

PUBLIC SCHOOLS — GONSKI REFORMS

Motion

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [4.52 pm]: I move —

That this house calls on the government to resolve issues with the federal government so that public schools can benefit from the Gonski reform package.

I am sure a swarm of people will come into the chamber soon to listen to this debate, although some competing national current affairs issues are occurring as I speak. This is an incredibly important issue because, as we all know, and I think we would all agree, education is fundamental to the economic and social wealth of this country. Without investing in education to the level that is necessary to compete with our competitors, we will face a period of declining economic reward, and other factors that go with economics with regard to the social fabric of our society. When a policy is presented to significantly increase funding in education, one would think that a government would be agreeable and enthusiastic to sign up to that agreement. Of course, one must be aware of whether signing that agreement will have any negatives, and I will pay the Premier a compliment. The initial offer by the Gillard government—it may be one of the last times I can say that—the federal Labor government, was not up to scratch. The Leader of the Opposition also stated that it was not sufficient. The principle, the foundation, of the Gonski reforms—short for the National Plan for School Improvement—was not sufficient because the federal government or the bureaucrats had not taken into consideration the cost of education in Western Australia. As a result of the number of remote schools in Western Australia, WA governments have to invest a lot more in educating our students than is the case in other states. We now have a substantially revised offer of \$960 million. It is a phenomenal offer and there is no doubt that money does matter in education, particularly with disadvantaged students. One of the beauties of the Gonski funding formula is that it is right on track in boosting funding for under-resourced schools and disadvantaged students. Research in Australia and internationally, particularly in the United Kingdom, clearly shows that money invested into the disadvantaged in the education system has significant positive effects.

The importance of education was succinctly put by Robert Reich, a professor in the United States at Berkeley University, and formerly the labour secretary under the first Clinton administration, who said that investment in education is one of the most crucial investments that any government can make. It is such a disappointment that the Barnett Liberal–National government has refused to sign onto the Gonski reforms or the Gonski agreement. The Gonski funding formula refers to the new schooling resource standard—SRS. This is a new way of funding schools based on a dollar amount per student. The beauty of it is in the extra loadings for students who are in need—for example, students with disabilities or students who come from a lower socioeconomic background or smaller schools. It is not just this side of the house arguing for the Western Australian government to sign onto the Gonski reforms. Today, after the passing of the Australian Education Bill 2013 in the Senate, the Western Australian Council of State Schools Organisations made the statement that it is imperative that Western Australia sign onto the Gonski education reforms. WACSSO president, Kylie Catto, stated —

“This is a significant day in education, with reforms promising to narrow the gap in achievement between the highest performing schools and the most disadvantaged set in legislation,” ...

“It is a relief to see what has been universally recognised for a long time finally set in legislation — that there will be greater investment in education and that students will receive the resources they need to reach their educational potential, regardless of their location, abilities, cultural or economic background”

“But, we’re not there yet. New South Wales, South Australia and the ACT State school systems have all signed up to Gonski. Private and Catholic schools across Australia, including WA will also receive Gonski funds. Western Australian students will not. In order for public school students ... to reap the educational benefits of an extra \$671 million —

That will go into the state system, and the balance will go to independent and Catholic schools in Western Australia. I continue —

... our Premier must sign up to Gonski.”

In case members on the other side might wish to be negative, the State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia is not affiliated with the Labor Party. As members on the other side would know, the SSTUWA has been very critical at times of our side of politics. The SSTUWA does not speak for all teachers, because obviously not all teachers are members of the SSTUWA, but it does speak for many teachers, and it is also at the forefront of the education debate in Western Australia.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 26 June 2013]

p2219b-2237a

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

In a statement dated 21 June, the SSTUWA states —

Every school sector in Western Australia will see their funding increase every year under the Gillard Government's National Plan for School Improvement, as shown by new data released today.

Government schools in Western Australia will receive a boost of around \$670 million, while non-government schools will benefit from around an extra \$250 million in funding over the next six years.

This extra investment, plus securing a better indexation rate, comes on top of existing funding for schools and will see a total public investment of about \$2.8 billion in the six years from 2014.

That is a phenomenal increase in funding for education. It states also —

If Colin Barnett accepts the offer that will see better schools across WA, schools will benefit from around an additional \$600 million in Commonwealth funding over the next six years.

Under the agreement, for every \$1 that the Western Australian government puts in, the commonwealth will match it by \$2—that is, two for one. It states also —

Labor's National Plan for School Improvement will deliver:

- More one on one attention and support in the classroom for every child.
- Specialist literacy and numeracy programs for those children in danger of being left behind.
- Greater assistance for those students with disability or special need.
- Building the skills and knowledge of teachers and providing mentoring support for those who are new to the profession.

The statement from the SSTUWA mentions students with a disability. Anyone who works in the education system and seeks to access Schools Plus funding will know how difficult that can be. The Gonski reforms will improve the funding for students with a disability. They will also improve the funding for students who come from a lower socioeconomic background. Basically, the Gonski reforms will improve the funding for every student.

In total, over \$900 million will be invested in the education system. That is in addition to current funding. One of the great negatives is that if this state does not sign up to the Gonski funding model, schools that are enjoying extra federal funding under the national partnership agreement will see that funding finish at the end of this year. The federal Abbott coalition has not promised to continue with that national partnership funding. So schools that are in low socioeconomic areas and schools that have a large Indigenous population and that are currently receiving benefits under the national partnership agreement will see that funding lost and not replaced with anything else. So not only will the additional funding be lost, but also the current funding under the national partnership agreement will be in jeopardy.

The government has recently released figures for each state school if it were to sign up to the Gonski reforms. I do not want to mislead members by saying that these figures for each school are set in concrete, because they are based on an assumption about how the state will distribute that money. However, based on that assumption being met by the state government and that additional funding being released, it is hard to argue that the funding for schools in Western Australia will not be boosted significantly.

I will go through some of the schools that will benefit from the Gonski reforms. The first is Albany Senior High School, which is in the electorate of my good friend the member for Albany. That is a government secondary high school with around 970 students. That school currently receives approximately \$13.5 million a year in total public funding. That works out to approximately \$13 900 per student. If the Western Australian government were to sign up to the National Plan for School Improvement, that school would receive an extra \$14.5 million in funding in 2019. This would increase the school's total public funding to \$28 million, an increase of around 108 per cent. This would work out to approximately \$18 160 per student, an increase of around 31 per cent. The way it will work is that in 2019, the total school funding for Albany Senior High School will comprise base funding of \$21 million; a low socioeconomic status loading for 59 per cent of the student population, giving a total SES loading of \$3.3 million; a disability loading for three per cent of students, giving a total disability loading of \$1 million; an Indigenous loading for four per cent of students, giving a total Indigenous loading of \$209 000; and a location loading for the school of \$2.5 million.

If Darling Range Sports College, which I think is in the member for Forrestfield's electorate, were to sign up to Gonski, it would receive an additional \$12 273 264 by 2019. That is a significant increase in funding. I wonder how the member for Forrestfield would go if he tried to explain to his constituents that he is not in favour of that additional funding. Cecil Andrews Senior High School is in my electorate. Both the member for Forrestfield and

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

I am on the board of that school. The member for Forrestfield has been in the education system for many years and was a very good deputy principal of that school. Under the Gonski reforms, that school would receive an additional \$7 430 955 by 2019. It is hard to argue that a school and a community—because schools also attract the community—would not find that attractive and could not achieve many things with that extra funding. Armadale Senior High School, which is in my electorate and also has many students from the electorate of the member for Darling Range, the Minister for Local Government, would receive an additional \$9 565 974 by 2019. The Armadale Education Support Centre, which is based at Gywnne Park Primary School, would receive an additional just over \$2 million by 2019. I mentioned that there are major problems with trying to access Schools Plus funding for students with a disability. That would be a significant increase in funding for an education support centre.

I am sure that the member for Morley, who was in the chamber previously, would be interested to know that Dianella Heights Primary School, which I believe is in his electorate, would be better off by over \$1 million by 2019. This is a primary school. I wonder whether he has informed Dianella Heights Primary School that it will miss out on that additional funding if the state government does not sign up to the Gonski reforms.

It is interesting to look at what will happen with Busselton Senior High School, which is in the Treasurer's seat of Busselton. The Treasurer has mentioned in Parliament the strain that is being caused to the state budget because of the additional number of students who are coming into our state. In answer to a question on 16 May 2013 in this house, the honourable Treasurer stated —

In 2013 there were 10 748 extra students in state and non-government schools across Western Australia. The largest source of enrolment growth in those schools was migration, which accounted for 70 per cent of enrolment growth in our state schools. So nearly 7 500 students at, say, a cost of \$12 400 a student, that is \$92 million. Do not get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with people migrating to the state, but that is \$92 million extra the government has to find to cover those kids in our school system. So revenues are under stress and expenses are under stress.

Of course, it is very difficult for the state government to try to fund our education system and to try to improve our education system, which we must always seek to do. When Busselton Senior High School, under the Gonski reforms, will receive a whopping additional \$9 614 842, I wonder why the Treasurer is not in favour of it. I wonder what that additional funding could do for Busselton Senior High School; I wonder what additional jobs and educational opportunities it will provide for the local community and students in the Vasse electorate.

Member for Pilbara, the Leader of the National Party and Minister for Regional Development, Port Hedland Primary School in the Pilbara region stands to receive an additional \$1 906 755 by 2019. Surely, our remote and regional students and families deserve an answer to why the Premier and this government continue to play politics with their future. The Premier initially stated that the \$300-odd million was an insult, and I will not argue with that. However, a substantial increase has now been offered. The Premier stated that the increase to around \$960 million is impressive, but he has concerns that accepting it would mean Canberra would take over our schools and we would have to report to Canberra. That is very misleading. We currently report to Canberra. Although most of our school funding is state funding, there is also commonwealth funding, and we have signed up to the national curriculum, which, of course, means some reporting to Canberra. Of course, when any government dishes out funding, there is an accountability process. But it is hard to understand why the Barnett government and the Premier are continuing to play politics with such a significant amount of money. The Premier has stated that he will not sign up before the federal election. Why not sign before the election? Is he saying that he might sign after the election?

Mr N.W. Morton: The election might be sooner.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It might be; we never know. We might know in a few minutes. They probably know by now.

The point is that the alternative Abbott government has no comprehensive education policy—no additional funding—to present before the election. He has not even committed to the national partnership agreement, so the Western Australian government is not allowing our students to benefit to the same extent that the students in New South Wales or the ACT are benefiting. Why is that? Surely it must be due to just politics. The Premier of New South Wales is a Liberal Premier and he has not seen Canberra take control of his schools. I will get onto that issue because that notion is very misleading and far from the truth.

The Premier needs to explain his position to all the school communities and the electorates. It is a shame there are not many government members in this house at the moment. I would love to ask all government members to go out to their electorates and to their local schools and say, “We have all agreed that we will not sign an agreement that will give us an additional \$1 million for a primary school, for instance, or an additional \$12 million for a high school after 2019.” That is absurd. I am sure members opposite will not do that—of

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

course they will not do that. If they speak to their P&Cs and most of their principals and teachers, I believe they will say, “Sign up.” They are not expressing concern about a takeover by Canberra, because there will not be one. Members opposite have an obligation to go to their school communities and explain what programs will be cut, because the Treasurer stated that the government needs \$92 million in school funding this year just to maintain the status quo—forget about the year 7 transition to high school, which will mean even more money is needed. I challenge the member for Balcatta, who is an educationist, to go to all the schools in his electorate and tell them that he is part of a government that has not signed up to an agreement —

Mr C.D. Hatton: I already have.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Was that to every single school?

Mr C.D. Hatton: I have been to a lot. Who goes to every school? Do you have time for that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I go to every school in my electorate.

Mr C.D. Hatton: I assure you, member, that I have approached a lot of my colleagues and they do not support it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will give the member a challenge. How about I go to every school in his electorate and meet the principals. We will go to a school assembly and invite the P&C, and the member for Balcatta can stand and put his government’s position and I will tell them why they should sign up to Gonski.

Mr C.D. Hatton: I suggest you do that in your electorate.

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is a challenge. I wonder whether he is going to every single school in his electorate and telling them. I do not think that his principals are that different from my principals, and mine are saying that they should sign. I find it very strange that principals in Balcatta, as a whole, would be so different from principals in Armadale. The member for Balcatta is not prepared to take up my challenge so I cannot verify that that is the case.

Mr C.D. Hatton interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member can come to my schools; I do not mind. I will take him along.

Mr C.D. Hatton: Then we can certainly talk about it.

Mr I.C. Blayney: After September, it will be gone.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member for Geraldton, country and remote schools are some of the main beneficiaries of the Gonski funding.

Mr I.C. Blayney: Gonski will be dead and buried after September.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is not the point, is it?

Mr I.C. Blayney: What is the point of signing up to it?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Does the member know nothing about legal agreements? New South Wales signed an agreement with the current government that will not be dead and buried after 14 September. Does the member not know anything about legal obligations under a contract? It is a contract of this current government.

Mr I.C. Blayney: Do you want to bet on it?

Mrs L.M. Harvey: That’s unparliamentary.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you, Minister for Police.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I am anti-gambling.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Members, perhaps we should allow the member for Armadale to continue his speech.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Premier referred to federal control of education. One of the initiatives the Barnett government instigated was independent public schools. Whatever one’s view of them, no-one can deny that they have been popular. The whole premise of independent public schools is to empower the local school community and the principal. The Gonski reforms seek also to do that. In many respects they seek to replicate what the state government has done with the IPS scheme. Members opposite could laud the federal government for taking up its IPS idea. But this government still seeks to argue that signing up to Gonski would mean a Canberra takeover. It is seeking to provide individual principals with more power to decide how they spend their funding. It is very strange to see the Premier supporting the IPS scheme on the one hand but seeking to deny an enhancement of that policy on the other hand.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

At the same time, the Premier is denying students in Western Australia significant additional education funding. At a time when the state finances are under severe stress, as we are told day in, day out—the Treasurer said \$92 million is required just to maintain the status quo—this government is denying our students what is available to students in New South Wales. Whether or not one agrees with it, the federal government is seeking to finance part of the additional funding through a two per cent efficiency dividend cut in funding for all universities. The situation is even worse, because might we have a ridiculous system of not only Western Australian tertiary students being subjected to the two per cent cut in university funding, but also our primary and secondary school students will not be the beneficiaries of the reforms that will be financed in part by those cuts. That is absurd.

The member for Balcatta said he does not visit schools in his electorate, which surprised me. I know he is a new member—although I have not been in this place much longer than him actually—but I am surprised that he does not visit all those schools as there cannot be that many schools in his electorate. Most federal members visit schools in their electorates, and they have many more to visit. I am surprised that is the case. The challenge is still there, member for Balcatta. I am prepared to go to his schools and he can come to mine if he wishes. We will see how many principals and parents and citizens associations would love to receive an additional significant increase in funding for each student and each school, additional loading for people with disabilities and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and additional loading for remote schools and for Indigenous students. The member for Geraldton maybe needs to do some homework on what happens after an agreement is signed. Of course it can be put in the bin afterwards, but that is pretty difficult once the system is in progress. We will see if there is a better system after the agreement is in place, because at the moment Abbott has no alternative. He does not have a comprehensive education policy for Australian students.

I urge the Barnett government to stop playing politics with the Gonski reforms by saying it will not sign up before the federal election. That is just ridiculous; it should sign up before the election. Granted, the Premier was able to get an increase in funding from \$300 million-odd to \$900 million-odd, and it is now a good agreement. In many respects, the Gonski reforms will further the independent public schools ideas by empowering schools and enabling students who need additional help to receive it.

The additional funding could be used for many things, including the development of personal learning plans, which would involve meetings between teachers, parents and students to talk about a student's particular learning needs. It could be used to employ school support learning officers or develop early intervention literacy programs. The Premier visited Challis Early Childhood Education Centre in my electorate, and it impressed him. This additional funding could further enhance what is happening at Challis. Schools could purchase diagnostic tools and extra training in professional development for their teachers, and implement targeted strategies aimed at enhancing the engagement and achievement of all students, particularly those at risk. If we spent money on students at risk, it might actually make policing and law enforcement cheaper; we may not have to spend so much on child protection and we may not have so many family break-ups. It is crucial. Although the members for Balcatta and Forrestfield and I may differ on some things, I am sure we would agree that investment in education can and does alleviate other social problems; the evidence is there. I do not think we would deny that.

Mr C.D. Hatton: No, not at all.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is right; I think most members would not deny that. The members for Balcatta and Forrestfield have extensive educational experience, and they would have seen the benefits that can be achieved through a properly funded and resourced educational system. Those members know what it is like for principals and teachers; they are under stress. The more support provided to teachers, the better the job they can do. The quality of teaching is fundamental to student outcomes.

That is all I have to say for now on this important debate. I seriously urge the Barnett government not to give up the opportunity of an additional \$900 million-odd for our schools—a significant part of which will be for our state schools. The Catholic and independent schools will already benefit from this without the Premier's agreement, but the state schools need it. I urge members on the other side to reconsider their Premier's position.

MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 pm]: I rise to speak against this motion, and I am a bit surprised at the simplicity of the member for Armadale's position and how he has approached it. He is absolutely right; we all want the very best for education in this state. But I have to say that this Liberal-National government has made some significant changes and improvements to education in this state, which is why we are so far ahead of any every other state and territory in Australia. That is why we can be a little more choosy about what we do and do not sign up to. At this stage, the standards we offer—the funding we put into our education system—are far greater than any other state in the country. That does not mean that we are not looking at what could be done and how. I think the difference is that because we are not desperate—I say that in the nicest possible way—we can afford to say what this state needs and how it should be done. I think that is what the Premier is doing, and I really applaud him for standing up to the federal government. It is not just a

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

simplistic, “Quick, we have to sign up because we need some help”; we are in a position of good standing, but we certainly want to make a difference and we certainly want to improve. There is no question about that, and no-one in this place would ever, ever think we want it any other way. If the federal government simply was going to give \$900 million to the schools of Western Australia to do as they saw fit or as we saw fit, there would not be a problem. But we all know not only through education, but also health and disability services—all those things—that nothing is just given; things are taken away. That is our dilemma. To start with, even to commence this process, funds were taken out of higher education. That is part of education. We need that part to be strong as well.

I will not go into the detail of the funding; I want to talk about independent public schools. The member for Armadale mentioned IPS and said the funding would be a positive for those schools. IPS was an incredible initiative of the Liberal–National government, and this year there will be 255 independent public schools, with 84 planned for 2013. The IPS system is something that schools are absolutely clamouring to be part of. We are certainly making changes this year, so that more people can come on board because of the more flexible approach. I have been out of the education system for a long time, but I recall that even when I was teaching, if someone came up with an initiative or did something different, they were quickly advised that that was not the way it was done, and everybody needed to do the same thing. I did not teach at the school the member for Armadale mentioned, but in some of the areas I taught I needed to show initiative. Nowadays, that initiative is welcomed because of the independent public school system. It is not saying they do not educate within the framework, but it is very, very important that schools, whether they be of a higher socioeconomic status or a lesser economic status, are allowed the ability to use initiative to get the best outcomes for their students. Independent public schools allow that. Schools and communities working together have a very, very positive outcome. Having the community involved in the direction of a school is important and has been very, very impressive.

The member for Armadale says that that would be enhanced at this stage by signing up to Gonski. I am sorry, but we must come from very different ways of looking at how things are done. My understanding is that that would not be the case. My understanding is that the federal government does not give money without attaching conditions and restrictions. My understanding is that the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has 4 000 staff. It does not look after one school. It does not employ one teacher. Therefore, we have to ask: Does it really know about education? What does it really know about what is required on the ground where the staff and the students are?

We have already seen how the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations works with the Building the Education Revolution funding whereby every school got the same building. The majority of those schools did not want that building, but that was not an option. They got it built and they got it built the same way as every other school.

Ms L.L. Baker: BER funding came into the state and the state prescribed how it was spent around education.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: No, it was prescribed by the federal government. It has already been demonstrated. Many of the schools would have welcomed that funding. They had things that they needed to do for their area. That was not an option. They had no choice. We know of schools that have been informed of the reporting processes already. Those schools would need to employ someone to do the reporting on a monthly basis. I do not know about the member for Maylands, but a number of teachers whom I know are finding that the paperwork and the reporting is much, much greater than it was previously. They already need to do a lot of reporting for their schools now. If we put in another layer so that schools also have to report federally to get federal money, we will find that our teachers will get very upset. That extra workload will take them away from what they really want to do—that is, teach and provide educational opportunities for students. We must work very hard to ensure that that extra workload is not the case. We need to give those people who are committed to and passionate about their profession the opportunity to work in that profession and not become paper bureaucrats. I have every belief that that is what would happen.

We do not want or need the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in Canberra to tell our schools and our staff what to do, how to do it, when to do it and what reporting needs to be done. Those things are fundamental to the education of students in Western Australia. We would welcome the money without strings attached. I am not the Premier so I have to be careful in what I say, but I am sure that if there was an opportunity to accept funds to be used on education as we see fit in the areas that have been mentioned, we would do so. There is no question that we have unique situations in remote and regional schools and in a number of areas with special needs students. But it is very important that we retain our ability to make those decisions so that our students keep getting the best education possible, worked out locally and within the framework of the state system. Nevertheless, we certainly would welcome support from the federal government.

I have taught in a couple of schools where it was absolutely necessary to have some initiative, some mobility, to work the programs so that it worked best for those students. When we could do that, there was such a difference. Teachers became passionate again about what they were doing. They felt like they were in control. They were given the authority to bring out the best in their students, and most teachers did that. That is what is happening with independent public schools now. They certainly have a framework within which to work. They have the ability to make decisions themselves, and spend some of their money on that one-line budget that suits what that school needs at that time. That can change and things happen, but we make sure that they operate with the best intentions for their students. It is very simply that. I am sorry that the member for Armadale thinks it is as simple as the federal government giving us some money and our doing what we like with it. That would be just bliss, but we all know that that is not the case. That is why I speak against this motion this afternoon.

I know that our Premier will stand up for Western Australia and we will benefit in the long run, but we will do it in the most positive way without losing the influence of the Western Australian Department of Education and our people on education in this state. It is a long way from Canberra and it is very, very important that we do not lose that ability to manage education in this state in a way that we, and also the schools, see is best. It is my firm belief that I cannot support the member for Armadale's motion, although I will say, and I said at the beginning, that I am very passionate that we make sure that we have the best education system in the country. We have to be very proud of ours; it is always at the top. We will continue to support our people within the education field so that they can provide the best education. The best way we can do that is to keep them closely aligned with what is going on in their schools in this state. As I said, it is my wish that we could get some money from the federal government, but it is also my desire that we do not take that money away from higher education and that teachers do not have to start reporting unnecessary things that take up time that could be spent educating.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [5.39 pm]: The Gonski report has its origins in a realisation that compared with the rest of the developed world, the funding level for education in Australia is fairly low. One measure is the percentage of gross domestic product that goes towards education. A table presented in the Gonski report shows that the percentage of Australian expenditure on primary, secondary, post-secondary and non-tertiary education as a percentage of GDP in 2008 was around three per cent compared with an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development average of public expenditure of 3.5 per cent and an OECD average of both public and private expenditure of 3.7 per cent. If we look at some of the member nations of the OECD, the United Kingdom's expenditure was 4.25 per cent. Other countries spend closer to five per cent of gross domestic product. Clearly, Australia's funding levels are not at the same level as those of other countries. We have heard other members talk about the importance of investment in education. I absolutely endorse those comments. From the point of view of my electorate, the need for investment in education is very strong. There are many reasons for this, and I want to go into a couple of those.

One reason for that investment is that some children are at risk in some way. Investment in their education is an investment in diverting their potential to veer off into a situation of low-level offending, criminal behaviour and eventually drug and alcohol abuse and a whole pattern of behaviour that is dangerous and costly to our society. Through investing in education, we can have the programs in place to divert students from those highly undesirable outcomes.

I really do applaud the member for Armadale for moving this motion. I note that it calls on the state government to resolve issues with the federal government so that public schools can benefit from the Gonski reform package. This reform package would have enormous benefits for schools in the Gosnells electorate. When I look at the table that demonstrates the money allocated to each student, what these reforms would deliver is quite striking. I will go through some of the schools. South Thornlie Primary School is a fantastic school. Principal John Miles and his staff do a wonderful job doing all kinds of positive programs. They have all sorts of creative activities. They are looking at 29 per cent growth per student in funding levels. With that, what are the sorts of things that can be done?

I have just had a text message from a parent at one of the schools in my electorate whose son, who is a lovely boy, suffers from dyslexia. That is an affliction that I gather occurs in 10 per cent of the population. He is a bright boy; nevertheless, that affliction means that his learning outcomes are hampered. He needs extra support at his school. I just want to read some of the things that his mother has indicated to me are the sorts of needs that he has. The first thing is the diagnosis. If we do not have the staff in the schools and if we do not have the diagnosis—bearing in mind that this funding can help deliver those staff in the schools to perform things like diagnoses—the kid goes under the radar, probably sits at the back of the class, acts in a disruptive fashion after a while, is not learning, is falling further and further behind and develops a hate for school, and before we know it we have a failed educational outcome, parents who are frustrated and all sorts of other risks, as I mentioned earlier.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 26 June 2013]

p2219b-2237a

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

The situation with diagnosis at the moment is that it is costly if people have to go privately. I understand that it costs at least \$400 privately. The alternative is to have it done within the school, and that takes forever, if there is the capacity to do it. Then there is the resourcing for the extra phonetic training and remedial reading—those sorts of things. More staff are needed; more intensive educational systems need to be in place. There is extra cost, and that is where the Gonski funding comes in. Furthermore, parents can volunteer their time. It is a long-term process. It is very important to get a child back on track if they suffer from something as mild as, but, nevertheless, as debilitating as, dyslexia.

I talked about the 29 per cent increase in funding that South Thornlie Primary School is set to receive. I will move on to Thornlie Primary School, of which Kevin Saunders is the principal. That school has gone through a dramatic transformation. It is a very multicultural school. It is a delightful school, and I applaud it on recently hosting a citizenship ceremony. It was a celebration of multiculturalism and of the citizenship ceremony that people were going through. That was held in the school grounds at a school assembly—a great idea. It really made the kids appreciate the event, and I think it meant that those people who were there were able to get another dimension, another level of understanding, about what it means to become an Australian citizen. As I said, that school has many children who have recently arrived in Australia from a non-English speaking background, and they need extra attention and extra assistance. The intensive English unit at the school works very hard to give attention to children in grade 1 or 2. By the time they are in year 3, they are able to go straight into the ordinary school and catch up with the normal curriculum and have the English standard that is expected of them. That is a remarkable achievement. But to deliver that sort of education, extra funding is needed. That is why the extra 19 per cent funding growth per student that would go to Thornlie Primary School is needed so much.

Thornlie Senior High School has a strong reputation in the area and for many parents is the school of choice. It has a specialist rugby program and runs catering courses. It has a real diversity of educational pathways open to students going through the school. It will have 29.3 per cent funding growth per student if these Gonski reforms are adopted. I fully commend Paul Billing, the principal of the school, for his work, but I can see that to work intensively with the students, the school needs this extra level of funding.

Doug Cook is the principal of Yale Primary School. He would love to see this reform go through because it would deliver a 26.6 per cent growth in funding. Yale Primary School is similar to Thornlie Primary School. It is in a part of my electorate that is growing rapidly in a very multicultural sense. Interestingly, I was at a graduation ceremony and the children were asked what they would like to do when they finish school. I was struck by the number of children who were enthusiastic about rugby. To my dismay, most of them said that they wanted to play for the All Blacks, so I hope we can turn that around and—who knows—perhaps additional funding will make them realise that playing for the Wallabies would be a higher goal to aim for. It would be so worthwhile if Yale Primary School had 26.6 per cent additional funding; what a difference it would make.

Mr R.H. Cook: That Yale principal is very good, isn't he, member?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I must acknowledge that the principal of Yale Primary School is a very well connected man because he is the brother of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Doug Cook is a wonderful principal. He is sometimes known at the school as “the fifth Wiggle”. He gives very entertaining musical performances for invitees to the school. He is loved by the students. He is an entertaining principal. He also manages to deliver those words of wisdom that we expect from principals at graduation ceremonies. He does that in a way that really connects with the students. I am sure that they always retain his messages.

Mr R.H. Cook: I've written all his speeches.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: He has a good speech writer!

I was about to get on to Gosnells Primary School, which will see a 21.1 per cent increase in funding. Southern River College, of which Mrs Everal Pearse is the principal, has the potential for a 26.7 per cent funding increase. Huntingdale Primary School is no longer in my electorate; it is in the electorate of Southern River. The principal is Edd Black. That school would have a 29.8 per cent increase in funding per student. Seaforth Primary School, of which the principal is Graeme Auckett, is expecting a 31.7 per cent increase in funding. Seaforth is a small school. It has a number of students who come from difficult backgrounds. I would describe them as sometimes coming from families in which education is not valued as highly as one would like it to be. That is unfortunate, but that is the reality that we have to deal with. It means that we need to put extra funding into a school such as that, so that we can help children learn at the school, and at the same time we are perhaps encouraging the parents to see the benefits in getting a good educational outcome for their children. The principal of Ashburton Drive Primary School, Brian Regan, is looking at a 30.9 per cent increase in funding. Finally, the principal of Wirrabirra Primary School, Steve Richards, would have a 23 per cent increase in funding. Those sorts of increases will make a big difference.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

In addition, something that we have to make sure our educational system tackles is accommodating the different learning styles of students, accepting that they come from different backgrounds and that we all have different learning styles. This is something that we have to accept and adapt to. There is no point in us trying to do this one-size-fits-all teaching. Some children might have a more visual learning style, some want a more active learning experience and some enjoy sitting in a classroom, having a lecture presented to them and things put up on the blackboard. Those different learning styles need to be accommodated. That means that we need more staff to accommodate those different learning styles. Of course, there is then the need for extra time to be put into those children with difficulties to make sure that they do not slip behind.

The Gonski report found that across Australia, looking at where we sit internationally and looking at the needs that exist, an increase of about \$5 billion was needed. That is the amount needed across the country. That is what we are talking about when we look at it in terms of those per student percentage increases that I mentioned before. That is where the money goes. What a boost it would be so that more education assistants and, where necessary, social workers and speech and occupational therapists could be employed. Some children from my electorate go to a school just out of the electorate for special speech and occupational therapy to have their vocalisation properly coordinated. It is important that young people learn to speak properly so they can enjoy discussing things. It is sad when those children do not have those opportunities, and it makes sense to invest in such things.

Psychologists are also needed in schools for children from at-risk families and troubled backgrounds. Psychological assessments need to be done. Welfare support is also needed in schools. We cannot accept the fact that some families suffer financially to the extent that their children come to school without having had breakfast. We have seen the success of breakfast clubs in schools. How are those children expected to learn when they have not had a proper breakfast, and perhaps not even a nutritional meal the night before? It is heartbreaking. How can those children be expected to learn and be attentive? It does not happen. Unfortunately, those children often are disruptive influences in the classroom and are not happy at school because they are hungry and often cold. I do marvel, however, at the resilience of many kids who go to school on cold days without jumpers.

We should be striving for not only better resourcing, nurturing and educational brilliance, but also accepting of the many different styles of learning and teaching. More needs to be done to find excellent teaching staff. All of that often means more money is needed. The case has been put to embrace this opportunity to be part of this national scheme and for the Premier to take advantage of it to ensure that the education of Western Australian children is properly funded and that schools that need this loading receive it.

Loading will also be available for schools with disadvantage and disability issues. I have not referred to children with disabilities who need assistance at schools. Schools must accommodate their needs as well as recognise the benefit of providing for those children. I have noticed at Wirrabirra Primary School, which has an educational support unit, the brilliant way the students rally around children who have either severe autism or a physical disability and who need extra assistance. It is the sort of educational opportunity that is not normally provided, and is not something that can be put into a curriculum, but the kids learn compassion from helping others with disabilities. However, extra support and teaching must be provided so a school can take on those people with various afflictions. That extra loading is needed in schools, such as many in my electorate that have students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. That loading is also needed to accommodate school size, remoteness and the needs of Indigenous students. We should not only lift the educational outcomes of Indigenous students, but also improve the English proficiency of children who come from non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as those kids who might be described as typical Aussies but whose English skills are not what are expected of their cohort.

I support the member for Armadale's motion, and I hope that reason will be seen and that our schools will not be denied this package of funding. Why should our state miss out on a boost such as this when it could have a dramatic impact on the funding delivered to students in my electorate and other electorates across Western Australia?

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [5.55 pm]: I rise to speak against this motion. The motion asks this house to call on the government to resolve issues with the federal government so that public schools can benefit from the Gonski reform package. There are certainly some issues with the federal government. In fact, as I stand here I am not sure who the Prime Minister of the country is.

I have a background in education. I worked in public education for the past 10 years, and nine of those years were at low socioeconomic indicator schools. I support differential resourcing of schools so students can maximise their educational outcomes. I have said words to that effect already in this house in my maiden speech. It is good to know that the member for Victoria Park took the time to read that speech and report some of it back to this chamber, and I thank him for his interest. I made some points in that speech about school funding and

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

young people, and that their educational pursuits should not be adversely affected by culture, race, religion, location or any other factor that could disadvantage their achieving their full educational potential. One of my mantras to my staff in my previous career was that the postcode of a child should not be the determining factor in their educational outcomes.

It is interesting to put into perspective the original funding proposal of the federal government—some \$300 million, of which the federal government would contribute \$200 million. The Northern Territory has roughly the same population as the City of Stirling, yet it would have received as much as WA, a state of approximately 2.5 million people. I cannot see how that is a fair and equitable divvying up of the funds for the states. People demanded that the Premier sign up to that agreement. Thank God, he did not.

Now, the proposal is for \$920 million. In the original proposal, the federal government set aspirational targets. The aspirational target the federal government wanted WA to aspire to in 2019 was \$9 200 per primary student, when WA is already spending \$13 900 per primary student. How is that aspirational? The aspirational target for secondary students for 2019, some six years in the distance, was \$12 200, when Western Australia already commits to funding of about \$19 000 per student. It is difficult for me to call those aspirational targets.

In the new funding proposal for Western Australia of some \$920 million, the commonwealth will contribute \$590 million and the state \$330 million. To give members some perspective, it is less than \$100 million a year over six years in a budget of just over \$4 billion a year. In actual fact, with the additional Australian government contribution per student, assuming that 65–35 split in allocation of funds, students in Western Australia would receive a smidge over \$1 600 whereas their counterparts in the Northern Territory, for example, would receive close to \$5 000 and students in South Australia would receive \$3 300 and in Tasmania \$3 200. I cannot see how this arrangement is entirely equitable for the students of this state.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Member for Mandurah!

Mr N.W. MORTON: I have not asked for interjections.

I said at the outset that I support funding for schools, but I just make the point that it is incumbent upon the government of the day to ensure it gets the best outcome for students and the community. Given that the member for Armadale, who is the mover of this motion, stated in his contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate in April this year that I was an outstanding educationalist, I would say it gives me some sort of authority to pass comment this evening.

I move on from funding and look at some of the other issues surrounding this matter. The control of schools is entrusted to state governments in the Constitution. It is fraught with danger for any state government of any day and of any persuasion to risk relinquishing that control of our state institutions, our state schools, to the commonwealth. In my experience working within schools, I found it difficult enough to deal with bureaucrats in what is termed “Silver City”, which is in the capital city of this state, and I would hate to think of the onerous issues and heartache we would put on some administrators if they had to deal with bureaucrats on the east coast of the country. Furthermore, I find that relinquishing control to a centralist version of the government, in Canberra, is at odds with what this Liberal–National government has tried to achieve thus far, and I refer to the very successful independent public school program that has been rolled out across Western Australia and, indeed, has been looked at by other jurisdictions in this country as a model of best practice. At its core this program looks at giving individual schools, local schools, the power to determine their future rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach to school resourcing and to assisting schools in their local contexts. Having worked in schools, I know that the capacity for them to determine their own future and to know their own contexts and the needs of their students, staff and school community are far more insightful than that of bureaucrats on the east coast of Australia.

At the end of the day the core business of educators is to educate young people in the state. I have looked at this Australian Education Bill 2013, which has recently passed, and some of the more onerous requests or requirements for schools to adhere to, if we do sign up to the Gonski program, and I counted at least a further 14 possible reporting requirements just at a quick glance. Having been a deputy principal in a public high school, I am very much aware of the time restrictions and reporting requirements already hoisted upon members of administration in the schools in the state. By signing up to this program, administrators may be forced to report upon potentially further layers of bureaucracy and heartache. Indeed, I read with some concern the capacity for the federal minister of the day to possibly apply a determination in relation to approved authorities for government schools that is not a legislative instrument, and this potentially gives them the power to withdraw it from schools or the state.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

In summary, I put on the record that, as the member for Armadale also stated, I do not think there is a member in this place who would not support further investment in our schools. As the member for Kingsley stated, of course we would agree to further funding for our schools wherever it came from if it meant we could apply that funding without further red tape and without relinquishing the controls intrinsically written into the Constitution as a state power. With that said, I cannot support this motion, given the restrictions that potentially results in some of those controls being relinquished to the east.

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle) [6.06 pm]: I support the motion and will talk briefly about a couple of issues in my electorate, which support the argument about why Fremantle would benefit from receiving just over \$27 million for its state schools by 2019 if it signed on to the extra money available in the Gonski program. Every school would receive at least a 19 per cent increase in funding per student, with one school receiving just over 24 per cent more per student by 2019. As I say, I would like to add my voice to call for the state government to put parochial politics aside and to work through any possible issues, whether they are reporting requirements or the so-called bureaucratic interference the state government alleges the federal government would engage in. We need to try to work through those issues so that we can secure the extra money. I understand that the Gonski legislation passed through the Senate today.

Our state high schools have been a big issue in my electorate and I take this opportunity to speak briefly about these matters. There are two high schools in the electorate, John Curtin College of the Arts and South Fremantle Senior High School, and both schools are quite successful in their own right. John Curtin College of the Arts, as many members would know, is a selective school that specialises in performing arts and has been very successful in this regard. Admission to that school is restricted through the gifted and talented program, although there is also a soccer program admission. Access for residents of the Fremantle area is restricted to residents from East Fremantle and North Fremantle. They are the only local-intake areas. The success of the school's performing arts program has caused something of a distortion. It has been relayed to me that as much as 95 per cent of intake to John Curtin College of the Arts is through the performing arts and specialist programs and that has left parents in the rest of the community who want to send their students to John Curtin high school in a bit of a quandary. Many of them joke that they are giving their children tap dancing lessons or violin lessons very early on to make sure they qualify for entry into John Curtin. It is quite a popular school. I have yet to meet with the principal, Mitch Mackay, but I look forward to getting to know that school better and to understand what its issues are. As I said, the distortion of that school as a successful selective school has put many parents in the electorate in the frustrating position that they want to send their children to the local school but they cannot get in.

The other high school in my electorate is South Fremantle Senior High School. It is also successful in its own area of expertise—that is, largely in the area of vocational training. In 2011, it was identified as the number one public senior high school for vocational education and training—VET—and was ranked sixth overall in the state. It has concentrated on many science and engineering-related specialties. For instance, it has a marine studies program. The school has also worked with the business community; Kailis Marine, Svitzer Engineering and Total Marine Engineering are partners in the development of the trade training centre built on the school site offering a certificate III course in mechanical engineering and plant operations. The school is particularly successful in this area. To ensure a full complement of Australian tertiary admission rank subjects are available, South Fremantle Senior High School has engaged with other public high schools in the area, including Hamilton Senior High School and North Lake Senior Campus, to maximise the exposure to ATAR subjects for its students.

South Fremantle Senior High School has been particularly successful in engaging with its local community, an area of which I doubt the member for Southern River would approve. The school has been very proactive in its responsibilities with respect to climate change. Last year, I attended the accreditation of the school as the first carbon-neutral school in the country, and for this accreditation the school should be congratulated. Just this week I was at the school to see it receive its Waterwise accreditation. It has worked very hard with the Fremantle community on its climate action responsibilities, and the school students and teachers and the local community have wholeheartedly embraced this program. The school also runs a very successful farmers' market every weekend, and this all adds to the school's engagement with the local community. Despite these gains in so many areas and the proactive and innovative efforts by the current principal, the P&C—with which I have met—and many in the local community, the number of student enrolments at South Fremantle Senior High School remains stubbornly low; hence, the debate in the electorate of how we ensure we have the best quality high schools we can.

I would like to give full credit to many people in my electorate who recognise that good quality and vibrant state schools are the centrepiece of a flourishing community. They have worked hard to pressure the policymakers with influence in this area to ensure there are high school options for Fremantle. I am sure I am not the only

member in this place who has this challenge in their electorate. Demographics are changing and schools must change, too. A number of weeks ago, the member for Victoria Park flagged a discussion in his electorate about how to ensure that his schools are best positioned to meet the needs of families in the community for the twenty-first century. As I go into my term as the member for Fremantle, I look forward to working with schools and families in my electorate to understand these issues even more and to come up with practical and forward-thinking solutions to strengthen our Fremantle state schools. One thing that cannot be disputed is that this change, these transformations, will take resources. When I read that South Fremantle Senior High School will receive an extra \$7 million by 2019 under the Gonski funding reforms, and John Curtin College of the Arts an extra \$13 million—an increase of 19 per cent funding per student—I wondered how the Premier of this state could possibly refuse this increased funding offer. Recently, I attended a function at which Dr Carmen Lawrence spoke on this issue and she is imminently qualified to do so. Her time in this house was spent as the Minister for Education as well as Premier, and she was a member of the six-member panel that worked with David Gonski to do the review, which ended up recommending a significant change in the funding model for state schools in our country. Dr Lawrence spoke about a number of issues, but central to her argument was that the statistics speak for themselves; that is, Australia is falling behind on important educational measures when compared with, for instance, our Asian neighbours, and many more statistics could back that up. In 2009, 56 per cent of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds completed year 12 compared with 75 per cent of children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The biggest change that can occur to lift students out of poverty is to increase their educational capacity, and I urge members on the other side of this house to look at the dollars on the table and to challenge the discussion within their party and their ranks to ask whether schools in WA can turn down the significant increase in funding that is available under this model.

I join other members from this side of the house in calling on the Premier to overcome parochial politics, to sit down with the federal government and to resolve practical issues around securing the Gonski funding, and to make sure that we can progress increased funding and then better communities and better outcomes for our state schools.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [6.16 pm]: This motion before the house is very important. As we now know, we have a new Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd. One of the things that must be highlighted in terms of reform is that the Gonski process was and is a landmark process in education in Australia. It was charged with looking at the issues of equity, the funding of need, and ensuring that the system works more fairly across Australia. I am quite frankly and quite honestly a little over the ongoing bleating by this Liberal government about a range of issues in terms of equity and fairness. Quite frankly, I can understand why schools and students in the Northern Territory would receive a greater proportion of funding, and —

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I do not care, member for Forrestfield. The member's contribution was quite appalling, particularly as a teacher.

Mr N.W. Morton: When did you last work in a school?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: When did I last work in a school? I was a primary school teacher for over 15 years. Like the member, I will not claim that I was the best teacher in the world, but I will claim that I, in my time as a teacher and now as a member for my electorate, know that there are students who deserve a greater share and I do not care where they live.

Mr N.W. Morton: I do.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I do not care where they live in Australia. If we talk about equity and about making sure that we suddenly start spending money and deciding that there are students in this country who deserve a greater lift up to ensure that they can have the best basis to make a contribution to their community no matter where they live, that is what Gonski is about. As a country, we should be strong enough to recognise that it should be the right of every child no matter where they live in this country—whether the remote areas of Western Australia or the Northern Territory, the outer regional areas of New South Wales or Western Australia, the goldfields of WA or in the southern hamlets of the Tasmanian wilderness—they deserve a good education. The fact of the matter is that these are Australian children. Gonski is about making sure that there is greater equity in funding so that all Australian children are given a lift up and are able to make a contribution to their community, no matter where they live.

There are people who live in the member for Forrestfield's electorate who were not born in Western Australia but came to Western Australia from all parts of the world. One of the great things about Western Australia is that it offers people an opportunity, no matter where they may have been born. However, this rubbish goes on about

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

how we are Western Australians, and we have been funding schools more than anybody else, so somehow we should deny the kids in my schools in Mandurah an increase in funding of 20 per cent plus. It is rubbish. I am sick of the parochial rubbish and the Canberra bashing that members opposite go on about. I can tell members what will happen. The federal election, whenever it might be held, will come and go. And, yes, of course the polling shows that the opposition side of politics will be on the treasury bench in Canberra within one month or two months. But where is the plan from that side of politics for education in Australia? Where is their plan to make sure that every child in Australia has the fundamental right to a good education, no matter where they live in this country? There ain't no such plan from Tony Abbott. All we have seen from Tony Abbott and from your lot, member for Forrestfield, is the canning of a plan to lift educational standards in this country. That is all we get from the member for Forrestfield. He is a negative, pathetic figure in this Parliament. He is. He is a negative, pathetic figure, and he should know better, because he is supposed to be an educationalist.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr N.W. MORTON: Madam Acting Speaker, point of order.

Mr D.A. Templeman: What is wrong with “pathetic figure”?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Member!

Mr N.W. MORTON: If the member thinks that is okay —

Mr D.A. Templeman: I think it is absolutely appropriate.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, there is a point of order. It is not open to debate. Member for Mandurah, you are actually on three strikes. If you continue in this manner, I will be forced to ask you to leave the chamber. So please withdraw what you have said and continue with your debate.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: But, Madam Acting Speaker, I am actually the person who is on my feet speaking. I am angry when I hear people like that member say the things that they are saying, when they have on their side of politics, particularly in the federal arena, no plan for how we will improve the educational standards of Australian children. Every person who is a teacher—the member for Forrestfield claims to have been a great one—should be concerned about making sure that every child in Australia has the capacity to participate in their community, no matter where they live. I do not care where they live, whether it is Western Australia or any other state or territory. I want the children of this country to get the best possible start in life. We all know that the best possible start in life is a good quality education that will ensure that those kids in particular who are the most vulnerable get the best assistance, get the early intervention and get the best funding. That is what Gonski is about.

In Western Australia, including in my electorate, and in the electorate of the member for Forrestfield, there are many, many students who are below the standards in terms of funding, if we are looking at them on a per capita basis, and who are below the standards in terms of their attainment levels in education. Not one person in this place should just dismiss the Gonski plan, as the member for Forrestfield and his side have done, and not present any other option.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, can I bring you back to the motion that is before you, which calls on the government to resolve issues with the federal government so that public schools can benefit from the Gonski reform package. I understand where you are going. But I want to bring you back to the motion.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: With all due respect, Madam Acting Speaker, I am talking about Gonski. I am talking about how Western Australian students will benefit from the Gonski report. We have heard the rubbish from members opposite about how they support funding for schools. But they will not support a widespread, major reform in the education system. This is the first time for decades that a major reform of education has been proposed that will tackle one of the most difficult areas that many governments over a long period of time have grappled with, and that is the actual funding model.

Let us look at what the Gonski report does. The Gonski report talks about lifting up all students by increasing the level of funding. It also talks about providing funding to support students based on need. Why the member for Forrestfield and other members on his side cannot at least see the basic benefits of this proposed program is beyond me. So what do we need to do at the funding level?

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I do not know about the schools in the member's electorate. I could go through that, but I will not, because I want to talk about some of the schools in my electorate. The Peel region continues to have high levels of unemployment and a high number of households under stress from a range of pressures, include budgetary pressures introduced and imposed by this government in power. That includes the exorbitant increases in the price of utilities, whether they be water, electricity or gas. These families are in my electorate, and they are in your electorate, mate, and you hold your seat by a couple of hundred, or less! I can tell the member for Forrestfield that his comments will be listened to very, very closely in the next four years, and that we will be chasing the member for Forrestfield in his seat, because he must start to remember that he represents a range of families who are absolutely on the bones of their bum because of what his government has done to them in the last four and a half or five years.

I will go through some of the schools in my electorate. Riverside Primary School in the central Mandurah area has a 10 per cent Aboriginal population. That school will receive a 31.3 per cent growth in funding through Gonski. The member cannot argue against that. That is a major contribution and major commitment to the kids and families who live in the Riverside Primary School catchment in Mandurah.

Greenfields Primary School has a brilliant principal, as does Riverside Primary, and brilliant staff. But it also has a lot of kids from families that are facing a range of issues. Those schools are doing a great job. In fact, they are punching above their weight. This plan will give Greenfields Primary School an over 25 per cent increase in funding per student over the period of the Gonski reforms.

Riverside Education Support Centre, which is for kids who have learning and intellectual disabilities, will receive an over 25 per cent increase in funding per student. The Peel Language Development School will receive a 40.6 per cent increase in funding per student. This school deals with kids who are vulnerable and need extra support in their early literacy and numeracy enrichment and development so that they will be able to read, write and communicate and find their way in the community when they leave the school system.

Dudley Park Primary School is a difficult school. I am on the board of Dudley Park Primary. That school was a PSP school—it was in the priority schools program—for a long time. It draws kids from the Coodanup and Dudley Park localities. There are lots of issues at that school. But, again, it is resilient. It has a great principal, Aaron Thomas, and brilliant and committed staff, and a great community supporting it. That school will get a nearly 27 per cent increase in funding per student. Mandurah Primary School, Mandurah's oldest school, will get a 21 per cent increase in funding. North Mandurah Primary School—my old school, where I taught—will get an increase in funding of over 27 per cent. Coodanup Community College—I am on the board of that school—has faced difficult challenges over the last two decades. It has a big Aboriginal population and lots of issues regarding the catchment but, again, it is punching above its weight. It has a committed principal, committed staff, and a committed student services team. These are committed people who want to make a difference for those kids. What is going to make a difference for those kids? This reform is going to make a difference. They will get nearly a 20 per cent increase per student. That is what Gonski is about; it is not a philosophical discussion or argument because it happened to be put up by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. We have to be better than that and get out of these arguments.

The royalties for regions program is a classic program that is not based upon funding per population but upon funding for need. We all support the royalties for regions program, but the fact is that the royalties for regions program goes mainly to small population areas. That is the reality. We already have a model, implemented by the state Liberal–National government, of disproportionate funding, if you like, in terms of population versus location, so the government should not come in here and criticise a major education reform without proposing an alternative.

That is the point I make right at the beginning of my whole argument: the government has offered no alternative. Tony Abbot has no alternative. I do not even know who the federal shadow education minister is, because we do not hear from the federal Liberal Party about its plan and what it is going to do in education. We do not hear what its plans are for genuine education reform. We do not hear about how it is going to lift up every student in Australia, no matter where they live or what their circumstances are, so that they can genuinely participate in their communities, or the communities that they may choose to live in in the future, which might include communities in Western Australia. The little kid who is growing up in Strahan, Tasmania, who is going to get more than someone in my electorate, might still end up in Western Australia. He or she might go to Queensland or the Northern Territory; I actually do not care, as long as I know that that kid in Strahan, or the kid in Oombulgurri up in the north, are being seen as students who deserve funding because of a range of measures, and that is what Gonski does.

The problem that the Liberal–National government has fallen for is the idea that, “Yes, Gillard's gone and the federal Labor Party is probably gone,” but that does not mean that a plan for the future of education in Australia

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

should just be jettisoned on a philosophical discussion. The state government's rubbish about, "Oh, I only care about this little patch," well, sorry—I care about my little patch too, but I also care about other kids no matter where they live, whether it is in Western Australia or in other parts of the country. The state government has fallen for that card trick; yes, the Liberal Party might be riding a big wave at the moment and, yes, it might be swept to power federally in the next month or so. But I tell members that when the voters go to the ballot boxes with their baseball bats, as it seems they might want to do, to attack the federal Labor Party, I bet they will not know what the potential incoming Abbott government's education plan is. They will have no idea because there is no plan from Abbott; no plan at all. It is very sad that the federal Liberal opposition has no plan for one of the most basic and fundamental rights of any child in Australia, whether it is an Aboriginal kid up in Broome or Wyndham; a new migrant kid in Mirrabooka or Lakelands in Mandurah; or a kid who has come across from the regional areas of Queensland to live in Baldvis, because that is where a lot of fly in, fly out workers are living now. Sorry; they are as important as anybody else, and if members think they can ringlock their own seat and that there will not be families and kids travelling between electorates and state boundaries, they are actually kidding themselves.

[Members time extended.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The issue of the national curriculum has been one of the biggest problems in education for many, many decades—the problem of students who traverse state boundaries and the differences in curriculum levels between different jurisdictions. The national curriculum is another important reform for some of those issues. Of course there have been problems, but we do not jettison a plan simply because we are opposed to it because it was an initiative of the current federal Labor government, which went through a very extensive process and put forward a proposal that will deliver benefits to our schools.

Some of the member for Forrestfield's schools are in the federal electorate of Hasluck. Let us look at one of the schools in Hasluck, Forrestfield Primary School. I assume that Forrestfield Primary School is in the member for Forrestfield's electorate.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Twenty per cent?

Mr D.J. Kelly: He doesn't need it, apparently.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is what I cannot understand. The kids at Forrestfield Primary School deserve to be given the extra benefits of support and encouragement. In my view, any person who has been in education should not just fall back on their philosophical point of view because they have entered Parliament, and can a proposal that will deliver real benefits, real outcomes and real opportunities for kids, no matter where they come from; a proposal that is based upon the principle of making sure that kids who need the assistance get it first. I have no problem with that proposal, I am sorry. The member can call me un-Western Australian if he wants to, but those kids need assistance, and that is what we should be doing. The member should take off his Liberal-coloured glasses and look at issues on their merit—in this case, one of the most fundamental issues, which we should all be concerned about, which is education.

I went through a few of my schools; I did not go through all of them because I would have used up all my time and I know that the member for Warnbro wants to have a say. This is one of the most fundamental issues that this Parliament should be debating, and that is why we are debating it this afternoon, against the backdrop of some amazing historical stuff that is taking place over in Canberra this afternoon. But that does not change the importance of education for kids who come from all parts of Western Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory. I unashamedly say that the philosophy behind this proposal, in terms of need, is a good and important philosophy. A huge number of schools in Western Australia will directly benefit from this proposed program, so it is a no-brainer for me. I do not see how members can sit on the seesaw and say, "Oh, I support funding for my school, but I don't support this". I just find that terribly hypocritical. I just find it amazing that someone could get up and say that.

This reform is important for Western Australia. The Premier has been negotiating and has been tough; I acknowledge that. He put the case for WA, and he won a major concession from the now former Prime Minister only two weeks ago. Well done on that, but now is the time to sign on, particularly as his side of politics in the federal Parliament has no plan. Has Tony Abbott talked to the Premier about a plan for education in a Tony Abbott-led federal government?

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He probably has not. He certainly has not shared it with the voters of Western Australia or Australia. He is playing the old small-target strategy. I will let the member for Warnbro have a say now.

MR C.D. HATTON (Balcatta) [6.39 pm]: I speak against this motion moved in the chamber today. The member for Mandurah spoke very passionately for the motion, and I would not like to think that that demonstration of passion was what he might deliver in a classroom. I do not think it would be appropriate.

Mr P.B. Watson: He's not in a classroom. What a silly thing to say.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr C.D. HATTON: He was very critical of one of my members and I support my member. From the opposite side of the chamber, I congratulate the members for Armadale, Gosnells, Fremantle and Mandurah.

Mr P.B. Watson: I hope you're not reading that speech.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I have it here. I am not reading it—no. The member can decide that.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany, the member for Balcatta has the call. He is not asking for interjections.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. As I said, I acknowledge the members' passion and I congratulate them for saying that money is a good thing. I agree too that it is good. It will deliver better outcomes. However, it is not just about money. Some weeks ago, I strongly emphasised in my maiden speech how important education is. I said that it is the foundation of society—a benchmark for successful societies. It is a benchmark for stability, engaging technologies, innovation, promoting good citizens and good social fabrics. Education, essentially, promotes good academic outcomes, good health outcomes, good physical and emotional outcomes and good social outcomes for communities.

Mr P.B. Watson: Is he talking to the motion?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Shush!

Mr C.D. HATTON: Members on the opposite side of the chamber who spoke today stressed the importance of good education—they recognised that, and so do I. So does the member for Forrestfield, having been a teacher for many years. But I need to emphasise that the argument from the opposite side of the chamber today in support of the Gonski reform is somewhat narrow. It was a passionate argument—one I support because education is a passionate issue—but their argument was based upon funding equalling better schooling. This assumption is not necessarily valid. Yes, funding education will make a big difference, but many other factors come into play when delivering good education. As a teacher of 30 years, and, I must say, a proud teacher—I am told I was a dedicated teacher—I can assure members across the chamber that federal funding for the Gonski reform would be beneficial if Western Australia had a broken system, but we do not have a broken system.

Mr P.B. Watson: Where will you get the money from?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr C.D. HATTON: In fact, we have an excellent education service.

Mr P.B. Watson: We'll send this to all your schools.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr C.D. HATTON: Please let me finish.

I believe it is the best system in Australia and one of the best in the world. We have been innovative in WA; we have implemented new curriculums over my three decades of teaching; and we have been a leader in the nation. Our system is not broken. We are well funded by good government investment. This Liberal government has invested heavily in not only education; it has invested also in a lot of other areas, and we have proved that with the investment in hospitals over the past years.

The federal government wants to deliver the money—almost throw the money at us—but not with transparent conditions attached, and that is our argument. We know that funding will benefit education.

Mr P.B. Watson: As an ex-teacher, this is disgraceful.

Mr C.D. HATTON: But it does not deliver the best outcomes. The principle of the federal education reform is to run education from 5 000 kilometres away.

Ms S.F. McGurk: It is not.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

Mr C.D. HATTON: This is what I believe, so please listen to me. It wants to make decisions on local schooling from remote bureaucratic destinations. The last thing WA teachers need is more red tape and bureaucracy imposed from afar. Our independent public schooling innovation is a leading innovation in education that empowers schools to be better schools by giving local schools the ability to allocate money and resources where needed. Can this be expected from bureaucratic Canberra? Do not get me wrong; the money would benefit. But it is not just about money; it is about the flexibility of delivery. Funding will be provided but based upon decision-makers from the other side of Australia, as I said. These decision-makers will want value for money, and rightly so. Money must always be invested in programs that deliver good outcomes and results. I do not doubt that. That is absolutely correct but do remember, as the member for Kingsley pointed out earlier, teachers do not need bureaucratic red tape imposed from afar. More flexibility is needed in delivering education and a spirit of nurturing and developing individuals in a local environment, not from afar. Independent public schooling is doing that under the funding arrangements of the state government and the direction it is taking with that IPS model. I support extra funding and acknowledge just how much it can benefit WA children. I am not doubting that at all, but I cannot support control being given to a federal government that will disempower WA schoolteachers—disempower us. I know that; I have been out there teaching for 30 years. We have a system now that is empowering us; we do not want to be disempowered.

Mr P.B. Watson: Next page.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Yes. They are my notes, and I am sure the member uses notes.

Mr J.H.D. Day: He has hand-written notes, so stop giving him a hard time.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Members are welcome to look at them if they like. I do not have a problem.

Mr P.B. Watson: I'll give him a hard time if I want to.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Members! Member for Albany, I have asked you to let the member for Balcatta have the floor. If you interject again, I will call you. I have asked that he have the floor. Member for Albany, I am talking to you, if you want to question my judgement. Thank you, member for Balcatta.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I have here the Gonski report, which contains 41 recommendations.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Balcatta has the floor.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I doubt whether many members opposite have read the whole report.

Mr P. Papalia: I have; have you?

Mr C.D. HATTON: I certainly have read all the report. The member is welcome to look at all the highlighting in it.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Did the member? How does he know that?

Mr P. Papalia: The point I want to make is everything you are saying indicates you haven't read it.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I read it after the member, did I? Okay. Still, my point is valid. I refer to two recommendations and I will take the opportunity to read both the recommendations, if that is all right, Madam Acting Speaker?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Recommendation 17 states that new funding arrangements for schools, from Gonski, aim to ensure differences in education outcomes are not a result of differences in wealth, income, power and possessions; all students have access to a high standard of education regardless of background and circumstances. I do not doubt that; it is a great recommendation. I support it fully. Recommendation 16 is that current planning is not sufficient in responding effectively to changing educational needs based on demographic and social change. It states that there should be effective coordinated planning between school sectors and at local area level; improvement is needed in accountability and coordinated planning around the use of public funding in establishing new schools.

Mr P.B. Watson: He's reading it.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I said I was reading it, member; I have authority to read it.

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

They are two valid recommendations. I challenge those recommendations in relation to our excellent education system in WA. We are already delivering new funding arrangements through the independent public school program in WA. We are planning for and responding effectively to the changing educational needs of students in WA through the IPS program. We are following the guidelines of Gonski but can do even better if we are given more money. We need to know that the control and delivery of the education system will not be taken away from us. More money would be fantastic and we would do the job even better. The difference between Labor and us is that Labor is being narrow and centring on funding and we are saying that we want more flexibility in how the funding is used. We actually support a lot of the Gonski findings and recommendations.

Mr P. Papalia: I concede what you are saying and if you sit down, I will tell you what my view is.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Until now, I did not think that the opposition agreed with a lot of this.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Fine. Once again, I challenge the disempowering of the good delivery of state education by the state government. I draw members' attention to how Gonski has evolved up till now. The federal government conducted the Gonski review of school funding, which was released late last year. It took a long time to release it. The federal government pondered and pondered until finally it came out. The state government supports any moves to improve schools but so far the Gillard—or Rudd—government's response to the review has lacked detail about the proposed improvements. Currently, the state government is responsible for 90 per cent of all government school funding and around 70 per cent of Western Australian students attend government schools. The state government is committed to being the biggest contributor of funding to government schools and being responsible for running government schools. We are committed to it and extra funding will make us even more committed because we can deliver good outcomes.

Mr P.B. Watson: You cut \$300 million out of the budget.

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Member for Albany, I did warn you. I call you for the second time.

Mr P. Papalia: Come on, mate, give us a few minutes.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I will try to finish in enough time for the member to respond.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr C.D. HATTON: No, I do not agree with the motion. Bear with me. The Prime Minister has said that the federal government is not interested in taking over the running of government schools but the improvement plan it is proposing as a response to Gonski indicates greater federal government intervention in government schools. That is what we do not want. We will take the money any time.

Finally, our independent public schools program is giving schools greater autonomy. Intervention from Canberra will jeopardise the success of those schools and the state government will not support that. I certainly do not support it. Until the federal government can convince me that it will not interfere with the state government's delivery of state education, or at least demonstrates a respect for the way in which Western Australia delivers education, I cannot support the motion. If there was more flexibility for getting the best outcomes for Western Australian students, I could very well see the good benefits. I certainly would like to see more clarity and transparency in the Gonski reform before I support it.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro) [6.53 pm]: I support the motion. I do so because there is nothing in the motion about agreeing to or disagreeing with whatever funding requirements the federal government has proposed to the Barnett government. The Premier is negotiating with the federal government and it has offered a package worth an additional \$900 million over seven years.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, they haven't.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It has. It comes down to a combined \$900 million for the education of Western Australian children. I concede that the government is opposing the requirement to contribute one-third of the money. The reason the government is opposing this package is that the Premier has destroyed the budget. Not only is this additional \$900 million being offered to the children of Western Australia over seven years, but also in the meantime, the Premier is offering the people and children of Western Australia an efficiency dividend cut of \$316 million over four years. Are the former teachers on the government's back benches who are espousing the benefits of education under the Barnett government aware that the state budget results in \$316 million being ripped from the education budget over four years? That is what the government's budget will do. We know that the government has not been successful in meeting its efficiency dividend cuts so far. We may be lucky and the government might continue to be inefficient at cutting the budget and hitting the targets that are designed to try

Dr Tony Buti; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Nathan Morton; Acting Speaker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr David Templeman; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Paul Papalia

to reign in the massive growth in public sector expenditure, in which case the \$316 million that is to be ripped out of the budget over the next four years in the government's forward estimates might not occur. However, in this financial year the government had a target of achieving a \$29 million efficiency dividend. We know that the government failed and it just gave the education department another sum of money that was the equivalent of the efficiency dividend cut for this year, but \$29 million was the target.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, direct your comments to me.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Through you, Chair, I will talk to the chamber.

Government backbenchers have to understand that their own budget will rip \$316 million over the next four years out of the education budget for our children. That is what members opposite are signing up to. I agree that when the federal government offered Western Australia \$300 million as part of the Gonski package, that was inadequate. I agree with that. The federal government upped the ante and offered \$900 million more for Western Australian education. About one-third of that component has to come from the state. We know that. The federal government is offering us additional money.

Mr D.C. Nalder: But there is the reduction in higher education funding.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is irrelevant to the state budget. What sound-minded state government would reject additional federal money for the education of our children, particularly in light of the fact that the greatest and most significant finding of the Gonski review was not related to money? In my view, the most significant finding in the Gonski review was the acknowledgement of the disadvantage in the education system. There is disadvantage in our education system and it is increasingly becoming concentrated in fewer and fewer schools within the public sector. The member for Balcatta would know that if he had read the review that he held up before. That is the most significant finding of the review. I agree with the suggestion that just throwing money at something is not a solution. However, the point of the matter is that we have a choice between receiving no additional money or accepting the significant additional money that is being offered by the federal government, regardless of semantics and whether a component of it comes from the state government.

Mr D.C. Nalder: We want that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sort out the issues. That is all this motion asks. It does not disagree that the government has concerns about the state and federal governments. This motion states that the government in office in Western Australia today should sort out the bloody problems.

Mr A. Krsticevic: We are.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Now! I will give the same answer the member for Mandurah gave: what the state government has been offered by the alternative federal education minister is zip. It is the status quo. Christopher Pyne has said that there is no problem of disadvantage. Members opposite know that is not true. That is Christopher Pyne's view. He has stated on the public record that he does not believe there is a problem with disadvantage and that it is not an issue. He has stated that there is no need to change the funding model. If the government wants extra money, the time is now. If there is a change of federal government and Tony Abbott becomes the Prime Minister, the federal government will not offer additional money for Western Australian education. That is a fact.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.01 pm
