they cannot understand enough to be taught. The school will have nine English as a second language students out of 47 this year, but in 2013 it will have 14 out of 55. The costs will be increased. There will be a requirement for additional resources. Those students will need to be accommodated. The government is cutting \$36 million out of the budget and it is telling me that it can be done within the current budget. How is the government going to do it?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The budget has been allocated for the provision of school services and, in particular, for this program to be implemented. As I said, there is spare capacity in the majority of schools and there is no need for any further allocation to be made to the education department for this financial year. At the moment students are able to access English as a second language services in preprimary centres within their specific schools, wherever they are located, and they are able to be assessed there for additional support they may need when they go into year 1. So, whatever is available now will continue to be available for students at the preprimary level.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The problem, minister, is that nothing is available now. I am not making it up. I met with representatives from the parents and citizens association about three or four days ago, and they said that at their school, North Morley Primary School, right now there are two classes. They have nine English as a second language students out of 47, and next year when school starts there will be 14 out of 55. Currently, those kids who are there cannot access the intensive English centres because they are not able to access them until they are in year 1 and the school itself does not have the capacity to provide the instruction to them. As we know, the central office has had all its travel cut, including travel for people who might provide additional advice and services for training teachers. What is the budget for this activity—that is, expanding compulsory schooling next year to preprimary? What component of that budget will ensure that ESL students are provided with the necessary access to intensive English centres?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What I understand is that students of this age are provided with visiting services at the moment —

Mr P. Papalia: From where?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: From the statewide speech and language service—the outreach services that exist. So, those services visit relevant schools at the moment and that will continue.

Mr P. Papalia: Is that true outside the metropolitan area?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Yes, so I am advised.

Mr P. Papalia: And how do the people travel from central office now that their budgets have been stopped for travel?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Where staff are involved in providing services to students, there is no impact on their travel. Therefore, any impact on travel would not have any effect on the services provided to students.

Mr P. Papalia: So, you’re saying that there’s no impact on any travel for staff travelling from central office for the purposes of providing training for students?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Where any direct services —

Mr P. Papalia: So, no professional development impact at all?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Where services are provided directly to students, there is no impact. But I will just make a comment on the state of the budget overall, because the opposition goes on at some length, probably

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understandably, about levels of state debt and the prospect of the state budget being in deficit. Because of the circumstances that have existed in recent times, which have been well publicised and talked about by the Treasurer, there have had to be some corrective measures put in place across most agencies. I sit on the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee and the education budget has grown substantially over the last four years and it probably —

Mr P. Papalia: You cut \$41 million out in 2009 and \$36 million this year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Whatever might have been taken out, it was out of a much greater increase in the allocation to the education budget. Therefore, the budget has grown substantially. I cannot recall exactly what the quantum is, but it is well above the rate of inflation, so —

Mr P. Papalia: So, you’re saying that there was \$77 million worth of wasted money in education prior to you taking charge?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am not saying that precisely.

Mr P. Papalia: What’s your view of Gonski?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I want you to come back to the point now.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The member can set himself up for a debate directly with the Minister for Education. I deal much more with planning, culture and the arts, and science and innovation issues at the moment, but what I do know, having been advised by the director general, is that the education budget has been balanced for two years in a row and there is no impact on front-line services, teaching services being provided in schools, as a result of any changes that need to be put in place. Therefore, in relation to this bill, it is about ensuring that preprimary year of school education is made compulsory. Ninety-eight per cent of students attend at the moment, so the impact of the additional two per cent, in resourcing terms, is negligible.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Just to confirm, the minister is saying that any English as a second language student in the state who now is required to attend preprimary as a compulsory part of their education will have access to intensive English centres in the same way as they would if they were in year 1 this year and that is fully funded and there will not be any schools that will have to accommodate them without appropriate training.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I understand that students are subject to assessment at the moment, and if they are assessed as being in need of provision of assistance, assistance will be provided. Students in the preprimary year do not have access to the intensive English centres at the moment; they do from year 1, obviously subject to assessment. There is no change to the current arrangements in relation to preprimary students. If they have been assessed as being in need of a visiting service, that will continue.

Mr P. Papalia: But that’s the point. Next year they have to go to preprimary; it’s compulsory. You’re imposing that requirement on them, and you are saying that we are still not going to provide them with access to intensive English centres until they get to year 1.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The majority of them are already in preprimary education now.

Mr P. Papalia: Yes, and they’re struggling.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: But the situation does not change as a result of this bill.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What are the objectives of increasing schooling and making preprimary compulsory? It is so that we can enhance the education experience for those preprimary students. The minister is saying that there is going to be a cohort that will not benefit; because they cannot speak English, they will just be sitting in the corner for another year until they are eligible for year 1 access to an intensive English centre. If that is not correct, what is the minister doing? He is just saying that they will be provided with the service. They are not currently being provided with the service. He is saying that it is going to be exactly the same as this year; what is the difference? The government has made it compulsory for a reason; the objectives have been set for a reason.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: This is probably the last time I will stand up on this issue, but, to summarise, the services that are being provided now will continue to be provided. They are actually the same as were provided when the previous government was in office —

Mr P. Papalia: Yes, but we didn’t make preprimary compulsory!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: — and 98 per cent of students are in school now, so the additional impact is really negligible.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is fine; I will tell North Morley Primary School it is not going to get any assistance next year when 14 out of 55 of its kids cannot speak English.

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Mr J.H.D. Day: They will get the same assistance now, based on the need that’s determined.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is right; they are getting more kids. The government has made it compulsory —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, come back to the bill, please.

Mr P. PAPALIA: — with the objective of improving outcomes, but it is not going to provide them with the resources they need. That is what it has done.

Mr J.H.D. Day: There’s always flexibility within the school system to provide additional support.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member for Pilbara was quite impassioned in his contribution to the second reading debate in respect of the issue I turn to now. Noting that right now we have a problem with locating a cohort of children in this state, what assurance can the minister give us that that small percentage of students of whom we do not know the whereabouts will not be completely overlooked by this expansion? The whole objective of this initiative is to improve outcomes; we are going to try to get additional education to children at a younger age, and that is to be commended. But what resources are being provided to ensure that we actually reach out to a greater number of kids, particularly Indigenous kids in remote localities, that we may not be reaching under the current system?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: A range of strategies are in place to encourage young Aboriginal children to attend school. There are Aboriginal education workers in place in regional and remote areas, and also in metropolitan areas where there are high Aboriginal populations. There is also the provision of school canteens and breakfast programs; a school that used to be in my electorate and is now in the electorate of Forrestfield is one example of that. Clothing is provided to assist, where that is necessary; homework classes have been established; play groups operate to specifically attract young Aboriginal children; and there are about 20 Aboriginal kindergartens for three-year-olds to attend school. Those are some examples. That does not mean that I am saying there is a perfect result, as clearly there is not, but a lot of effort is put in to try to ensure that Aboriginal children attend school. It is very much an ongoing issue, particularly in remote areas. I have no doubt, as I commented earlier, that some students attend up to eight schools a year, so it is quite a challenge, but a substantial effort is made to try to make sure that they attend, and that will continue, of course.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Further to that, when the minister was responding to the member for Pilbara in the second reading debate—or it might have been someone else—he said that Western Australia was considered to be the leading state in improvements in Indigenous numeracy and literacy. Noting that one of the intended outcomes of this bill is this additional year of education, I am interested in taking the opportunity to explore that a little. Is that claim that I hear occasionally based on our own analysis, on the independent study report that was released this year or is it just a comparison of the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy failure rates?

Mr J.H.D. Day: It is based on national testing that is undertaken in all states; it is NAPLAN.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is that claim based on the Centre for Independent Studies’ report?

Mr J.H.D. Day: It is based on NAPLAN testing.

Mr P. PAPALIA: When the Centre for Independent Studies released its report in which it lauded WA as second only to Queensland in improving Indigenous education this year, one of the graphs that was produced analysed the NAPLAN results, and if the absentee rates in year 3 and failure rates are taken into account, the reduction overall over the four years is three per cent. Is that what we are referring to?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, what has this to do with the clause?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The whole intent of this bill is to try to provide additional education to children in the early years to ensure that they get better outcomes in numeracy and literacy.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Where they are not attending at the moment.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No; because the minister has said that 98 per cent are attending.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It is not going to have any impact on those who are attending now.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am referring to absenteeism from NAPLAN testing. I am trying to explore the claims that are frequently made that we are leading the nation in improving Indigenous literacy rates, particularly in year 3. When I look at it, it seems that we have had a three per cent reduction in the failure and absentee rates for NAPLAN between 2008 and 2011. Is that what the minister is talking about?

Mr J.H.D. Day: What do you mean by the failure rate?

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, clause 5 deals with the pre-compulsory education period. I have let you talk widely.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In light of the fact that the pre-compulsory education period is being reduced and we are extending the compulsory education period with a view to getting better results in NAPLAN testing in year 3, can we reflect a little on how we are going so far? It is often claimed that we are leading the nation in improved Indigenous literacy outcomes. How do we find out where that claim comes from, because when I look at the failure rates and take into account absenteeism from NAPLAN testing, our massive improvement has been a three per cent improvement over four years. Initially, it went up, it then got worse and came down again. Is that what we are talking about, or is there something I have not seen that the minister is relying on?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I understand that the member is looking specifically at year 3, but it is necessary to take a wider view of the outcomes and consider the testing that was also done in years 5, 7 and 9. In answer to the member’s question about where this view comes from, it is based on the results of the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy testing. I am not personally familiar with the exact results, but to take an example, from 2007 to 2011, the mean numeracy scores for year 5 have gone from 455 to 473; for year 7, they have gone from 533 to 537; and for year 9, they have gone from 559 to 568. For the record for completeness, for year 3 they have declined slightly from 390 to 383, but that is only part of the picture.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members that we are talking about the pre-compulsory education period.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am interested in how detailed the analysis is and whether it accommodates a high absentee rate for Indigenous students from the NAPLAN testing.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You cannot talk about an absentee rate in pre-compulsory education because it is not compulsory. If you want to talk about it, do so on another clause. This is about pre-compulsory education.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is clause 5. Clause 5 provides that sections 5 and 6 will be replaced with proposed new sections 5 and 6 as outlined in the clause. It is the whole lot.

Mr J.H.D. Day: I think your questions would be better suited to an estimates committee process, so that might be something to save for next year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: They might be, minister, but there is not another one before the election, so we will take advantage of this opportunity.

Mr J.H.D. Day: We will have another one next year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I was trying to elicit some sort of indication about the resources that are provided. When these claims are made about the outcomes for Aboriginal students—early childhood in particular—how much analysis is given to whether a lot of them are not there? In light of the fact that there has been significant growth in the number of students whose whereabouts are unknown, what certainty do we have that the claim the minister makes that 90 per cent of them are already attending is true?

Mr J.H.D. Day: That is what the Department of Education advises. It has some pretty full statistical record keeping, I have no doubt.

Mr R.H. COOK: The member for Warnbro was trying to say something that I was not quite clear on.

Mr P. PAPALIA: How many children are there at the moment whose whereabouts are unknown to the system—1 200? How many of them are in year 1, for instance?

Mr J.H.D. Day: We do not have that information in detail. It does not really relate to the bill. The bill is about making preprimary school compulsory—nothing more and nothing less.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is about doing something effective. If the government is going to be effective, should it not know how many children we are not reaching currently and what resources it will allocate to rectify that problem?

Mr J.H.D. Day: That is a wider issue than is covered by this bill.

Dr A.D. BUTI: In my contribution to the second reading debate, I asked whether the minister would allow some latitude for children in Steiner and Montessori schools et cetera. We were told at the briefing that the minister was amenable to the possibility of allowing children in alternative schools to not start at the compulsory ages being mandated under this bill. The minister did not mention it in his response to the second reading debate, so can he please give us some clarification on that?

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: This is a separate issue from that raised by the member for Warnbro, so I will respond. The Minister for Education has written to the CEO of Steiner Education Australia, and amongst other things said —

In general terms, this will mean that “five-year-olds” will be required to attend school full-time, however, school principals will be given the discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to make alternative arrangements for individual students on a case-by-case basis to transit to full-time attendance if it is considered to be in the best interests of the particular child. For instance, it may be possible for a gentle transition to occur during, say, the first five weeks of term 1, or in certain circumstances, if there are developmental issues or other extenuating circumstances involved, the transition could occur over a longer period.

Essentially, it is up to the discretion of the school principal; if the principal is convinced, as presumably they would be in these schools, in the early stages of the year at least, that it is not appropriate or desirable for a student to attend full time, there is flexibility whereby they are able to be exempted from attending on a full-time basis. In particular, section 23(1)(a)(i) of the act provides flexibility when a school has a properly formulated policy that permits children to attend fewer than full-time hours for a defined part of the school year. I understand that this provision would be available, for example, to Perth’s Rudolf Steiner schools to meet their concerns. Some flexibility is possible when it is considered necessary.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I would like some further clarification. I presume that because the compulsory phase is now earlier, that will also relate to home schooling. If a parent decides they want to home school a child, would they have to comply with the normal requirements of home schooling at the earlier age?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Yes.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6 to 16 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Mr J.H.D. Day (Minister for Planning)**, and passed.

House adjourned at 11.04 pm
