

Chairman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr John Day; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Jan Norberger; Ms Andrea Mitchell

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**Division 23: Education, \$3 888 980 000 —**

Mr P. Abetz, Chairman.

Mr J.H.D. Day, Minister for Planning representing the Minister for Education.

Ms S. O'Neill, Director General.

Mr J.W. Leaf, Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration.

Mr D. Axworthy, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Miss A. Ramm, Director, Staff Recruitment and Employment Services.

Mr C.W. Gillam, Executive Director, Workforce.

Mr B. Roach, Deputy Chief Finance Officer.

Mr J.F. Fischer, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Mr P. Titmanis, Executive Director, Innovation, Performance and Research.

Mr L. Hale, Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery.

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

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to the discussion of those items for which a vote of money proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must clearly relate to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question. The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by Friday, 30 August 2013. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office.

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

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIRMAN:** We have a quorum so let us get started. Member for Armadale.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I refer to "Corrective Measures" on page 272, particularly the line item "Public Sector Workforce Reform". This week the government announced the cut of 500 educational jobs, including 350 education assistants. Can the minister confirm the cuts to the number of education assistants for anaphylactic students from kindergarten to year 2 and can he confirm whether all EAs from kindergarten to year 2-aged schoolchildren will be cut?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Is the member talking about the provision of support for anaphylaxis?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Yes, the education assistants.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is intended that the education assistants who are appointed specifically to deal with anaphylactic issues will not continue in those positions, and that is in the context of the fact that much better procedures have been put in place in schools following advice from the Department of Health. The issues that exist are able to be appropriately managed by the adequate training of existing school staff, including teachers. I do not think anybody expected that education assistants would necessarily be at every location or present on every occasion that a student needed support. I also recall that support staff were appointed specifically to deal with peanut allergy issues, but children have other allergies as well. It is necessary to have a wider level of expertise in school communities to deal with that issue. I will ask the director general to add a bit more information about how the issue is being managed.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** That is right, minister. Support will be provided for all students. We provide specific funding for the purchase of auto-injector pens—EpiPens—and we have also developed online training material for schools to ensure that all staff understand the issues surrounding and management of anaphylaxis and how to respond in an emergency. This approach is supported by the president of Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia who recently said that this is appropriate action. It is also consistent with what happens in other states. We are the only state in

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Australia that provides education assistants specifically for this purpose. They were originally employed to wipe down tables for students in the early years. As the minister alluded, they deal only with students' reaction to nuts. In fact, there is no EA support for those who suffer from other anaphylactic reactions, such as bee stings. We believe the management in place has a good evidence base. It is well supported and is consistent with the way other states manage this issue. Specifically, the risk work and mitigation is in place to make this change.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** And the other part of the question?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which was?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Can the minister confirm that all education assistants for kindergarten to year 2-aged schoolchildren will be cut?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I defer to the director general to comment on that.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** There will be some reductions. I will not confirm that the number of all junior primary or early years assistants will be reduced. That is not the case. There will be some reduction in K–2 EAs under the current model. I will explain the current model. Education assistants are allocated on the basis of the type of class and the number of K–2 classes formed. As an example, a class of 15 preprimary students receives an allocation, but a class of 14 preprimary students does not. Obviously, we want to ensure that more widely spread smaller class groupings are given support. The minister talked about reform and a new funding model—this is part of that. A per student allocation will be introduced and that will mean that every child in K–2 is entitled to receive an EA allocation rather than having to wait until we group together a class of 15 students. It is not the case that junior primary or early years assistants are being cut across the board. We have done a review and we are introducing a new way of allocating those assistants.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The director general said there would be some reduction. Can she be more specific? Turning to anaphylactic assistants, yesterday the Minister for Education said that no education assistants for people with special needs will be affected. It was confirmed last night in the estimates of the Disabilities Service Commission in an email from Hon Helen Morton to Dr Ron Chalmers that no EAs for students with special needs will be taken away. It has been confirmed today that that is not the case.

[9.10 am]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The situation as I understand it is that students who have a disability will continue to have education assistants. No student with a disability will lose an EA. I make the overall point that of the more than 7 000 EAs in the system, approximately 368 positions are intended to be removed. That is about five per cent. A large number of education assistants will continue to provide support, particularly to students with disabilities. As I said, there is no intention to change that.

In recent years there has been a very large growth in the number of education assistants; that has not always been where the needs have been most evident. One particular problem that exists is where an education assistant is appointed for a particular student and that student may either move schools or has moved on to high school or whatever. In many cases the education assistant is retained at that school even though the particular student to which they were appointed is no longer there. That is hardly the best use of taxpayers' funding in the education system. Part of the aim is to get more effective use of the very large amount of public funding that is going into the educational system.

I will make the overall point that the budget for school education is being increased by 7.3 per cent. In this financial year it has gone up by \$300 million in total to about \$4.4 billion. There is by no means any reduction in the education budget. There is a change to where the funding—a substantial increase in overall funding—is being directed to try to deal with schools that have the greater needs and where students do have particular needs for a whole range of reasons that maybe we can go into later. The changes that have been put in place are in that overall context of a still rapidly growing education budget. I know from being a member on both the Expenditure Review Committee and cabinet that the substantial increases in education as well as in health do have a significant impact on what else the government is able to do in a whole range of other portfolios. What is changing does need to be seen in that overall context. I will just ask Sharyn O'Neill to make some additional comments, specifically.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Yes, thanks. To make sure that we are all absolutely clear, anaphylaxis does not get categorised as a disability. I will point out, firstly, that under the national definition of disability, anaphylaxis is a medical condition, specific, more so than a disability; there has been some confusion about the two different groups. For the purposes of educational assistants, or more broadly, funding for students with disabilities, that is a completely separate process; it is funded under Schools Plus. I think the member made mention that people said there would be no reduction in education assistants for students with disabilities, because that is right; that is the

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case. The Schools Plus mechanism is not part of the discussion that has been had over the past couple of days. To be very clear, anaphylaxis does not fit under the students with disabilities funding mechanism called Schools Plus.

The second point that is important to make is that while we are looking to make better use of our funding, in particular with education assistants, many of those people—or some of those people—at the very least would be looking to be redeployed. We are a large system and we will have other vacancies. We are looking for the best use of those education assistants so that the capacities of those individuals involved are redeployed into positions where they can undertake that work. It is a complex area. Our education assistants are highly valued in the system and they do play an important support role; but at the same time we need to make the best effective use of the resources and the minister has given some examples of that. There has been growth in education assistants; for example, since 2004 there has been an increase of some 73 per cent. We have quite a number of education assistants in the field and they are valued in schools. But we need to make sure they are in the right places, they are doing the work that is required, and we are making the very best use of them. With any reform, there is change, and there will be some changes in schools, but we intend to manage those changes appropriately.

**The CHAIRMAN:** A follow-up question?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** If I could just provide a bit more information on this overall issue. What I am advised in relation to Schools Plus expenditure levels between 2011 and 2013, taking a comparison, is that there has been a substantial increase in some of these specific areas in particular. For example, the expenditure for those with autism spectrum disorder has increased from 2011 at a level of \$54.1 million up to \$115 million in 2013; for those with a severe mental disorder, the expenditure has increased over that period from \$9.5 million to \$20.7 million; and for those with a hearing impairment, the expenditure has increased from \$10 million to \$15.9 million. There are substantial resources and increases going into students with those disabilities.

**The CHAIRMAN:** A further question?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I am seeking a clarification. It was said that there would be some cuts for EAs from kindergarten to year 2. I want to know how many. Also, the minister mentioned the increase in spending, but with the reforms announced yesterday, will there now be a decrease?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, there will not be any decrease in the education budget as a result of reforms announced yesterday. As I said, the additional expenditure, at least, is increasing by \$300 million to just over \$4.4 billion. What is happening is that resources are being directed to some extent—they are not dramatic changes generally—but there is an increased emphasis on directing resources to areas of need and to where the numbers of students are growing more strongly or obviously where new schools are opening. In relation to the statement by the minister on Tuesday, it was made clear that the total number of teachers in the education system was being maintained for 2014 at the same level as 2013; there will not be any reduction in the number of teachers. There will be some changes in allocations at particular schools to deal with the greater growth that is occurring in some areas—or, as I said, where new schools are being opened.

**Ms S.F. MCGURK:** My follow-up question is in relation to the total numbers. There was an announcement of 500 education jobs that will be going out of the education department. Is this in addition to the 1 200 redundancies already announced by the state government?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In addition to the number of education assistant positions being reduced which, as I said, is roughly 5 per cent of education assistants, the other changes are in the administration area, mainly central office, and regional offices as well. I will ask the director general to provide some more information on that and to answer your question specifically, if possible.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We have already made mention of the 350 or thereabouts education assistants and 150 central and regional staff, and those staff have been advised of that change. Obviously, no permanent person would lose his or her position; we will have redeployment available. Those people who are on fixed-term positions will conclude their work at the end of that fixed term. That will require central office to re-look at the way it does its work and, in some instances, do the work differently and, in some instances, not continue to undertake some of the work that it does. That will be undertaken over the next period of time.

The member's second part of her question mentioned redundancies and whether these numbers formed part of the government's redundancies. In relation to severance, that is a different question. What we are talking about here is the positions of education assistants and the 150 positions at central office. Whether or not those people are involved in a severance scheme is another question.

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**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not feel the question was answered. There were job cuts of 500 announced this week. Is that in addition to the 1 200 total that the government announced previously?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** As I understand it, some of the 500 positions may be able to take advantage of the overall government's redundancy scheme, but that would not be the majority. The positions that are being talked about generally are fixed-term appointments; they are not permanent appointments. In most cases, as I understand it, they would not be accessing the redundancy scheme, which generally applies to staff who have permanent appointments.

[9.20 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Could that be in addition to the 1 200 that have already been announced?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Across government overall—yes. They are separate processes.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I refer to comments the Treasurer made to me yesterday and the second dot point on page 273 on the construction of new schools and the replacement, refurbishment and maintenance of existing schools. The Treasurer said to the estimates committee yesterday —

What I can say is that a number of amalgamations are part of the Department of Education's plan to deliver some of the efficiencies embedded in the current forward estimates.

I am interested in the detail of the amalgamations that are embedded in the forward estimates, particularly the comments around efficiencies. Do those details factor in the cost of construction of new schools when schools are amalgamated; do those efficiencies take into consideration the sale of land once a school is closed upon amalgamation; or are those efficiencies just in respect of staffing?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** With the possibility of some schools amalgamating in future, the primary purpose is to provide a better educational outcome, provision of resources, range of courses and increased specialist staff to students and schools, which can be achieved by having a larger number of students on one campus. Generally, when schools are amalgamated, as implied by the member's question, a new school is either constructed or there is a substantial refurbishment of an existing school. We do not intend for any of those to occur in the current financial year.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Or in the forward estimates?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will ask the director general to comment on that in a moment. The provision of either new schools or substantial refurbishments is dealt with through the capital works program, not through the recurrent expenditure.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** As the minister said, there is no provision for that work in the current financial year. The School Education Act 1999 requires a 12-month notice of closure, not an amalgamation. The schools are gazetted. In the forward estimates, with any thought or discussion on school closures and amalgamations, the funding perspective is about staffing costs and recurrent costs and, as the minister said, the capital from the land sale is built into the capital program. At the moment, as the Treasurer said, there is discussion about this being a possibility with some schools. We continually review the size of our schools and monitor the enrolments and programs to ensure that schools are well placed to provide a reasonable curriculum offering. The Treasurer and Premier might have commented about monitoring and looking at those schools where the numbers are low and where some of the programs might not be full and comprehensive as we would want them to be. In short, it is separated into capital, and on the recurrent side it is about staffing, the school grant and the operating costs of the school.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Are the efficiencies just in respect of staff management, to use a broad term—

**Ms S. O'Neill:** And operating costs.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Yes. So in terms of capital spend, the budget year and the forward estimates do not consider the construction of new schools as a result of amalgamation?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** No, I do not believe they do.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The Premier referred to Armadale, Fremantle and the northern suburbs, so clearly work has been done on which schools should be amalgamated. In light of the fact that we have already factored in efficiencies around staffing, clearly work has been done on which and how many schools will be amalgamated to create those efficiencies around staffing. Which schools have been considered for amalgamation to create those efficiencies that are currently embedded in the budget?

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** As I mentioned, the primary motivation behind making changes of this sort is to get a better educational outcome and provision of resources to students in need, as there are a lot of cases. I am sure the member has read the report by Stephen Lamb and Richard Teese that was tabled in Parliament earlier this year. That report does not go directly to this issue but makes comments about directing resources to a greater extent to students in need whether they live in a remote area or they have an Indigenous background, learning difficulties or other issues. That is the primary motivation. I understand no detailed work has been done about the potential amalgamations of schools for this purpose, but it is an ongoing issue. Changes were made when we were previously in government—I was not the education minister, Colin Barnett was—with some successful outcomes and changes to school arrangements, including in the Cannington area that I am familiar with, as the member would also be. Better educational services are now being provided to students in those areas, and that is the philosophy behind this strategy. It is an ongoing issue and the education department would not be doing its job if it did not think about these issues in broad terms. I understand that no specific or detailed work has been undertaken at this stage.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** In the forward estimates, consideration has been given to closures and amalgamations, not specific schools. The Premier looked at some areas of interest—as an example he mentioned some smaller schools in Armadale—but the work is more general rather than a detailed analysis of the forward estimates not representing particular schools as being named. In his statement the Premier said a lot of work, discussion and proposals will be put forward. But as I said, we constantly monitor schools across the state. We have a particular eye to small schools and their enrolments, and we have recently done more enrolment projections. An interesting year for us will be 2015 because for those schools as well the half-cohort restores, and so many thousands of students will return into those secondary schools. We will need to have a closer look at that year and how that impacts, and also the year 7s will be moving to secondary school. Although we monitor schools continuously, in 2015 enrolment patterns and school growth will be a particular issue. In the forward estimates there is no representation of specific schools in terms of savings measures.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I will come to the Teese report in due course, but I appreciate the answer about it. Efficiencies have already been budgeted, even though we do not know how many or which schools will be amalgamated. Can the minister tell me what savings will be created by those efficiencies?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The budget we are dealing with is specifically for the next 12 months. The point has been made in the parliamentary arena previously that the forward estimates are exactly that. They can change and decisions are made on an ongoing basis.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I am doing what the Treasurer asked me to do, which is to ask the minister about the efficiencies the Treasurer talked about.

[9.30 am]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that at the moment when a secondary school is amalgamated or closed about \$500 000 per year is saved.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** In efficiencies in amalgamating those two schools?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Yes, in having a more efficient administrative structure—one set of administration rather than two—and that is the maximum amount.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** All up, what is the total? Is it \$6 million in efficiencies that has been booked?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** If three sites were dealt with, it would be up to perhaps \$500 000 per site. I am not aware any significant figure has been allocated.

**Ms S.F. MCGURK:** The comments this week about school amalgamations have caused a lot of uncertainty and disquiet in my electorate and, I imagine, in other electorates as well. Low enrolments in some schools are not new issues, and parents and school communities have been asking for involvement. Is there a trigger point of numbers that results in discussion about the future of a school? What is the exact timetable for and process of discussion for school communities on school amalgamations?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am not aware of any specific number that is a trigger point for these issues to be considered, but a high school with a population of around 400 students in the metropolitan area is considered fairly small. As I said, changes were put in place when the coalition government was in office in the 1990s and they have been accepted as being very successful. I mentioned one geographical location where it has occurred, and that is in the western suburbs between the former Hollywood and Swanbourne high schools, which resulted in the new Shenton College being established. It is about getting better outcomes.

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In relation to how the process will work, it is important that the process is managed well and that school communities are engaged, are part of the discussion and have confidence that what is going to be provided will be better than what currently exists. Given examples where everybody agrees that is what has eventuated, my understanding is that it is the responsibility of district superintendents—or district directors, as they are called now—along with school principals, being involved in leading those sorts of discussions. Sharyn is more up to date with the current terminology so I will ask her to add a comment.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** You got rid of all of those, minister.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** In terms of the process, there is nothing in the current financial year, but the act requires 12 months’ notice for the closure of a school. If two schools are amalgamating, there is a variation to that; however, in broad terms, 12 months’ notification is required. Aside from the legislative requirement, the member for Fremantle is right; there is a lot of discussion in communities where schools are small. No particular fixed number invokes closure, and that is demonstrated by a number of small secondary and primary schools, and they are considered on a case-by-case basis. I have already said that 2015 stands out as a year when enrolment trends and changes will be made, so the department has not wanted to pre-empt what will happen in that year. However, every government and every minister of education has attempted to ensure that the local community is involved in the discussion when a proposition comes forward. The local education planning process of some years ago has changed somewhat, but the principles are the same—that is, when a proposal comes forward, the local community will be involved in shaping that proposal such that it meets the needs of that local community. That process will be gone through if and when specific sites are agreed on, and that process would go through cabinet.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The problem I have with that is the Department of Education has already booked these savings, even though there is no capital allowance for the construction of new schools. When the director general says consultation, that consultation is coming at the wrong end. There is pressure on the department now to find those efficiencies because they have been booked. Presumably, the department does not want to go back to Treasury and ask for more money. The consultation is occurring post the efficiencies being booked into the finances. When the director general says that the community can shape those decisions, the reality is that it cannot. Eventually, at some point a decision will be made to amalgamate these schools and new schools will then have to be constructed, so any efficiencies will be pushed well beyond the forward estimates. The consultation, therefore, is like it or lump it. If there were genuine consultation, I dare say Professor Teese would have been heard of or mentioned prior to the election.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There is nothing provided for by way of change in the current financial year. As I said, although some indicative amount may be written in, I am not sure what it is in the future, and that does not mean that will be the outcome. There are always discussions about budgetary changes during the year, and those issues will be considered in more detail in the lead-up to next year’s budget. So if there is more certainty about change occurring in a particular location in relation to building new schools or substantially upgrading an existing one by bringing two together, that will be considered in more detail in the preparation of later budgets.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I refer to page 275 of budget paper No 2 and the heading “Closing the Gap for Indigenous Students”. Would the minister outline the nature of the partnerships that will be developed with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other state and Australian government agencies to improve case management for students at educational risk?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** This is an important aspect of the education system. The Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee of cabinet has established a subcommittee on school attendance and it will report to the Minister for Education by October this year on proposals to improve compliance with the School Education Act and the Parental Support and Responsibility Act, together with the Children and Community Services Act 2004, on non-attendance at school. The Department of Education will promote the greater use of parental responsibility agreements and, where appropriate, make referrals to federal agencies for income management orders.

The government has already made a significant commitment to establish 16 new child and parent centres. They are expected to improve early childhood services to families in low socioeconomic areas to ensure that children are better prepared to start school and more likely to engage and actually attend school. Public schools and also non-government sector organisations, including the Smith Family, for example, are cooperating and offering extended community services to families of children at educational risk. The government continues to support school-based engagement programs, such as Clontarf Aboriginal College which supports student attendance through retention and achievement. I will ask Sharyn to add more on that issue.

[9.40 am]

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**Ms S. O'Neill:** The department is excited to be chairing the subcommittee that sits under the cabinet subcommittee on Aboriginal education and, in particular, on attendance. We know from the data that Aboriginal student attendance and the gap that exists between that of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students continues to be grave. To date, despite the best efforts—it would be the same across Australia—the attendance of Aboriginal students continues to be of great concern and flatlines. In fact, recent research put out by the Telethon Institute, and in particular by Professor Steve Zubrick, talks about the attendance career of Aboriginal students starting very young and the gap never being made up—in fact, the attendance career, which can start in preprimary and year one, is about 60 per cent as opposed to the non-Aboriginal student figure of 90 per cent.

There is certainly a lot of work to be done in this space. In the partnership with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, we have brought across the deputy director general of DAA to work in our department to ensure we are not working in silos but are working closely together. That has brought some greater depth to the Department of Education, and we have been very pleased with that injection. The directors general of all of the human service agencies are coming together specifically to work on Aboriginal attendance. We are pretty happy about that, and the support has been fantastic. It is a difficult area in which to ensure we have improvement. It has been difficult not only for this period of time but a long period of time. Some of the things we have had in place have had great impact at local school level, but we want to see a big shift in attendance rates right across the state. That is the goal of the work we are doing.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Specifically, what is DAA providing to the department? Is it cultural advice? DAA is not a service provider, so I am curious about DAA's role in the partnership.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** As I just said, its deputy director general has moved across into our department for this year.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** So his salary is now based in the Department of Education?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** He is actually working in our department.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** He will not be sacked, I hope! I am being facetious. The director general does not need to answer that.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** I had no intention of answering that. As the member said, it is not only cultural advice but the great networks that DAA brings in the community. Of course, in the community our schools have their own networks and communications, but the work of DAA has helped the Department of Education on the ground by enabling schools to, I think, connect better to the elders in the area, particularly in local schools.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Is that a networking role?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** It is support, networking, cultural advice and connection to non-government agencies.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I refer to Closing the Gap in Aboriginal communities. I am allowed to ask questions; I have been instructed about that. With the Ngaanyatjarra lands around Warburton, the Aboriginal community is very keen to get residential blocks in Perth for its students so that they can be immersed in English culture and so on, because English is a second language for them. Can the minister advise if any progress has been made on that?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We are having pretty exciting discussion with the Ngaanyatjarra Council and its education representatives. It is a challenge, in particular the provision of secondary schooling out in the lands, given there might be only one or two senior secondary students, or even lower secondary students. It is very hard to provide specialist staffing for those places. We do a reasonable job in that field. We obviously would like to do better. It is the same struggle that other states have in remote communities. The council approached the department and asked if it could consider an innovation by which secondary school students might be able to undertake what they call block release learning in other locations, so we are exploring that with the lands council. It is fair to say that discussion is continuing. Obviously having young people away from home for periods of time is a challenge for not only the students and the families, but also the capacity for the residential block in Perth. It need not be in Perth; the council is happy to consider other locations that not only are culturally appropriate but also provide the kind of support that students need. Many of the students need English as a second language support and tuition, so it is probably not as simple as finding a residential location; it is much more complex in terms of mental shift, the living away from home arrangements, the cultural arrangements, and the separation of boys and girls, which is another issue the elders have raised. It is right to say there is progress. We have a new principal, a very senior principal, out in the lands leading that discussion and working very closely with the lands council, the department and DAA.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I refer to the new wages policy—not the previous one—that is capped. Do the current budget projections and forward estimates assume CPI wage growth each year?

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that the salary cap arrangements do not apply to education for another couple of years. I will get some additional information on that in a moment. I am also advised that the amount of salary increase provided for teachers in the current financial year is 4.25 per cent, so it is a pretty generous increase most people would agree. In addition to that is a 0.25 per cent increase under the superannuation guarantee arrangement changes. That is quite a substantial increase for teachers in the current financial year.

**Mr J.W. Leaf:** The 2.5 per cent cap on employee benefits that is described in the budget statements as public sector workforce reform does impact on the department's budget. It was applied on 10 June 2013 to salaries of staff, salary leave accruals, superannuation and district allowances. It excludes those employee benefits associated with election commitments and decisions made post-10 June 2013, which includes an item described in the budget statements on page 272 as structural realignment, which amounts to close to \$1 billion over the forward estimates, and it also excludes the items in employee benefits that are related to government housing, fringe benefits tax and training costs. The net impact on the items I have described are such that the 2.5 per cent cap described as public sector workforce reform does not really impact on the education department in 2013–14, but has, from memory, an \$18 million impact in the following financial year, and starts to have a significant impact from 2015–16.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I would like that clarified. I refer to page 284, and the line item for employee benefits, which is impacted on by growth in numbers. Did the adviser say that after 2013–14 the forward estimates assume that salaries will grow at CPI from 2013–14?

**Mr J.W. Leaf:** The future wages policy of the government, as I understand it, is intended to cap growth in enterprise bargaining agreement outcomes at 2.5 per cent. Currently our award provides for substantially more than that, particularly for teachers, and the next increment will be 4.25 per cent. If I am incorrect, my director HR will advise me. The public sector reform measure is intended to cap growth in employment costs, and that may be achieved in a number of ways. I think the minister said he would talk about the impacts of the reform later, but one of them is that we are expected to find means of making productivity improvements; in other words, employing our resources in a more effective way.

[9.50 am]

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I understand what the wages policy is designed to do. I am curious about whether that has been embedded in the forward estimates. The teachers' EBA—maybe the minister can tell me about that—will expire in due course, and in 2013–14, the next rise of 4.25 per cent has been factored in. Beyond 2013–14—I know what the wages policy is designed to do—what is the assumption for wages growth? Is it the consumer price index policy of government or is it a different figure?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that the current EBA expires on 7 December 2014.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Sorry; in August 2014?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, on 7 December 2014, I am advised. On page 272, the line item “Public Sector Workforce Reform” under the heading “Corrective Measures” indicates that some savings are built in there. My understanding is that that will assume the government wages policy applying after the current EBA expires.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** In response to that, that salaries figure that I referred to before obviously assumes a higher growth rate than CPI, and this public sector workforce reform assumes growth beyond 2013–14 in education wages. Is it CPI as per the wages policy?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There are issues of growth in the sector, which has been occurring since 2011. The growth in student numbers would be dealt with in future years, and a decision will be made in next year's budget about the staffing levels for 2015, and in subsequent budgets for further years. What is here is an indicative amount as things are at the moment, but there will no doubt be further discussions between Education and Treasury, and then the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee at the cabinet level, in relation to how future growth, assuming that continues to occur, is responded to.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I appreciate that. I am not talking about full-time equivalent numbers; I am talking about the wages.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** But FTE numbers obviously directly impact on the salaries cost.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Yes, but presumably they would be rising at CPI rate.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** That is my understanding, after the current EBA expires.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** I refer to page 272 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2 and to child and parent centres on public schools sites. There has been some discussion today about interagency networking and support



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mechanisms for schools, which greatly interests me. However, could the minister explain where the additional child and parent centres are to be located and outline the further benefits of these centres to the communities?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** As I mentioned earlier, this development is a very significant and positive one by the government. It involves an increase in funding being provided to the department for these centres to be developed. It is in the context of a strong recognition now of the importance of the early years from birth through to the age of six years. A lot of those years are before children would normally be in a school environment, but the environment that they have at home and interacting with other young children and other families are very important in their development of language and literacy skills, relationships with other children socially and so on. This is something that has been identified over the past 10 or 15 years, and it is very pleasing that this decision has been made. The additional centres specifically will be located at Rangeway Primary School in Geraldton, Mt Lockyer Primary School in Albany, Wilson Park Primary School in Collie, East Waikiki Primary School in Rockingham, East Maddington Primary School—I am familiar with that school; it is in the Kalamunda electorate—and Gosnells Primary School. The centres will be completed during 2015. The centre coordinators will be in place and located within the existing schools early next year to begin the community mapping and coordination of programs and services through the existing physical facilities. The health, family and early learning programs and services to be delivered will be for local families and their children, from birth through to the age of eight years, with a particular focus up to the age of four years. They will provide not only for families whose children attend the local government school—the school where the centre is located—and surrounding government schools, but also for families with children in the Catholic and independent schools sector, where that is appropriate. The intention is to reduce the level of vulnerability of children, in particular prior to entry to kindergarten within the particular local communities, and strong relationships will be developed between the Departments of Education, Health, Local Government and Communities and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. It has been a very positive development. It probably has not received a large amount of publicity, but it has the potential to have a very significant, positive effect on young children, because what happens in those years has a major influence in an individual's life in adulthood.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Certainly, the centres are there for community use. We have often been asked exactly what will happen. They will offer coordinated programs and services. The focus is largely on birth to eight years, but with a particular focus on birth to four years. Each site will have a local advisory committee that the community can involve itself in—we are certainly looking forward to that—with the agencies involved. At the moment, the original 10, with their coordinators in place, are doing a mapping of the local service, because we want to ensure that we do not duplicate what is happening at the local level. They are looking at the kinds of services that could be provided, such as antenatal education; child health checks and referrals—the nurse from the health department will be located at those sites—parenting programs; mental health, disability and psychology services; information sessions on children's development, including physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional and the like; and early learning programs. It is a real focus for the community to bring a number of those services together at the school site. For the first 10 centres, the seven non-government organisations are already in place. Currently, for the second round of six centres that the minister referred to, the request for tender has already gone out, so we are looking forward to having those appointed. It has been well regarded. Certainly, at the local level the feedback has been great. We are working closely with the non-government or the not-for-profit sector, and we have received good feedback from it, and it is very involved, obviously, in the process as well. It truly is an across-government or across-agency initiative with the non-government or the not-for-profit organisations, and it is very exciting when I visit any of those sites.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will just add—it is an important point—that the schools I mentioned are in the second round. There are 10 in the first round, and they are currently under construction, to my understanding. I am not sure where they all are, but I am familiar with one at Clayton View Primary School, because I drive past it periodically. For the record, the others are at Brookman Primary School in Langford, Warriapendi Primary School in Balga, South Hedland Primary School, Calista Primary School, Carey Park Primary School in Bunbury, Challis Early Childhood Education Centre in Armadale, Roseworth Primary School in Girrawheen, Westminster Junior Primary School, Dudley Park Primary School in Mandurah and Neerabup Primary School in Banksia Grove. I also mentioned Clayton View Primary School in Koongamia because I have seen it, but it does not seem to be on that list.

[10.00 am]

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I refer to page 273 of budget paper No 2 and the first dot point under the subheading “Managing the Supply of Teachers”, which makes reference to year 7s. What is the base student funding that will be allocated for years 7 to 12, years 4 to 6, pre-primary to year 3, and kindergarten? Will year 7s be allocated funding at the same rate as years 8 to 12?

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Can the member explain what he means by “base funding”?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** What is the funding per student? I presume the Department of Education gives funding per student; under the Teese model, that is what it should be trying to comply with. What funding will be supplied for those categories? The second question is: will the year 7 funding be the same as for students in years 8 to 12?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will ask the director general to provide that information.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** Minister Collier has already said that they would be funded at the secondary school rate, remembering that this is for 2015, so the per-student information is still being finalised and will be made available, as I think Minister Collier has already said, after the budget. We are still finalising that work, but that is for 2015.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** So year 7s for 2015 will be funded at the same rate as for students in years 8 to 12, but there is no further commitment after 2015—is that right?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** No, I did not say that. I said that they would be funded at the secondary rate—I think the member just said they would be funded the same as year 8s.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Will year 7s be funded at the same rate as students in years 8 through to 12?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** I think what I have said is that that information is going to be available to schools over the next few weeks. It is being finalised as we speak, given that the minister has introduced a new model. That is not a 2014 rate; it is a 2015 rate. What I can say is that they will be struck at the secondary rate, and the finalisation per student is being done as we speak and will be available over the next few weeks.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I am a bit surprised and confused. We have just had a budget handed down and it was not able to actually tell us what the funding is for this massive change in the education system, under which year 7 students will come into secondary schools from primary schools; and the department is unable, at this stage, to finalise what the funding will be going forward.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What I do know is that there has been a significant allocation of funds by the government to provide for the transition of students in year 7 to secondary school locations; I cannot remember what the figure is, but it was in the hundreds of millions of dollars, from memory.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** With regard to the question about the year 7 rate, the member is asking about 2015; that is a quite specific question about the funding rate. They will be funded at the same rate as years 8 to 12 in 2015. The member also referred to the minister’s model; that model provides for a flat rate for years 7 to 12, so year 7s will be funded at the same rate as years 8 to 12 in 2015. Each year we will put out what those rates will be; for example, we will probably today put out the rates for the 2014 levels. There are a number of layers to the questions that the member is asking; obviously there is the question about the broad year 7 cost for capital et cetera, and that has already been answered. That is why I asked the member to clarify what he meant about the funding; it depends what he is including in the funding. We have general recurrent costs in schools, and we have staffing costs in schools, and the per student rate does not include the current capital cost. We also have costs for retraining. That is why I specifically asked what the member was referring to in terms of the per student cost.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I will also ask the other parts of my question: what is the student funding for kindergarten, preprimary to year 3, and years 4 to 6?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In what year?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** By the sound of it, the department can do only one year at a time, so what is the current funding?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Per student?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** In respect of the minister’s model, we are caught between 2014—which is central to the member’s question—and moving to the model in 2015, so the per student rates that have been expressed in the new model that the minister issued, I think, two days ago, are for 2015. For 2014, we are working on the current formulas; we do not have a per student rate under the current formula for 2014.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** What is it for 2015, if that is contained within the budget?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** For 2015, I guess my answer is the same: we do not put out the rate for 2015 yet. The minister has put out the new model and he has said that the details are being finalised in terms of the per student rates for 2015. What we are dealing with today is 2014. The rates for 2014 are against the old model, because we are in the transition to a new model for 2015. What the minister has said is that for 2015 there will be a flat rate for years 7 to 12; the member has talked about the slightly different rates in the year levels for primary. That is the concept of the per student funding. The values attached to that for 2015 are subject to detailed analysis now,

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because they are for 2015; for 2014, the transition period, the current expressions of formula will apply. I should clarify that they will be made available to schools, possibly even today.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Just a follow-up question. I actually feel sorry for the Department of Education having to deal with a system that does not seem to have any logic or timing to it. We had a budget brought down two weeks ago, and the minister announced a new funding model. Does the minister think that is an appropriate way to administer a very important department?

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am sorry, member, but that is an opinion; it is not related to the budget papers.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Really?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, sorry. I do not think the minister is in a position to answer an opinion question, unless he wants to.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am not sure whether the member is coming to an actual question or not.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But if he is relating something to the budget papers and the minister wants to take up the issue, please do.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that the department is actually very happy with the reforms being put in place.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I refer to page 276 of budget paper No 2, and a table titled “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators”. I refer specifically to literacy and numeracy performance in national tests at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Can the minister or, through the minister, the director general comment on the performance of Western Australian public school students in NAPLAN testing.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I thank the member for the question. It is the case that, since 2008, Western Australia is the most improved state in the NAPLAN testing results. There have been significant increases in 10 of the 16 assessments, with no significant declines in the mean scores achieved, and that includes non-government schools as well. Since 2008, the mean scores for public schools in Western Australia for 15 of the 16 assessments have increased. The notable improvements have been in year 3 reading, spelling and grammar and punctuation; year 5 spelling and numeracy; year 7 spelling and grammar and punctuation; and year 9 spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy. That is just a bit of background, but I will ask Sharyn to provide a few more comments in that area.

[10.10 am]

**Ms S. O’Neill:** We have been very pleased to be the, I guess, fastest performing state since 2008 in overall gains. Obviously NAPLAN is only one part of the assessment jigsaw—it is one day in the year—but it does represent nationally agreed central learning for success into the future, and therefore it is an important piece of the jigsaw about understanding students’ performance. So there has been improvement since 2008 on the means for 15 of the 16 assessments. We need to look closely at whether the results are statistically significant, so sometimes they are marginal improvements, nonetheless improvements, and in comparison with other states we have fared well. It should be noted, though, that we had some distance to improve, and we were consistently about second-last in comparison with other states; more recently, on a number of the assessments we sit about fourth, which is a pretty good representation of improvement. The schools undertake an enormous amount of work, putting aside the test, around literacy and numeracy more generally, and I think even recently in the newspaper a particular school—Ballajura—was made mention of, but we could name a number of schools in a similar vein that have, I think, outstanding literacy and numeracy outcomes. Again, we are concerned, as we ought to be, about the gap in performance between non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students, and we see that as a key focus of our work. We will continue to work hard every day, particularly around NAPLAN dates to ensure that our students are well prepared, that they feel confident to undertake the tests and that the tests represent a good picture of their performance on a daily basis.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Noting that the Centre for Independent Studies report on Indigenous education last year confirmed that Western Australia has the lowest participation rates in NAPLAN for Indigenous students in the country, and also that we have the greatest drop-off from year 3 to year 9 in attendance—I am assuming that is for participation in NAPLAN—is the minister concerned that our statistics referred to there, regarding our success in literacy and numeracy outcomes, are distorted by the fact that we have fewer Indigenous kids actually sitting the tests, and in all likelihood escaping the net of testing?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Certainly it is a matter of concern about attendance rates of children in some locations, including Aboriginal children at school, and that is an ongoing issue. It is not one that is at all easy to get a substantial improvement in, but I think there has been some progress made. But the sentiment behind the member’s question is a concern we certainly share. I will ask Sharyn to add some information about that issue.

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**Ms S. O'Neill:** On an individual basis for those students, of course we are concerned for those students; and, yes, we want to encourage as many students as we can to undertake the tests. The representational proportion of the Aboriginal students is so small relative to the total that from a statistics point of view it is not significant enough to sway our results one way or another, and I am advised of that by Peter Titmanis, who was one of the original constructors of national testing and has expertise in the data and statistics in his own right. So the advice I can provide to the member is that of course on an individual basis for those students we do not end up getting their information in terms of a national test, but that is only one form of information we have. Yes, we do want them to be there; yes I am concerned and will be speaking with community members, parents and schools to ensure that we can get more of those students to participate. But in terms of it swaying our overall data and performance as a state, it is highly unlikely.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Acknowledging what the director general just said, is it not true that the state received a benefit last year through the national partnerships for its improvement in Indigenous literacy and numeracy outcomes? So it may not be relevant statistically in a global sense for all students, but clearly it has an impact directly on funding and acknowledgement of the state's efforts purely with respect to Indigenous student outcomes. So beyond talking to parents and encouraging people, what are we doing to ensure that our Indigenous students are tested so that we actually know how badly or how well they are doing? How do we make sure they actually show up for the testing, and do we know how many do not? We know how many are not, because that is in that Centre for Independent Studies report.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** I am not quite sure which national partnership the member is referring to, but the national partnerships we get are for low socioeconomic and literacy and numeracy, and we get other special-purpose funding for Aboriginal students, so they make up part of the total. Do I think we achieved additional funding on the back of those students not attending? I do not think the calculations for national partnership funding are that simple. A range of information is used to derive national partnership funding, and, of course, a number of those national partnerships do not continue into the future. I am not sure whether this is what the member is suggesting, but, if I can just finish, I do not think a connection can be drawn to Aboriginal students not turning up on the day and us, therefore, achieving additional funding on the back of that because it is much more complex than that.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** It is my understanding that the member is not part of the committee, and I have some important questions I want to ask.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you, member; I take your point. It is at my discretion, though, under these circumstances, and the member seems to be pursuing a line of questioning. I am assuming he is about to finish.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Just one more.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I understand what the director general is saying, but I do sense that we are not too sure. The national partnerships award money that I was referring to was, I think, from the year before last. It was about \$29 million, and when it was presented there was an acknowledgement that we had a reduction in our failure rates—I think that is how it was measured—or an improvement in our success rates of achieving the minimum national standard for Indigenous students. My concern is that that was not because fewer kids were coming to the testing or none were testing at all, or they were not attending school at all. Do we have the ability to measure that?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We want Aboriginal kids to turn up for the teaching, not just the testing, and it is an expression, really, of the attendance issues we have with Aboriginal students, and perhaps they are less inclined to come on a day of testing. We see the focus with Aboriginal students being their literacy and numeracy; we know their current performance is below that of others—I know the member knows that—as is attendance, obviously. So across all those things, yes, they form part of the reason we achieved that national partnership and we are required to have detailed plans put in place. Testing is one part of the measurement framework; it is part of a total plan we have in place that we need to have approved by the federal government to achieve that funding, and there is very rigorous reporting back. So, yes, their lack of performance would drive more of that funding than their lack of turning up for one particular test over a period of time. It is a problem and I acknowledge it is a problem. As I said, we want to work with the communities on attendance more broadly and on testing more specifically, so, of course, we are concerned about a measure where Aboriginal students are not performing to their potential.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to the third dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 273 of the *Budget Statements*, which reads —

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- Over the past six years, expenditure on education has grown by an average 7.9% a year. It is clear that this level of expenditure growth is not sustainable ...

I wonder if the minister could outline to me how that relates to the corresponding period of time in terms of increase in the demand on the system in terms of the number of enrolments; and also some of the changes to the school-age requirements and the increase in student numbers that might have brought?

[10.20 pm]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What did the member mean by “the change to the school-age requirements”? Did he mean the half cohort?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Specifically, I mean bringing preprimary students into full-time education.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** As stated in the question, there have been substantial increases of well above the rate of inflation in the amount of funding allocated to education. Part of that has been to deal with the growth that has occurred in the system. That has been particularly the case since 2011, when there was a reversal of the previous trend of numbers in government schools. I understand that there was a decrease in the number of students in 2010, the number went up by about 3 000 in 2011, it went up by approximately 7 000 in 2012, and it has gone up by 8 000 so far in 2013 and will probably be about 10 000 by the end of the year. There has been quite a dramatic change in the past two years.

In relation to the changes in early childhood education, I presume the member is referring to the fact that it is now compulsory for children to attend the preprimary year. I do not believe—I will get confirmation in a moment—that that has had any significant impact on the resourcing needs of the department, because almost all children at the preprimary level were attending previously, and when there has been an increase, generally that has been accommodated within the existing school and staffing structures. I will ask Ms O’Neill to add a bit more information.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** That is right; there has been unprecedented growth over the past few years. We have just received the preliminary data from the August census—the census happens in February and August each year. From August last year to this year, there were an additional 10 400 students, representing about 3.8 per cent or 3.9 per cent growth. Over the past two years, we have had unprecedented growth, given that previously growth was fairly flat. Also over the past two years we have had a shift in what is commonly referred to as market share between public and private schools, and so for the first time in about 30 years larger numbers of students have come back into our schools. A couple of structural changes have added to the growth, but they are probably quite old now. The raising of the leaving age meant that more students stayed in the system in 2006 and 2008, but they were accounted for previously. When we look at the enrolments, we have to look at the half cohort, which means that we will have an additional 6 500 students in secondary schools in 2015, on top of the year 7 students, so we will have one and a half extra cohorts in secondary schools in 2015.

On the preprimary question, unusually across Australia, about 98 per cent or 99 per cent of our preprimary school students were already enrolled and attending, so they do not inflate the enrolment figures; they were already built in and they were already funded. Over the years there have been some structural changes, but the kinds of enrolment shifts that we are seeing can be attributed in part to the shift from other sectors to government schools. Over the past two or three years, we have had interstate and overseas migration. It is a very strong and different enrolment pattern that we have to deal with, and it is fairly new, given that for a long time before that we did not have that sort of enrolment growth. The enrolment growth is not consistent. There are growth areas; obviously they are the ones that we would expect—north and south in particular, but not only those. We have had enrolment shifts in the inner city from infill growth as people move there. The distributions of enrolments are as challenging as the enrolment growth in its own right.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** In terms of the increase in enrolments, one of the line items on page 287 is for the fees for the children of 457 visa holders. Given that many of these visa holders are in regional areas utilising what are, in the main, underpopulated schools, is there much elasticity in that expected income, given that many of these people may indeed send their children back to their home countries in preference to paying \$4 000 per child? If there is an effect on the budget, what corresponding decrease in expense items is expected to be seen?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The first point I will make is that the criteria for the application of this fee have not been determined yet. Further consideration will be given to that between now and the end of the year. It is also important to appreciate that the number of children of 457 visa holders attending Western Australian schools has increased substantially in recent years. In 2005 there were 290 and currently there are about 8 600, so that is having a significant impact on the cost of providing the education system in Western Australia. It has a major impact on taxpayers in this state. The cost of educating a child at a government primary school is nearly \$15 000,

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and it is close to \$20 000 for a student at secondary school. Given the growth in numbers, the issue needed to be addressed somehow or other. As I have said, the details of how it will be applied are currently being discussed. No decisions have been made. The Department of Education is currently looking at the options, and that will be considered more widely by government. I believe that most people in the community would think that 457 visa holders in the state who are on high incomes—for example, those working in the resource sector and earning salaries that, by any standard, are pretty high—would be in a position to make a contribution, given that they are not permanent residents of the country and, unless circumstances change and they become permanent residents, they will not make a long-term contribution to the taxation system in Western Australia or Australia. I believe most people would think it is reasonable that they make some contribution. At the most, it is only about one-quarter of the cost of educating a student that is being contemplated, but the details are still being considered.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The response indicated that it will save taxpayers' money. These people are, of course, taxpayers and we need to acknowledge that they pay tax while they are here. The idea that all these visa holders are working in the resource sector and are on high incomes is not the experience in my electorate; many are rural workers. Very many jobs in rural areas were unfilled until recently when these 457 visa holders moved in. Many of them are Irish and Filipino workers. Others are working in manufacturing and are on fairly minimal wage rates. Firstly, has any consideration been given to either making some of these charges prospective, so that new arrivals will face them rather than the people who are already here; and, secondly, has any thought been given to introducing means testing for some of these charges?

[10.30 am]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am sure that some of those options will be considered. As I said, there have not yet been decisions made. I guess there is an arguable case that there is a difference between somebody who is on a much lower income working in an agricultural area compared with somebody who is on a high income working in the resources sector, but how that is all dealt with is being considered at the moment. What would be good in the long term of course is that we actually get Australian residents or citizens working in these positions. It is not as if there is no unemployment in the community, but obviously that is part of a much wider issue.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Can the minister confirm that the revenue that has been booked for 457 visa fees is not based on means testing? I will be very reasonable here and say the minister can provide this by way of supplementary information: can the minister provide me with a list of the percentage of 457 students in each school?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In relation to the prospect of means testing, the decision has been made based on the total number of 457 visa holder students —

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Paying the fee; yes, thank you.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** — in government schools at the moment paying a fee. How it is dealt with in detail remains to be seen, but that has been the assumption to this point. We certainly do not have the information on each school at the moment.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I appreciate the minister will not have it with him now; hence I am happy to take it by way of supplementary.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I understand the 2013 information is available, and as far as is reasonably possible we will provide it through supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No B31.*]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** My question also relates to 457 visa holder charges. Was any modelling done on the impact across different incomes received by 457 visa holders and the possible impact on employment in the sectors that they come from, and the possibility that they would simply leave, so the state would be worse off because we would be foregoing those workers' participation in employment as well as the tax received from them?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I understand that most of the work on this issue to this point has been done within Treasury rather than the Department of Education. The member has really asked about wider issues, so probably the question should be directed to the Treasurer. It is also worth making the point that a similar charge exists at least in some, if not most, other states of Australia; certainly in New South Wales where, I am advised, it is about double.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I understand there is some means testing there.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Maybe that is a model that can be looked at. All those issues will be looked at, but the department —

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**Ms S.F. McGURK:** So the minister is not aware of any modelling that looked at the possible impact of applying this fee?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What I said is that most of the work up until the delivery of the budget has been done in Treasury as opposed to the Department of Education. I do not have a detailed knowledge of what modelling Treasury may have done, but the Department of Education has only been involved more recently. The government made the decision because the cost of educating these children, who, as I said, are not permanent residents of this state, impacts on the state's finances overall, particularly in the education budget.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Yesterday, the Treasurer told the committee that a further \$80 million—\$40 million this financial year and \$40 million next financial year—has been put into the education budget because an increase of 2 900 students have appeared on school rolls between the conclusion of semester 1 and the start of semester 2. I am curious to know how we got that estimate wrong and are we expecting a request for a further injection of recent money into the education budget as a result of a growth in student numbers?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is not a matter of getting the estimates wrong. I understand that the numbers vary quite a bit each year. A census is undertaken on 15 February and 2 August. The information provided to government indicates there has been further growth this year. The budget cut-off is in the first week of July so it is not unreasonable that there has been a reconsideration of the amount of funding provided to take into account the growth in numbers of students in government schools which continues to occur during 2013.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Is it a growth in primary school student numbers? Obviously it is in all, but does the majority appear in one particular area?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is more so in the early years; it also applies to secondary schools but, more particularly, in primary schools.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** What percentage of those extra 2 900 students are children of 457 visa holders?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** We do not have that information at the moment. There was another specific question the member asked in his original question; I am not sure whether I have answered it.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** It was whether the department expects a further injection of resources between now and the midyear review?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, we do not expect that. The government has made the decision that an extra \$80 million will be available in the 2014 calendar year—\$40 million in the current financial year and \$40 million in the 2014–15 financial year. That will ensure teacher numbers can be maintained at the same level in schools in 2014 as in 2013, but we do not expect there will be a further allocation. We have made that allocation. As I said, it means that teacher numbers can be maintained.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The reason I asked what percentage of students are children of 457 visa holders is: is that a result of incorrect population forecasting or an unexpected high input of people from outside Western Australia? If it is the result of incorrect population forecasting, are we looking at how we project our population figures in the education budget, for example, or have we had another 1 500 457 arrivals out of the 2 900?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I think it reflects a number of factors. It is partly population growth, but that is only part of the cause; that is, population growth, through natural increases in Western Australia as well as interstate and overseas migration. There has also been more of a trend of students moving from non-government schools to government schools in the last couple of years. That is a positive reflection on the state of the government school system in this state in that more families want to attend them. There is a whole range of factors involved in that.

**Mr C.D. HATTON:** I refer to “Additional Funding for Independent Public Schools” on page 272 in volume 1 of budget paper No 2. It is my understanding that 255 schools are already independent public schools. There is a staged budget commitment of a fourth and fifth intake. Could the minister please explain how these funds will be used?

[10.40 am]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is accurate to say that the introduction of independent public schools in Western Australia has been a success story. There are currently 255 such schools, which empower principals and schools communities with more flexibility to make decisions that more appropriately suit their students and local communities. The next phase of development has been informed by an independent valuation by the University of Melbourne, and, essentially, it has provided a positive report of the effects on the public education system in the state. There will be a further development and transition program between October this year and November

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2014. It will provide targeted and extensive support to school communities to assist them in meeting the strict selection criteria and, if they are successful in making that transition to independence in 2015, each of the successful schools will be allocated additional funding of between \$20 000 and \$40 000 prior to commencing as an IPS to help prepare and plan for the transition. In addition, each independent public school will receive ongoing additional funding of between \$25 000 and \$50 000 to assist with administrative support for human resources and financial management. That is how the funding will be used. I ask the director general to comment on how the system is operating.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We are really pleased about the new development program. As late as yesterday I was told that there are 170 expressions of interest for participation in the program. As the member said, there are currently 255 independent public schools, which represents about one-third of the schools in the system. However, it represents half the students in the system. It is well spread across all the socioeconomic deciles on which the department works. We also have country and city schools and large and small schools. We do not have very small remote schools. We are working with those schools at the moment. There are reasons for that and for the extent to which it makes sense for them to be supported in their staffing. We are very pleased with the progress of those schools and the keenness of other schools to become involved. The evaluation by the University of Melbourne was positive. It made a range of findings. It also raised key issues that we will continue to address. Those issues are not new to us; indeed, they have been raised with us before. I meet with all the associations, the unions and teacher representatives et cetera on a regular basis, so I am well across those issues.

The development program itself, however, responds to some of the criticisms of the previous selection process—although I think it served us well—that some schools need additional assistance to respond to the selection criteria. We are really pleased that we will be able to work with those schools. The communities are very much involved. I personally meet with school board chairs and groups. Parent representatives and school board chairs talk to me about the difference this program has made in their schools. They are well aware, as we are, of the statement in the report that student outcomes have yet to change. If members look closely at any school autonomy program they will realise that autonomy in itself does not directly impact student outcomes; rather, it is there to provide the conditions on which schools can change teacher quality and support. Independent public schools, if we go back to the original document, referred to the preconditions for student improvement and student learning improvement, of which the report makes note. The evaluation itself has informed the development of the new program and obviously people are becoming very interested and excited in becoming an IPS. There will always be schools that need greater system support than other schools. One of the features of the Western Australian version of greater school flexibility and autonomy has been the choice agenda and that remains very much a part of the government's continuing commitment to communities. Communities are clearly interested to see the benefits and are happy to work with schools when issues arise. That is a great indication of a good change in the management program of schools.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Has there been an evaluation of student outcomes at IP schools? Surely the whole idea is to improve school outcomes. The director general mentioned the University of Melbourne report in which it is clearly stated that there has been no significant change in student educational outcomes. Can the minister elaborate on why the government believes that IP schools are such a success when the state has yet to evaluate student outcomes?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** One need only look at any research on educational change to realise that we need more than just a few years to impact significantly on student performance data. I point to the fact that in the original IPS prospectus, which I think I already mentioned, the claim is not the direct relationship with student outcomes—no autonomy program will do that. Rather, it states that we need to put in the hands of school leaders and the communities the wherewithal to improve teacher quality in particular, but also the processes and operations of the school. We know the greatest impact on student performance is the socioeconomic index of the student and their family. The greatest in-school factor, and possibly up to a 20 per cent effect size, is that of teacher quality. IPS is constructed to put in the hands of those who are able to make the change—that is schools and school communities—the ability to customise their teaching and learning to meet the needs of students. I do not think it is fair to say that it was not evaluated. The University of Melbourne was asked to comment on that issue. It commented on that issue. It is entirely consistent with the government and the department's claims about needing time for improvement and also that it is about putting the empowerment in the hands of people on the ground. One of the University of Melbourne reviewers was eminent Professor Hattie. His evidence, expertise and research is well known to all educators. He said no-one could expect change in National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy et cetera for about five to eight years. We have to wait some time. Change in student outcomes is not fast when an entire system of schools is being turned around. It is entirely reasonable that we say that IPS has been a success. Obviously, student outcomes is our key business, but there are other



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success factors; for example, the engagement of the community in the school. In almost every IP school one hears about greater engagement. The surveys in the evaluation itself referred to the engagement, enthusiasm, capacity, sense of autonomy and empowerment of teachers and school leaders to undertake what is right for their school community. The evaluation needs to be read in its entirety—one cannot pick out only one part. It refers to a range of success factors and successes and it refers to the issues. It is an entirely open report in that sense and it has been used in its entirety to feed into the new development program. Indeed, changes were made on the basis of that report and its finding, including the development program itself. There was a suggestion in the report that the selection process needs to be more developmental and that it needs to provide more capacity building. That is the exact design of the model. A large part of it is based on the research and evidence brought forward by the system. Certainly, I also point to the fact that enrolments in the intake are three times greater than those of the system. People are voting with their feet. I also point to a difficult-to-staff school in the northern suburbs, Roseworth Primary School. It now advertises jobs and gets more than 100 applications, whereas the principal has said that, historically, when they have advertised jobs, they have received no applications at all. A range of success factors ought to be taken into consideration.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I will leave the issue about the popularity of IP schools. The director general mentioned that the most important factor is the socioeconomic background of students. With the conclusion of funding under the national partnership —

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which national partnership?

[10.50 am]

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The various national partnerships that schools are engaged in. A number of schools in my electorate have national partnership commonwealth funding. That is coming to an end. Additionally, with the state government having refused to sign up with Gonski, where there would have been significant increase in funding for people who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, how will the government improve the socioeconomic conditions or support students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as we are told that that is the major factor in student outcomes?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In relation to the so-called Gonski issue, it is not a matter that is concluded as far as the state is concerned. The discussions have been held at head-of-government level between the Premier and the Prime Minister. There is now a federal election underway, of course, and I expect that whoever is in government federally would be engaging with the state following the federal election.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The government needs to find \$300 million that it does not have in the budget!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The state has had concerns about the amount of extra allocation proposed by the federal government. It was very much underdone initially, and that was revised when Julia Gillard was still prime minister, from my memory. What was being offered to Western Australia per capita was far less than was being offered to all other jurisdictions.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Not now, though.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In a sense, that reflects positively on the state of the education system in Western Australia because we fund our schools at a much higher level; particularly in secondary schools that is a major cost pressure. In relation to the other aspect of the issue, the state is concerned, as the Premier has expressed, that the federal government is seeking to become excessively involved in the management of schools. We consider that this state government and its administration is able to effectively manage Western Australian schools; we do not need things to be second-guessed or duplicated through another bureaucracy playing a much greater role from Canberra. That is really the sticking point at this stage. Obviously, it will not be concluded in the next two and a half weeks, but after the federal election I am sure there will be further discussions between whoever is in government federally and the Premier here. I am sure there will be a sensible outcome, ultimately.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Following on from the independent public schools issue, and noting that members in our particular seats would have some experience or exposure to it directly or indirectly, one of the greatest benefits being purported about it is flexibility in staffing and single-line budgets—all these sorts of things, but principally it is staffing. Given that it is now government policy that IPS will be provided to any of those schools that want it, and obviously having to meet the criteria, there is a potential that there will be a massive jump in IP schools, certainly through the forwards estimates. Given my preamble about staffing, how is that going to affect the pool requirements in relation to staffing? If we, for example, in the out years of this budget, find that we have had a 60 per cent uptake of secondary schools, are they going to be forced at some point to take from the pool?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Are they going to be forced to —

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**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** To take their staffing from the pool?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The policy is that they are not required to take people from the redeployment pool. It would not be right to say they do not take people from pools. IPSs do select from graduate pools and other fixed-term pools et cetera, but I think the member is referring to that requirement to take redeployees, essentially. The policy is as it has been—that is, that they are not required to do that, but I would say that IPSs do take people from the redeployment pool; they have chosen to do it this year. They have that capacity; they have that entitlement to do so, and they do take from the redeployment pool. It has not greatly affected our numbers. We are managing the redeployees closely and very well. The policy, as the government has already stated, remains for the new crop of IP schools that are trying to get themselves involved through the development program.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Given that it is government policy and not education department activity—although, the department will deliver on policy—can the minister give a guarantee that future IP schools will not be compelled to take from the redeployment pool?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** That is the policy as it exists.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The member for Willagee is talking about the future.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The future, though. It is not the forward estimates, it is just the —

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There is no plan to change the policy that I am aware of.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Good.

Staying with that theme of IPSs, I now ask: how many full-time equivalent staff have been working in the department's head office dedicated to supporting and establishing the IPS model over the past four years?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** About six a year, I am advised.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** How many will be there from 2014 onwards?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** About five.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** A reduction of one?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Thereabouts.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yet, here we have a government policy to expand IPSs, seemingly. Given that people are voting with their feet, it will be a stampede into the head office for IPSs. How will it possibly support the policy of government to deliver a much-increased IPS uptake?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The old notion of IP schools assumes that more is done within the local school. As I mentioned in answer to an earlier question, some additional funding is being made available to schools to help deal with that. Those schools that have been established as IP schools for a couple of years or so now presumably have their new arrangements established and do not need the same degree of support. That is my off-the-cuff response, but I will now ask for the expert response

**Ms S. O'Neill:** It is quite expert, minister! What the minister has said is true. On top of that, though, if one assumes that five or six people run IPSs, that would not be right. They are a support group to the schools themselves. The whole department implements the policy of independent public schools, and increasingly over time, shifts the nature of its work to support those schools. For example, while IP schools, as the minister said, are more autonomous in terms of staffing, they might make contact with the staffing directorate for some support and advice. It would be the same for labour, if they needed the support of labour relations; and with finance—they do their own finances—but the support they are provided with is through the finance directorate. People sometimes see these things as a project and there is this project team that deals with the total, but it is a whole-of-system reform involving all the central office and regional offices. If an IPS wants to engage with the regional office, it is its choice; they are all positioned to support. It is the entire department, including the finance area, services and labour relations areas. Five or six people, of course, could never have implemented in their own right an enormous system change, which is what the IPS system is. It is a reform on a massive scale. Five or six people would never have been able to do that on their own.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Given that the government has announced this policy for a step change, again in the uptake of IPSs, what costings in the budget—if the minister could point to it—are provided for that transition; and, if so, what is his anticipated or projected numbers of schools that would want to take up IPSs? What planning work has the minister done and has he costed it?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** It is on page 272 in budget paper No 2 in the table headed “Spending Changes”. I am just trying to locate the government's initiatives at the very top. It is noted as “Additional Funding for Independent Public

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Schools 4th Intake”. The member can read that across the line, but for the year in question, it is \$1.878 million; and then, for the fifth intake it is noted as \$887 000. The differential is because, technically, there is not an intake in 2014 itself; the development program will run into 2014 and the intake will be in 2015. The funding is provided for that. As I said just before, a number of schools are expressing an interest, and should they meet and be supported to meet the selection criteria, they will then be participating in the program.

[11.00 am]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** That number is clearly based on the projected number of schools. What is that number of schools projected as the basis for the assumptions in this document?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** That funding is based on a nominal figure—as we have done previously—of 120, but we do not—

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sorry, can I have some clarification. Is that 120 schools a year, or for the full forward estimates?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** This is 120 schools for that intake period. The forward estimates relate to the 120 schools for that next development program, and subsequent discussions would be held with government on the forward estimates. We never fix to a hard target. We always have a discussion with ministers through the expenditure reform committee and others, depending on the level of interest. That is an indicative number at this point.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I refer to page 277 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the heading “Asset Investment Program”. I refer to the department’s planned asset investment program in 2013–14 and the allocation of \$581.8 million that relates primarily to improving infrastructure for public schools throughout the state. Can the minister detail how many new primary and secondary schools are planned as part of this investment, and also shed some light on whether this includes schools in country areas?

[Mr I.C. Blayney took the chair.]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is a substantial capital works, otherwise known as an asset investment program that is provided for, and included in it are five new primary schools in the final stages of construction; Hammond Park, North Butler, North Yanchep, Treendale in Australind, and Wandina in Geraldton. They are expected to open at the beginning of the next school year in 2014 at a total cost of about \$78 million. Construction will commence in the next 12 months on four additional new primary schools at Broome North, Golden Bay, Lakelands and Smirk Road in Baldivis. They will open in 2015 and are expected to cost \$56 million.

In relation to secondary schools, construction has commenced on stage 1 of the new Byford Secondary College at a cost of about \$30 million, which is scheduled to open in 2014. The new Banksia Grove Senior High School at a cost of \$45 million is due to open in 2015, and the Willetton Senior High School redevelopment has commenced at a cost of \$43 million. Funding has been allocated for a new secondary school at the cost of \$61 million in Forrestdale and is expected to open in 2017. A new secondary school will also be funded at Ellenbrook North. Construction has commenced on the second stage of the Dalyellup College, due to be completed in 2014 at a total cost of \$30 million. The Halls Head Community College at an estimated cost of \$30 million is due for completion in 2015. Construction will commence on the second stage of the Baldivis Secondary College at an estimated cost of \$40 million, and Butler College at a cost of \$35 million, with the expected completion of those two schools in 2016. Planning will commence on the second stage of the Byford Secondary College, which is due to open in 2017 and is expected to cost \$47 million.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Is the minister reading from the new works table?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am reading off the notes that I have been given. It is a big story and I am close to the end.

Planning will commence for the second stage of Banksia Grove Senior High School, which will cost \$25 million and is due to open in 2018. Some people, believe it or not, read *Hansard*, and I am sure this will be very illuminating for them. Construction will continue on the redevelopment of the Applecross Senior High School at a cost of \$56 million. In the Goldfields, planning will commence on the redevelopment of the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School at a cost of \$45 million. That school has been funded through the royalties for regions program and funding has also been allocated to accommodate year 7 students as they transition to high school in 2015.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Minister, do you want to take a five-minute break?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I would be happy to do that at a mutually agreed time.

*Meeting suspended from 11.04 to 11.15 am*

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**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I refer to the capital works listed under “Asset Investment Program”, which commence on page 277. A series of promises were made in the lead-up to the election and throughout last year but I cannot find access to them in the papers. Would the minister spell out where they are? Those promises included \$7.5 million for new facilities at Collie Senior High School; \$200 000 for upgrades to East Kenwick Primary School; \$150 000 for upgrades to Forrestfield Primary School; \$1.3 million for upgrades to Mount Hawthorn Primary School—I can only find part of that—\$80 million for a complete rebuild at Willetton Senior High School—again, I can only find part of that—and \$27.5 million for the stage 2 redevelopment at Rossmoyne Senior High School. Also in my electorate there was a promise of \$12.4 million to finish by the end of 2014 the improvements to John Curtin College of the Arts for the year 7 intake, but I cannot see any reference to John Curtin College of the Arts at all in the budget.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In relation to a couple of schools the member has mentioned, as I said before the break, Willetton Senior High School’s redevelopment has commenced.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is it the \$80 million that was promised?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The figure I have here is \$43 million.

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** The total estimated cost of upgrading Willetton is in excess of \$80 million. The budget papers show only the amounts in the current budget period. Previously, it was shown as \$32.5 million, and an extra \$10.5 million is included in this year’s budget so that the total amount in the budget papers reflects the current works planned for the upgrade of Willetton.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** What is the completion date for that \$80 million project?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** I do not have the figures in front of me. I understand that when the announcement was made it was recognised as a long-term program and it could take as long as nine years to complete. That reflects the fact that it involves the upgrade of an operating school and that the works need to be timed to allow the school to operate as well as provide improved facilities. That project is a substantial refurbishment and the existing school facilities need to be maintained.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** An amount of \$80 million was promised for a complete rebuild, but that has not been allocated.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** As was mentioned, some of it would be outside the forward estimates.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It has not been allocated.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Not in these forward estimates; not in this four-year period. I presume that if the whole project is to be undertaken at a cost of \$80 million, then some would be notionally allocated in later years of the forward estimates, but they are not part of what is published in this budget.

It is just the same for the WA Museum development, for example, something I am familiar with, the total cost of which is \$428 million. There is roughly \$160 million in the current forward estimates, but the whole project is intended to be completed—obviously, you do not do half of it; a lot of it is past the current forward estimates, with completion in 2019 or 2020.

[11.20 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** When a promise is made for expenditure of \$80 million, parents in the community expect that will take place when their kids are still at school, not when they are at university. I listed a range of different schools, including Collie Senior High School, \$7.5 million.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised planning has commenced. The commitment stated that planning work would begin in 2013, and I am advised this is happening.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is there money allocated to that, minister?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am not sure that they need a specific allocation for the planning work, but I ask Mr Fischer.

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** An architect has been appointed to commence planning for the work. There is no funding in this year’s budget for that project.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am looking for specific responses to the questions that I asked, as promised. I asked about East Kenwick Primary School.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I make the point that this budget is the first in a four-year term.

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**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Is the minister saying he has not broken a promise yet, but he will break it in four years' time?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There will be four budgets presented in this term of government, and this is only the first. There is still room for a lot of activity in the other three years.

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** An announcement was made on the East Kenwick project of \$200 000 for traffic improvement works at the school. That work was undertaken in the 2012–13 year.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is there an allocation in this budget?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** It was undertaken in 2012–13.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Collie–Preston has a specific question on Collie Senior High School.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I am at loss to understand the minister's logic here. If the election promises were fully costed and fully funded why is the \$7 million promised for Collie Senior High School not in the budget? There is \$500 000 in the budget, which is a carry-over; it is there as new money, which it is not. Why is that not in the budget as fully funded and fully costed as per the government's election blurb?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** As I advised, the planning work is underway. Before any major building development is undertaken, it has to be designed. We have to ascertain the precise needs, and that work is underway. The funds for the actual construction are not allocated in this year's budget, but there is clearly time in this term of government to do that.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The minister has still not answered my question about the commitment being fully funded and fully costed, yet it has no budget item. How does the minister reconcile those things?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The funding will be allocated when construction is expected to commence. The planning work has to be done initially.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I asked some other specific questions, particularly about John Curtin College of the Arts, and also Rossmoyne Senior High School, for which \$27.5 million was promised. Has that been allocated?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** The moneys for John Curtin College of the Arts for year 7s is shown in a line item under "Additions and Improvements to High Schools" on page 279. The single line item "Relocation of Year 7s to Secondary Schools" allocates \$186 million over the budget period, and includes the amount allocated for the year 7 works at John Curtin College. It also includes an amount for Rossmoyne Senior High School estimated at \$13.5 million. I am not aware of the other amount the member quoted in her question.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I referred to \$27.5 million promised for Rossmoyne Senior High School. How much has been allocated?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** I am not aware of that promise. I am only aware of the money that was allocated for the year 7 works, which is also included in that line item for year 7s.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** How much is allocated for Rossmoyne?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** It was estimated at \$13.45 million.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** How much for John Curtin?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** We had an initial estimate of \$13 million for John Curtin.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Has that money been allocated for John Curtin?

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** The total budget for the line item for year 7 relocations is \$186 million. Those amounts may vary from school to school but that program will be managed within that allocation.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is there a master plan for John Curtin capital works, minister?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I do not know, and I ask Mr Fischer to respond.

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** We have undertaken some master planning for John Curtin College of the Arts. We have used that to identify where the year 7 block will be located, and in the future if we seek to do other works where those might occur.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is it possible to get a copy of that master plan?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I think the member probably should have some discussions with the school in her own local community. It is normal for local members to have some contact.

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**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have done that, minister, and was told I needed to ask the minister, so I am asking now. There was a lot of discussion about health and safety issues at John Curtin College and the capital works it needed.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I seem to recall something about that.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is quite pertinent to the budget, because the ageing infrastructure in that popular specialist school has created a demand for capital works to be done.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** We will take that question on notice and refer it to the minister who should make that decision. I do not see any good reason why the master plan cannot be made available, but it is subject to change.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I request that as supplementary information.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is not like it was not on the radar, surely.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is apparently at the minister's discretion whether the master plan is given over.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It was referred to publicly quite a bit last year.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** We will provide it as it exists at the moment, but it is subject to change.

*[Supplementary Information No B32.]*

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** I refer the minister to the eighth dot point on page 272 of budget paper No 2 on the playground equipment and shade structure program. Would the minister update the house on the rollout of this program and how public schools have benefited?

[11.30 am]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The government committed about \$1 million a year to primary schools to provide playground equipment and shade structures over the next four years. This continues a program started in 2011–12. Students in preprimary to year 10 spend at least two hours of their weekly curriculum engaging in compulsory physical activities, so when that can be done in the shade it is better for sun protection. The program targets those schools in low socio-economic areas that previously may not have had the capacity to replace old, noncompliant equipment with stimulating and safe playground equipment to promote healthy physical activity. The program will ensure that appropriate, modern playground equipment provides opportunities to increase physical fitness and help in the development of gross motor skills and increases in upper and lower body strength. The final point I make is that well-designed playground equipment also provides children with a range of learning experiences and helps to stimulate their imagination.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to the new works table on page 282 and the “Perimeter Security Fencing Program” line item, which indicates that there will be \$4 million in the out years towards this project. I have a specific question regarding a school in my electorate—namely, Endeavour Primary School in Port Kennedy. Can the minister confirm that it will be allocated funding for a security perimeter fence this financial year?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** John Fischer can endeavour to answer that.

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** A number of primary schools are being considered for security fencing this year. Endeavour Primary School is one of those, and we are just waiting to finalise the estimates for those schools to see whether we can afford to fund all those schools this financial year.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Further to that, I am being pretty specific, because this school has expended more than \$200 000 on the repair of wilful damage in the past four years. I know that because I have asked in Parliament. Its level of expenditure on the repair of wilful damage has been amongst the highest in the state. For the last financial year—in fact, for the last four years—at least half the schools that received funding for perimeter fencing had lower wilful damage bills. Will the school be funded this year, because it is a false economy not to fund it if it receives another lot of wilful damage that is in the order of what it has had in the past four years?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I think the member is making a strong case for the perimeter fencing to be installed. The answer that was given earlier is that costs are being ascertained. A decision will need to be made about which schools go ahead within the available funding. If the needs at Endeavour Primary School are assessed as being at the top of the list, no doubt it will go ahead. The member has certainly made the point quite strongly, and I have no reason to doubt what he is saying.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay. I will watch with anticipation to hear the good news shortly.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am sure the member's case has been heard.

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**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** I refer the minister to the heading at the bottom of page 273, “Managing the Supply of Teachers”. I would specifically like to know how much has been invested in the Switch training program and also the outcome of that in terms of the number of teachers who have indicated an interest and applied for the program.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The government allocated \$22.4 million in May last year to support primary teachers to develop their skills to competently teach in secondary schools when year 7 students make the move in 2015. The program itself was launched in early June this year. Interested primary school teachers have been invited to apply to undertake the training to change to secondary teaching, and also secondary teachers can expand the range of subjects that they are able to teach. As at 20 August this year, 409 teachers had expressed an interest in participating in the Switch program. That will assist in building greater levels of content knowledge to teach in specialist secondary subjects. The breakdown of interest shows that the figure was 409 teachers. One day later there were an additional two expressions of interest, making the figure 411. There are 138 teachers in maths, 81 in science, 49 in design and technology, 61 in special education, 36 in English, 24 in society and environment, seven in health and physical education, and 15 in other subject areas outside the scope—for example, English as an additional language, home economics and computing. There seems to be quite a good level of interest. The program will provide graduate certificate courses in all the learning areas, and these will also be available during 2014.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** In regard to that Switch program, which is trying to accommodate teachers to take the year 7 students into high school, I believe a question was asked of the minister in the other house—which is the Council, obviously. The Switch program will retrain 500 new teachers and the minister said that 800 graduate teachers would be available. Is the department confident that those 800 graduates who will be available will be ready to teach year 7 students in a secondary setting; and, if the department is confident, why is it confident?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** Yes, we are confident that that will be the case, and we continue to work with the universities. Undergraduates are having instruction in the Australian curriculum. It must be remembered that the main focus of the year 7 change is so that they can access and have specialised instruction and facilities around the requirements of the new Australian curriculum, so undergraduates are involving themselves in that. But, yes, we are confident that those graduates who come into our employment will be prepared and ready to undertake the challenge of working with year 7s in secondary settings.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Were those 800 graduates all enrolled in university secondary teaching or was it only some of them? If it was only some of them, how many were enrolled as primary school undergraduates? If there are any such people, what is the difference in the Australian tertiary admission rank cut-off score to enter university primary school teaching vis-a-vis secondary teaching?

**Ms S. O’Neill:** The member would have to ask the universities about their plans for the cut-off score in the future. I am not sure that we are in a position to state the cut-off score today.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** No, I am talking about those 800 graduates.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** Those 800 graduates will comply with the cut-off scores of the university. I do not manage the cut-off scores of the university, so I am not exactly sure what they are going to be in the future. That is speculative.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I know it is not the director general’s position to determine the ATAR score, but if she is saying that these graduates will be equipped to teach secondary school students, surely she would have some interest in knowing the calibre of students entering the courses at university, because traditionally the ATAR scores to enter secondary school courses at university have been substantially higher, or at least higher, than they have been for primary school courses.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** They will have an ATAR score that enables them to enter university, and then they will graduate from the course. The course standards are set by the universities, and in some respects nationally. As the employer, we would expect them to meet the established standards for teacher registration and for employment in our department. Naturally, we want the highest calibre students. We are very fortunate that we get high-calibre students, and that is exactly what we would expect in 2015. Those students are in university now. We anticipate that they are meeting the requirements of those courses, and they will be employed if they meet those standards and they are suitable to us as an employer.

[11.40 am]

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I refer to the second dot point on page 273 of budget paper No 2, which refers to the implications of student enrolment growth. With the Collie community in mind, as well as many other country senior high schools, can the minister give us an assurance that none of these senior high schools will be reduced

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to junior high school status, so that people are forced to travel long distances to access senior high school programs?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There are no plans to change the status of country high schools that I am aware of.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Is there any that the director general is aware of?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Obviously the numbers of students in schools and what is able to be provided educationally is monitored, and the crucial aspect, to go back to a point that was being made earlier this morning, is about what can be offered to students. It is much harder to provide a good educational outcome, a range of courses and specialist support in situations in which there are small numbers of students. Having said that, the use of internet technology and the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education and so on are important and play a very valid role. There are no plans to make any change, but it would probably not be possible to give an absolute guarantee that there will never be any change in the medium term, because there have been changes in the past, but there is certainly no plan to make any change.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The minister must be aware that his answer does not give me much joy or any reassurance. People in country towns who want to invest in their towns will be obliged to make a different decision; the impact of this on smaller country towns is more than just a high school issue. The question I am coming to is: how can we, in our job, give some reassurance to those people who are making the lifestyle investment of living in smaller towns? Some of them might end up making the decision to move, for example, to Bunbury so that the kids can go to school there, while the father travels back to work. If we are not careful and if the minister does not provide a satisfactory answer, we could end up undermining the confidence of many country towns. How can we provide some confidence to people that they will have proper educational facilities for their children in country towns?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that the process that is used now has not changed over the last decade or so; it is exactly the same now as it was when the previous Labor government was in office, and some changes were put in place during the term of the previous Labor government. Having said that, the distance that children have to travel to school is clearly a significant factor, so the decisions made in rural areas may well be different from those that are made in the metropolitan area or in large regional cities or towns, where alternative schools are located relatively close by. As I said, there are no plans to make any changes, but we need to take into account changing circumstances and consider the quality of the education that is able to be provided to students. To reiterate: there has not been any change in the process since the previous government was in office.

**Ms S.F. MCGURK:** Considering the amount of uncertainty that follows such announcements, as was highlighted by the member for Collie, does the minister concede that the announcement this week about possible amalgamations or closures in the Armadale and Fremantle areas could have been handled better by the government?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The statements made earlier this week about potential amalgamations were, in fact, more general with respect to the issues that are being considered. I am not sure exactly about the conversations, but I presume that some examples were asked for, and the schools of Armadale, Fremantle, and some schools in the northern suburbs were simply given as examples. That does not mean to say that there will necessarily be changes in those areas. As we discussed earlier this morning, there would be engagement with the parents and the local communities about the best ways of going about the provision of the best possible education for their children. It is obviously always problematic when specific examples are given but, on the other hand, if no examples are given, people press for them. That is the stage that we are at; certainly no decisions have been made. I think there has been a reasonably open discussion and hopefully we can have an informed and intelligent discussion about these things that is primarily driven by wanting to get the best possible educational outcomes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The government mentioned specific examples, so I ask the minister: are South Fremantle Senior High School and Hamilton Senior High School currently under active consideration, within the processes of the department, for closure or amalgamation?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that discussions have been ongoing between schools in local areas over a period of time; it has not just been over the last week. The Department of Education would really not be doing its job if it were not looking into the future about what might be a sensible outcome for the future, but just because there have been some discussions and considerations of options, it does not mean that decisions have been made at all.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The question was not about decisions, the question was about consideration: are Hamilton Senior High School and South Fremantle Senior High School under consideration?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** All small schools are having discussions, as has long been the case.



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**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Can the minister provide advice as to the criteria for placing a secondary school within this area of consideration and/or discussion? Is it purely numbers? Is it NAPLAN? What are the flags?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will ask the director general to elaborate.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** As we mentioned earlier this morning, it is not a single criterion; size is one amongst many criteria for us to look at for all schools—primary, secondary, education support. In our ongoing monitoring, we take into consideration school size; the kind of curriculum that they are able to offer, at both lower and upper secondary level, if we are talking about secondary schools; vocational education and training provision; the types of students and their particular needs for additional support; whether schools have specialist programs or provide for adult students; provision of English as a second language courses; Intensive English Centres; whether a school has an education support centre; and alternatives in the local community. We have just talked about distance education. A complication in all of this, and a reason there is ongoing monitoring, is that we have enrolment changes; we have things on the board that have not been on the board before. We have year 7s moving into secondary schools and the half cohort, so of course, as part of our ongoing asset management and process, we need to monitor not only enrolments but also other shifts in those areas. In that sense, all small schools are under consideration. We would want to have a look at any school that is unable to offer a wider range of curriculum offerings. There are transport considerations in the country with buses and where they go and do not go, and the bus policy about distances travelled. It is not just an enrolment issue; it is broader than that. Boundary changes are also taken into consideration, so we do that work constantly and have always done it constantly. We have a big asset base, with 770 schools, so in that sense, any school that comes to our attention for a range of reasons is under consideration for discussion and monitoring; it has always been thus.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The first time the public of Western Australia heard about the impending closures of high schools in the metropolitan area was this week. When did the process commence of assessing schools for potential closure, such as South Fremantle Senior High School and Hamilton Senior High School? Did it only commence this week, or was it well underway prior to the state election in March?

[11.50 am]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is an ongoing issue; there is nothing impending that is about to occur suddenly. It is not as if there is a process —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Hang on! The Premier was on the radio two days ago saying it is going to happen; that he is warning people.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** And changes have occurred in the past. I gave examples earlier of when we were in government previously. I am not sure which changes occurred when the Labor government was in office, but I presume some changes—closures of schools or amalgamations—happened then. I am not sure; maybe there was not the will to do it. But it has certainly occurred over a long period of time and needs to occur in the future, because what was appropriate 50 years ago is not necessarily appropriate now given changes of demographics, the declining number of students in particular areas and the substantial growth that occurs in other areas. It is not a static city we live in; it is appropriate to consider these issues on a continuing basis.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Two days ago the Premier publicly announced that there may be school closures as a result of budget pressures. He did not say that before the election, he did not say it in any of the months post the election until now, and he did not even say it during the budget week. I am asking when this process commenced of determining whether schools such as South Fremantle and Hamilton Hill will be closed in the metropolitan area.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In the short term it normally costs money to amalgamate schools because it does involve, obviously, restructuring and new building construction. As we mentioned before, the advice I have is that amalgamating a school probably saves about \$500 000 a year, so it is not a major financial issue, but what is the most —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Premier said they could be closed to save money!

**The CHAIRMAN:** Member!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am not sure that he did say it was as a result of budget.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** He did! I am looking at a media report; it is right here! This is ABC radio.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Member, the minister is answering your question.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** He has been Minister for Education in the past and was pretty highly regarded as such, and Sevenoaks Senior College and Yule Brook College, which exist in the Cannington and Maddington areas, are an

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example of the changes put in place when the Premier was education minister. Shenton College, formed from the old Hollywood and Swanbourne high schools, is another example of positive change.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** So when did this process commence?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** So, it is not a cost-saving exercise, but it is about —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Premier said it was!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** — an educational improvement exercise.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Premier said it was to save money because of budget pressures. He said that the harsh budget reality is —

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am going to move on to the member for Joondalup.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** He has not answered the question! He was about to answer the question.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You, member, threw more questions in there!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will just make the point again: in the longer term it may produce some degree of reduction of overall cost in recurrent terms, but in the short term it normally costs money because of the capital investment that needs to be made. But the most important aspect is getting a better education outcome.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It looks like the Liberal Party covered it up before the election, and it is rolling out the bad news now.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** I refer to the sixth dot point on page 278 of the *Budget Statements*, which relates to the implementation of the \$52 million state air-cooling program. Would the minister provide the house with an update on the rollout of this program, and how it is benefiting students in public schools throughout Western Australia?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There has been a program over quite a long period of time to install air cooling in schools, and I am advised that in more recent times there has been funding to install air cooling at an additional 489 schools that had not been previously covered. That will be undertaken in two stages at a total cost of \$52 million, as the member said, over the four-year period. The first stage, covering 206 schools, was completed in April this year. That provided for 99 schools in the north east metropolitan area and the Serpentine–Jarrahdale area and was completed in the 2011–12 financial year; a further 75 schools in the central metropolitan area, Upper Great Southern and south east Perth metropolitan area were completed in the 2012–13 financial year. An additional 32 schools in these areas have previously had air cooling installed. Stage 2 is currently underway and will provide it to 283 schools over the next two years. The current rollout will predominantly focus on the metropolitan coast and southern areas of Western Australia.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am trying to find the line item for general expenditure; it might be in education services. I will take some guidance there.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The member might want to move on to that division at some stage, but that is up to the committee.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** My question is in relation to school support program resource allocation funding. Can the minister advise, in the suite of budget pressures and savings, how SSPRA funding will be reduced?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that the amount being expended in 2013 is \$53 million, and in 2014 it is \$37 million, so that is a change of about 30 per cent.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** One of my schools had anticipated SSPRA funding of \$170 000: should it anticipate a 30 per cent reduction?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** On an individual basis the variations may well vary from that overall change, so obviously schools are being considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The minister has rightly pointed out that as to the total bucket of SSPRA funding—as the member calls it—and what the individual schools get is not yet in schools, and that would not necessarily reflect that overall 30 per cent reduction the minister referred to. It is dependent on individual student and school characteristics. So, the 30 per cent reduction is to the total; as to individual schools, a simple calculation could not be done to say there will be a 30 per cent reduction. It will be thereabouts, give or take, depending on the characteristics of the school. That will come out shortly.

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**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Is the minister aware that, clearly, this will have the greatest impact on low socioeconomic schools with high Indigenous participation and greater learning difficulties? This is striking directly at the heart of a quality education in those areas.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is a specific program; it is not the whole story—I know members are not suggesting that. I am advised that some schools will continue to have national partnership funding —

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** But they are coming to an end, and we do not have Gonski! The government is not only preventing them having money; it is robbing them of money now!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No. Gonski has not started off, actually, in any state as yet, but where there has been agreement, it will be starting in those jurisdictions in future years; it is over a four-year period, if I remember rightly. As I said earlier, there will be further discussions, no doubt, between Western Australia and the commonwealth after the commonwealth election. The principle is supported, but there are concerns about the degree of commonwealth government involvement in the actual management of Western Australian schools.

[12 noon]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have been looking through the documents but I cannot see any allocation specifically for the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education; perhaps there is one and it has escaped me. Earlier the minister spoke about the need to include and improve some of the technological solutions for remote and regional schools. Is there any allocation of money to further improve the development of innovative digital learning solutions through SIDE? Is there any change to the funding for SIDE and the services offered?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will ask Ms O'Neill to comment.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** I missed the first part of the member's question, but I think the last part was about the funding for SIDE; is that what he was asking?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, the funding for SIDE specifically to enable it to take advantage of some of the new technologies.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** SIDE has its own allocation. It is well placed with the provision of information and communications technology for distance education across the state. It will continue to be funded for the work it does. I do not think there is any suggestion that there will be a change in its overall ICT funding, unless it falls within a program that comes to an end.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** So there is no threat to staffing levels at SIDE as such.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Sorry; I thought the member asked about its ICT. There will be shifts in the staffing complement depending on a range of factors from year to year, such as enrolment shifts. SIDE is fully dependent on an enrolment-driven staffing complement; it depends on how many kids enrol. I would not guarantee that its staffing complement will be the same from one year to the next; it gets staffed on the basis of its enrolments.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** On the expenditures for the relocation of year 7 students to high school, I do not think there is a list of the expenditure levels of various schools in the budget papers, although I have seen an indication in an unrelated document that John Willcock College, which services many people in my electorate in Geraldton, has a fairly modest expenditure level of about \$600 000. It is my understanding that it will have one of the larger intakes of year 7 students of any school in the state. Is there any plan to further resource John Willcock beyond the \$600 000 that I have seen in unrelated documents; and, if so, to what level?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** For what purpose?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** It is to accommodate the intake of year 7 students into the school. Given that the school basically serves as a junior high school now, it will virtually increase its capacity by 30 per cent or more.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** I will have to confirm the funding figure that the member has referred to, but at this stage the allocation provided for John Willcock College is the allocation that John Willcock will work from. I think there are transportable buildings, as the member is aware. I do not think there is any plan at this point to change the funding allocation for John Willcock. I will just confirm that.

**Mr J.F. Fischer:** The initial estimate for John Willcock was about \$600 000. We anticipate spending probably another \$1 million above that to accommodate the facilities required at John Willcock. There are not just transportables for classrooms, but also other facilities to support the influx of students.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I could not hear the response. What was the figure?

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**Mr J.F. Fischer:** I indicated that we estimate that we will spend about \$1.6 million on the facility at John Willcock to provide for year 7 students. An allocation of \$600 000 is being provided through royalties for regions, and there is additional money through other allocations for relocating year 7 students.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I refer to page 272. I have another question about public sector workforce reform. Is it true that schools have been told that some of their funding will be reduced through a thing called leave liability, through which, I believe, the department will be able to draw back money from the school when teachers who are due long service leave or sick leave do not take it. If that is so, why is that so? Did the department come to that decision by looking at how independent public schools operate and at the savings that individual IP schools are making?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** In relation to IP schools, I am advised that the answer is no. In relation to the wider question, Ms O'Neill will respond.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The member can see the leave liability issue on page 272, which was brought in for all departments, and therefore schools as part of the department, as a calculation of the liability of leave. Of course, we know that staff at schools have to take their annual leave because we have term holidays, but when there are 20 000 teachers, quite a mass of long service leave gets accrued. Schools have been advised—I think, probably just today—that a portion of that cost will be sought from schools as a payment or a levy. It has no relationship to IPS.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** If, for instance, the teachers at an IP school wanted to trade off their sick leave to use for another function at the school, would they be able to do that?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** They cannot trade off sick leave; it is an industrial entitlement.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Will the leave liability also apply to IP schools?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The leave liability applies to all schools. Staff cannot trade off sick leave; it is an industrial entitlement. For schools, this line will reflect their long service leave but no other form of leave.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Is it true that some primary schools, even those that are not large, could lose up to \$15 000 a year through the measure that the government has instigated?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The amount would vary depending on the size of the school. I do not have the individual school numbers with me; but, for example, if it were \$15 000 for a large primary school, that would be calculated on the basis of the number of staff at the school.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Is it just for long service leave, not sick leave?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** For schools it is a calculation for long service leave, because it is mandated that staff have to take all other forms of leave.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** What about an IPS? Can staff at an IPS trade off long service leave?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** This is not about trading off leave.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** No, but I am asking whether they could.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Could they have their long service leave cashed out? Any employee can ask to have long service leave calculated and cashed out. It is at the discretion of the agency.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I refer to the first and fourth dot points on page 275 of the budget papers. My question is about everyday absences from school and truancy. How is truancy checked and managed? I do not see truancy officers anywhere. In recent times, I have heard complaints about kids not going to school. When a kid does not attend school, how are they followed up, because in my experience there is no follow-up? How is that done? I will roll in another question because I think it is a social issue, although it may be considered a different question. In one particular case in Collie, a special needs school was shut and some parents made a very big decision to take two of their children to the special needs school in Bunbury, but they are paid a pittance of 20c a kilometre one way because there is no bus service to take their children to that school. If the children do not go to school, the school says that they are truants. It is an appalling circle.

[12.10 pm]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will make an initial comment. There are 283 attendance officers in schools. They not only deal with attendance issues, but also are designated in addition to their other duties to follow up on why children are not at school. If it is not happening at a particular school, that would certainly be concerning. Schools have a

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responsibility to do what they can to make sure children are at school. I will ask the director general to provide some more information about the process.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** There is quite a lengthy process. I would be surprised to hear about students not being followed up. Of course if the member is aware of an individual, we would be keen to understand that. Primary schools take what people would commonly understand as “the roll”—it is taken in the morning and in the afternoon. In secondary schools that run an eight-period grid, the roll is taken every period. That information is gathered at the school level. Many parents would be accustomed these days to receiving an SMS message when their child has not appeared for some reason or has disappeared during the school day. There is quite an extensive process chart, which we are happy to provide—it is two pages long. It sets out all the different steps required for attendance intervention. It is comprehensive.

A range of required processes are put in place for following up on students, even more recently working with the police department—more so in the city—in returning students to school who are found not to be in attendance at school. How do we manage attendance? The answer is: very closely indeed, right down to the individual level. It is true to say that some students, despite all of that endeavour—multiple follow-ups, individual attendance programs, rewards, sanctions and everything else in between—continue to not attend school. There is a difference, as the member would be aware from previous discussions, between not attending school and truancy. Truancy is described as established non-compliance over a long period.

There are unauthorised and authorised absences. We have seen changes in the number that have been authorised by parents. Parents play a key role in that. Students of a young age do not decide to go or not to go to school; it is the parents’ decision. It becomes more complex as students get older. We have a range of programs and processes in place to encourage students to go to school. When they do not, under the legislation we have panels that deal with that. We prosecuted a family this year for student non-attendance. That is a very complex process. We have two others on foot at the moment. From our perspective, we do not think it is a reasonable suggestion that students not be followed up. That said, there are some very difficult cases of truanting, with long-term patterns of truancy. We support the parents in preventing that. Parents find their own children very difficult in that situation when they think they are at school but they have not turned up. We would be happy to provide, through another means, information on the process as it currently exists.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I am trying to be very careful about how I couch this. I have some concerns, and I wonder whether the minister has concerns, about pressures on headmasters and teachers; that is, because they are quite happy for those kids not to be at school, the effort is not put in to get them back into the school programs, and I think we suffer very much for that further down the line. I am not pointing the finger at anyone; I am trying to be very nice about this. But in some cases headmasters say, “Thank goodness they’re not at school because they’re not disrupting the whole school”, because they do not have the resources to deal with that. Are there any plans to provide extra help for these types of students?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Obviously that would be a concern. A range of strategies are probably used. As the director general said, there are examples of cases that are particularly difficult to manage but the question is more relevant to the Department of Education Services. I was made aware yesterday that there are non-government-funded schools known as CARE schools—curriculum and re-engagement schools—that are for children with particular needs or difficult backgrounds and that try to get them re-engaged in the education system in some form or other. That is just one example. I will ask Sharyn to make a comment in response to the member’s point.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** There are a lot of programs, funding and effort put in place. We have programs to pick kids up in the morning, to feed them, to clothe them, and to provide individual tuition and engagement. They are quite extensive. For some of the kids the member is talking about—the truanting kids—I am not sure that more programs would necessarily make a difference. There are some students, for example, who participate in Clontarf, who would not otherwise ever come to school. We have some cases of that. It is more pervasive in some ways when we get to the truanting point because the programs, the opportunities, the transport and the funding—all of those things—are in place. At the end of the day it comes down to the individual student’s willingness to engage. It is not helped by mobility. I will quote some figures. Some children, for example, have attended nine different schools between February 2009 and this year. There are a couple of kids like that. There are four kids who have attended eight schools. There are 376 students who have attended five schools in probably three to four years. The problem of non-attendance is not helped by that. I take the point that of course additional resources and programs are always helpful, but for truanting students who are making a conscious decision to not go to school, despite all of that support, I am not sure that more and more programs would make a difference there. For those students who are not as much truanting as taking regular days off, programs, mentorship and everything else is entirely relevant. Of course it does not mean we have given up on the truanting

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kids, but I think we are in a different category when we start hitting truancy. They very often have mental health issues, need more psychological support and more family support, and the level of family dysfunction often comes hand in glove with that. It is a very complex situation.

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** Madam Chair, before you go on, I was not here at the beginning of the day so I do apologise, but I am wondering if there has been any determined time to complete this division because we have three other divisions to do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, there has. My understanding is that there is one more question to be asked on this division and then we are changing. Does the member have questions in other divisions?

**Ms A.R. MITCHELL:** Yes, I have.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** As the minister can imagine, with some turbulence around the budget and budget savings, as local members we are getting lots of inquiries from different school leaderships. Hopefully the minister can dispel these concerns. A lot of the more focused schools in my area of interest have reserved funds in their budgets for the replacement of depreciating items such as buses and so on. Is there any intention whatsoever for the department to reach down and access any of those funds?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that the answer is no.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** My second question relates to postage. I understand that there has been a cut in postage to \$4 per child per year. I am happy to be corrected on that. Is the minister aware that that sort of cut makes it almost impossible for schools to communicate with parents beyond the mandated requirements that they apparently already have to comply with to send notes home and all that sort of usual communication with schools? I think it is a 50 per cent cut.

[12.20 pm]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The obvious answer, in part, is that these days electronic communication is used a lot more with emails and so on. I will ask the director general to add more information.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** To date, schools have not had funding per se for postage; rather, it has been handled centrally. This is a change for schools. It is true to say that the old days of kids having a note pinned to their top does not happen anymore. Schools are using many different forms of communication, such as the internet, SMS and a range of other means. The overall funding available for postage has been reduced, but is a reflection of the change in the ways in which the Department of Education and schools communicate more broadly. There simply is no need for the same level of funding. We are cognisant that in country and remote areas freight has not changed. If a school demonstrated that, despite doing everything it could in the most efficient way using modern technology, there was still a strain on its budget and it had run out of money, we would talk to that school to ensure that it was using contemporary and appropriate communication strategies and achieving the best effect for the available funding. Of course, if a school got into financial difficulty, we would talk to it to see how we could support it, if indeed it was putting all those things in place.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** My last question relates to school maintenance, which I know we have covered. I note that prior to the budget there was approval to repair the swimming pool at Applecross Senior High School—I think that was the school—while at the same time Hamilton Senior High School put in for repair funding for its swimming pool but was knocked back. Is there any chance that that pool will be repaired? I say that in light of the half-cohort coming in which the service provision for year 7s includes swim training. The Fremantle area has a distinct paucity of swimming pools at which those students can participate in their state swimming finals.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I am advised that a review of pools in public schools is underway. It is a significant cost to the education system.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Absolutely. However —

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There has been no decision to go ahead at this stage.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The answer is no decision or no?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Not as yet anyway.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Provision to do something about that particular pool is not in the forward estimates. We are looking at all pools and should a decision be made to upgrade or improve —

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** It is out of operation; it does not work.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** There is nothing in the forward estimates for that work.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 22 August 2013]

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