

Chairman; Mr Alan Carpenter; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Abetz

Division 31: Country High School Hostels Authority, \$11 827 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Dr E. Constable, Minister for Education.

Ms S.A. O'Neill, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Mr J. Hopkins, Director.

Mr C. Shimmon, Finance Manager.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? The member for Willagee.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Can the minister ask one of her advisers to provide an update on progress on the Albany hostel?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I visited the hostel in Albany in December last year and saw the progress for myself. It will be a fantastic change to that hostel. I understand that there is some funding in that project from the Catholic Education Commission as well, which will allow children attending Catholic schools to have access to the residential facility. I will ask Mr Hopkins to make some comments on the progress.

Mr J. Hopkins: The work is progressing well. It is slightly behind where we were hoping it would be, but not outside of the adjustments that need to be made for normal changes to weather. The expectation now is that the residential college will be complete for next year, with 145 student bedrooms in place. It is coming along magnificently well, and everybody in the facility is looking forward to next year when it will be available.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My interest is in the Broome hostel. How is it progressing, and what is the student take up?

Mr J. Hopkins: At Broome this year we have increased the student capacity to 72 bedrooms. The residential college has been full and the demand is still in excess of the current boarding capacity. The outlook is for good demand for boarding services in Broome, and it is progressing well. We have made a submission in conjunction with the Catholic Education Office seeking \$2.5 million from the federal government's Local Schools Working Together program to extend student accommodation by another 19 beds, and to add two more units of staff accommodation.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to page 388 of the *Budget Statements*. On that page it is stated that the authority is expecting a drop in income as enrolment numbers decline in 2010 due to the half cohort. How significant is that expected drop in income, and what is the potential impact on employment in the authority at some residential colleges, given that the director has mentioned here that there will be a drop in enrolments?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It goes without saying that we might see that drop with the half cohort. I ask Mr Hopkins to answer the question fully.

Mr J. Hopkins: It is uncertain what the actual impact of the half cohort will be. We expect that it will impact on some of our residential colleges, particularly those in the inland country areas. However, some of our residential colleges will actually see an increase, such as City Beach, which gets an intake through the gifted and talented education program, and will experience a new intake this year of about another 20 students. If we are successful in getting the extra 19 beds at Broome, we would see those being filled up very quickly. It is a little uncertain whether there will be an overall decrease in the enrolment due to the half cohort, or whether the enrolment will end up on balance about the same. We may need to make adjustments to the staffing arrangements. We have a staffing allocation that is linked to the number of students enrolled at a college, and it is in broad bands. It depends on the extent of the variation in enrolment, and we do not know that at this time.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I would expect that the impact on staffing would be minimal, given that the half cohort is only year 8. There will still be years 9 to 12 and part of year 8. My expectation would be that the impact on staffing would be minimal.

Mr P. ABETZ: In a sense, this question follows on from that of the member for Mandurah. With the half cohort issue, and given that it would appear that—I was talking to some people in Warburton recently—some moves are afoot to change some of the educational structures, I would have thought that the reduced numbers in the half cohort would actually create an opportunity for more Indigenous children to benefit from coming to Perth or the other hostels to pursue their education. Rather than being seen as a decline, would this not create more opportunities for kids in the other years to tap into the system and improve their educational outcomes?

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member has made a very interesting comment. Perhaps there is a window of opportunity during those years to provide those facilities for children who might otherwise not have been able to use them. It is certainly something we will look into.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Through the minister, perhaps, to Mr Hopkins. In the past eight to 10 years there have been major capital works redevelopments or new hostels at Geraldton, Narrogin, Albany, Broome, Northam and City Beach. I am just wondering, looking at the capital works allocation for this year, which is not great, about the next program of major redevelopments for country hostels.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think we can see that a great deal has happened over the past few years on capital works in these residential facilities. I would just like to correct the member. The City Beach hostel was already there; it was built by the International School, and it is beautiful accommodation. It is ideal that it is being used for its present purpose, mainly for students at Perth Modern School. It has worked out very well for them to this point.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am sorry; I forgot the one that we did with Rotary at Kent Street.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is right; I met the people running that the other day. I am looking at two things with the minister assisting, Hon Terry Redman. One is residential needs for rural and remote students, and the other is facilities in agricultural colleges. The member will note that the Harvey Agricultural College will be rebuilt on the Wokalup site through the Department of Education and Training. We want to look at provision for students living in rural and remote areas to make sure that they are sufficient. There is currently a review of that. I will pass over to Mr Hopkins to answer the member's question.

[3.30 pm]

Mr J. Hopkins: In strategic terms we have always thought that there would be a growing need for more student residential accommodation to support Indigenous students, probably in the far north of the state. We are receiving support for that from a federal government initiative in Kununurra in the short term. Beyond that, it might become important for further residential colleges in that region. There is a residential college at Esperance, which had a very high priority for additions and improvements. The need for additions has perhaps eased with the closure of the Ravensthorpe nickel mine.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I had forgotten about Kununurra. An interesting project for a residential college was mooted for Kununurra as well. Is that still happening?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: With commonwealth funding.

Mr J. Hopkins: It is expected to be completed this year and opened next year.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Was there a state contribution to that?

Mr J. Hopkins: The state contribution originally was the grant of the land. I am not sure whether there will be any other state contribution towards that. There was at one time an interest in the state perhaps contributing some funds towards that at some point if the demand for that facility was high. Rather than build a second residential college close by, we might, through negotiations, seek to add on to that in some way.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: As it stands, looking forward, basically absolutely nothing has been determined to be done. There is to be a rebuild of Harvey agricultural college, but as far as the Country High School Hostels Authority program is concerned, there is nothing.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is important for this incoming government to review what is there to see where we go next. From my point of view and together with the minister assisting in rural and remote areas, it is my ideal to be part of that discussion and review. That is happening. It will take a bit longer to complete that to ascertain what needs to be done.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The building program seems to have come to an end. It is listed in the budget papers but there is no allocation against it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is the case.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: So much for who backs the regions!

I refer to the hostel at Katanning. There was an issue at Katanning 15 years ago that blighted the attractiveness of the institution. I regret that we did not get around to doing what we would like to have done. Is there a program in mind for Katanning?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: To what page number is the member referring?

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: My question relates to the capital works program. The minister does not seem to know. There is a capital appropriation of \$1 million in both 2011-12 and 2012-13 for the Country High School Hostels Authority, but there is no plan. Is Katanning considered to be one hostel that could be redeveloped? It is an underutilised facility.

Mr J. Hopkins: There is no investment in Katanning Residential College. The college is being maintained as a facility.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does it still have students?

Mr J. Hopkins: It has a very small enrolment.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: What is its capacity?

The CHAIRMAN: The member will ask the question through the minister.

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

Mr J. Hopkins: If it was fully configured, it would be able to accommodate approximately 72 students. As it is currently configured it could probably accommodate about 52. There are just under 22 students there now. It is certainly struggling. The board of management has been trying to develop an equine initiative in conjunction with the local high school to attract students from outside the local catchment area to boost the membership of the college. That is its focus at this time.

The appropriation was recommended.