

LITERACY

**319. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:**

I refer to the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, which was released on Tuesday, showing that the number of boys who met or exceeded the study's intermediate benchmark for reading was 77 per cent, and for girls, 84 per cent. More troubling was that in WA, year 4 boys trailed 18 per cent behind girls. Meanwhile, WA's year 9 NAPLAN results for boys indicate the minimum standard of reading has been decreasing since 2018. Noting this, what are the minister and his department doing to improve these declining reading levels of boys in WA?

**Dr A.D. BUTI replied:**

The member represented those figures in a misleading way. As he very well knows, the figures that came out yesterday show that WA is on par with most of Australia. The Australian Capital Territory is ahead of Western Australia. Statistically, there is no difference in Western Australia compared with the others. Boys are behind in reading across Australia and probably across the world. The member also did not note that Australia is ahead of 28 nations measured in that test, and that only six nations were ahead of us. How about giving the Parliament the full representation of the figures rather than cherry-picking? How about that? As he very well knows, boys have been falling behind girls in reading and in other academic pursuits for a long time. This government has been putting extra money into teaching students, including literacy. This budget invested over \$6 billion in education. For the first time ever, more than \$6 billion has been invested in education. Over \$350 million has been invested to improve the education outcomes of students with learning difficulties. That is a \$74 million increase from last year. That is what we are doing. We have made a concerted effort to try to improve the education outcome for all boys and girls in the Western Australian public education system, and we are providing support for the independent schools as well.