

**Division 27: Country High School Hostels Authority, \$6 724 000 —**

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chairman.

Mrs L.M. Harvey, Minister for Police representing the Minister for Education.

Ms S. O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr D. Smith, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr S.A. Baxter, Acting Deputy Director General, Schools.

Ms D. Hardie, Manager of Residential Colleges.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIRMAN:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

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 discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related 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 she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 3 June 2016. 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 give the call to the member for Moore.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have some questions pertaining to the second dot point under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 292. The dot point refers to the royalties for regions program funding the development of sufficient single-bed capacity to meet current parental expectations. I note that under "New Works" on page 294 there is an allocation to royalties for regions in the 2018–19 forward estimates. What is the authority's level of awareness and planning for the rectification of the current situation at the residential boarding house in Moora? Although it has single bedrooms, they seem to have been put together by a cost-effective means, shall I say, which has not been very satisfactory. I am concerned about that continuing for much longer. What plans are there to rectify that situation and provide decent single-bed accommodation?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I will ask Mr Baxter to respond.

**Mr S.A. Baxter:** The member referred to an amount on page 294. We have looked at all residential facilities across the state in regard to the requirement for demand. The only one that requires additional student accommodation because of student demand is in the Kimberley. St James Residential College has a 50-bed capacity. I think 35 students are boarding there at the moment. We have taken a particularly good look at that hostel and its need for an upgrade. I imagine that when those decisions are taken, the member will hear about it. I am very much aware of the context of boarding at Moora.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** My next question, on a different topic, also relates to page 294. I refer to the "Efficiency Indicators". It gives an efficiency average cost per student in 2016–17 of \$24 903, which is less than in previous years. What percentage of that figure is recovered from parents? Does the actual cost include a lot of overheads and capital costs or is that the average running cost of the hostel per student?

**Mr S.A. Baxter:** The reason for what appears to be an efficiency is due to decreases in employee benefits. We had factored into the estimates greater increases than the government wages policy would provide. Some efficiencies were gained for consumable expenses and also, as was pointed out, the increase in income related to the increase in the boarding fee.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is that the cost after the income from parents is recovered?

**Mr S.A. Baxter:** No.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is that the full cost per student?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes. Mr Baxter has indicated that is the full cost per student.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Going back to page 292, the third dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” states —

The Government is progressing legislative changes to subsume the Authority into the Department of Education ...

What is the status of that program? Does the authority currently have responsibility for the agriculture colleges’ boarding houses as well as those, or is that already in the education department?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I believe the agriculture colleges are in the Department of Education. I understand that those legislative amendments were a recommendation of the Blaxell inquiry. Mr Baxter, are you able to respond to the question about agriculture colleges? The question was whether the agriculture colleges fall under the remit of the department.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** There were two parts to the question.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** They are part of the department.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I also asked about the status of that change in the authority from the Country High School Hostels Authority to a part of the education department; and what is the status of the agriculture colleges?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Does the member want to know the status of the merger of those colleges into the Department of Education?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, and how that affects the ag colleges going forward.

**Mr S.A. Baxter:** The School Boarding Facilities Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2015 was introduced into Parliament in October 2015 and is awaiting final approval. The status of the functions of the authority will be incorporated into the Department of Education.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The bill needs to pass through Parliament for us to implement the changes.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I refer to the last dot point on page 292 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. The legislation is before the house, but how is the actual governance transition going at the moment? What is the report on that?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I will ask the chief executive officer to respond.

**Ms S. O’Neill:** While that legislation is passing through, we have undertaken significant project planning across seven or eight operational areas, including governance. At the moment the Country High School Hostels Authority, under its own legislation, retains governance until the new legislation comes in. Along with the authority, the Department of Education is working to integrate payroll and human resources services in preparation for that. The Department of Education already provides many services. Because the agency is so small, the department already provides investigative services, employee support services and a range of other services to it. We are putting in place a comprehensive plan so that when the legislation is enacted, the merger will be pretty smooth.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

*Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*