

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Division 55: Education and Training, \$2 502 308 000 -

Mrs D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr A.J. Carpenter, Minister for Education and Training.

Mr P. Albert, Director General.

Mr M. Goff, Acting Deputy Director General, Training.

Ms M. Banks, Acting Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr K.A. O'Keefe, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning.

Mr A. Huts, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning, People and Organisational Development.

Mr B.A. Doyle, Chief Information Officer.

Mr S. Harvey, Director, Facilities and Services.

Ms G.L.C. Mitchell, Director, Training Resource Allocation.

Mr R. Player, General Manager, Training Group.

The CHAIRMAN (Mrs D.J. Guise): This Estimates Committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow. The Estimates Committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated fund. This is the prime focus of the committee. Although there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly prefaced with a page number, item, program or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the *Budget Statements* while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairperson to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered, and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than ask that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide, and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by 6 June 2003, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available.

Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and, accordingly, I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by 6 June 2003.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Absent without a note is Mr Jim Hopkins, the Director of the Country High School Hostels Authority, which has a separate allocation. Jim may be of the view that he should come a little later.

The CHAIRMAN: Should he arrive, we will deal with that introduction then.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to the major policy decisions listed on page 904 and the savings that are shown against the item that deals with the merger of the Departments of Education and Training. It is estimated that the savings in 2003-04 will be \$5 million and \$30 million in the succeeding years. Can we have a breakdown, in as much detail as possible, of how those savings will be achieved, and also information about the number of positions that have been abolished since the merger of the departments occurred on 1 January this year?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: By way of preface, I indicate that these are obviously savings that were identified during the process of the Functional Review Taskforce for us to achieve as a result of the amalgamation of the two departments; that is, the Departments of Education and Training. The basic position was that whatever savings eventuated - the target set was \$30 million - would be reinvested into the budgets of education and training, enabling us to achieve the outcomes that we sought without requiring further appropriations. Obviously, that will be a challenge.

Before I ask Mr Albert or Mr McCaffrey to comment, I also indicate that in the political and financial climate in which we are operating currently, rigorous fiscal management in the departments - plural - is absolutely essential. The Government has made a commitment that it will maintain operating surpluses. We are not in a

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position in which we can simply go back to Treasury and continually seek supplementary funding to match the aspirations or requirements of the departments. If we are to try to achieve things, it must be done within the budget parameters.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The health budget has sucked too much out of everything else, has it not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Under the previous Government, continual overspending of the education budget, for example, was a common feature, not only because of enterprise bargaining agreement necessitations, but also because generally the previous Government, as opposed to the department, did not keep a close rein on its spending. I believe we made an assessment early in the piece that, over four years, the budget for the former Department of Education was overspent against its budget estimates for each year by more than \$300 million, which was simply astounding. I am amazed that it did not capture more attention at the time. When the education budget is overspent an argument can be made - which the member for Darling Range and the Leader of the Opposition have done when I have raised it in the past - that funds are being spent on schools and teachers.

[9.10 am]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Teachers' salaries increased. The allocation increased because of a substantial pay increase for teachers.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That was not the reason, although it was part of the reason. If that was the reason, unexpected teachers' salary movements would arise in every budget. Enterprise bargaining agreements are negotiated every three or four years.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The last of which came after the beginning of our most recent budget.

The CHAIRMAN: The member should ask a question.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I would like some information.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We are having a bit of a debate.

The CHAIRMAN: I am reminding the member that his question time is limited.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: "We good, them bad" is our position on budget management! There are many programs I want to see continually funded in education. The EBA will be negotiated again this year. The department must manage within its budget. There was no point amalgamating education and training if the amalgamation was unable to provide savings. I thought the amalgamation of education and training was important because, rather than cutting positions, the departments could get better value from their resources by directing expenditure more appropriately and achieving better outcomes. In the two years I have been Minister for Education, the track record has been quite good. I expect it to continue that way, although the EBA will present a challenge this year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We will come to that later.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thought so. Savings of \$5 million will be made in the first financial year, and \$25 million will be saved thereafter. The Director General of Education might be able to give the member some more detail on that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Does the minister not have some concept of how those savings will be achieved?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have. This group of people has had a number of meetings about how this will be achieved. A series of targets within government must be set. In the amalgamation of the two departments, financing, information technology etc can realise considerable savings.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The amount of \$30 million a year is a very large amount of money. The Opposition would like some detail on how it will be achieved.

Mr ALBERT: As the minister indicated, it is a challenge. However, we have been given two financial years to achieve that with the first \$5 million to be delivered this coming financial year and the next \$25 million to be delivered the following financial year. The department is also supposed to identify 200 FTE positions within central office to be abolished towards achieving those savings. Since the decision was made on 3 February to amalgamate the two departments, we have been engaged in a major review of all our corporate service activities, information technology, communication, human resources, audit, policy functions, facilities and services, finance, international education, administrative and computing components and strategic planning. We have appointed a person from training and a person from education who are experts in those areas to undertake a review and come back to the committee. So far, we have identified approximately 100 positions to be abolished. Our initial target of 100 was identified before the end of June. We are on target.

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 21 May 2003]
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Mr J.H.D. DAY: How much will be saved annually due to the abolition of 200 positions?

Mr ALBERT: About \$12 million.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Only about \$12 million? The department must save another \$18 million. How will that be found?

Mr ALBERT: Our intention is to save that in systems; for example, licensing arrangements for software and telecommunications in particular.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Are you going to cut back in that area?

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the member for Darling Range that if he has a further question to ask, he should do so through the Chair and direct it to the minister.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am seeking supplementary information as we go because we are not getting much information.

The CHAIRMAN: If the member has a further question I will allow him to ask it. If he is seeking supplementary information, that is something else. The member has been a member of this place long enough to know the correct procedure.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am trying to get information.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does the member want information on how the balance will be saved beyond the \$12 million and the 100 positions?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I think it was \$12 million for 200 positions.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: One hundred positions have been identified so far.

Mr ALBERT: With regard to how we bring the two groups together, the second part of that strategy is to examine services, overheads and programs that those groups offer. As I indicated, we see great potential savings in telecommunications and in consultancies, licensing arrangements and general overheads. To get to the heart of the member's question of how to get beyond the \$12 million and save the \$18 million required -

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The \$30 million.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The additional \$18 million.

Mr ALBERT: Yes. The second component involves a complete review of all the programs run centrally. In areas that overlap or where a program does not provide a suitable outcome according to what we want to achieve in line with our priorities, we will cut programs. We have two financial years in which to achieve that. Our first part of the \$30 million saving has been achieved through bringing together central corporate service agencies and the staffing positions we can identify through that merger.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Can the minister provide more detail about the programs that will be cut? I asked how many positions have so far been abolished.

Mr ALBERT: One hundred.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Have they actually been abolished?

Mr ALBERT: We have identified 100 positions for abolition. Effective from the end of June, as part of the implementation process in identifying those positions, we are running a consultation process with staff. Although we have identified the positions, it is not our intention to abolish them until the end of June.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What about the overlapping programs?

Mr ALBERT: We have two financial years in which to achieve the \$30 million. In terms of identifying those additional savings, we consider that the beginning of July to the end of December is the period in which we will work on that issue.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the behaviour management and discipline initiative referred to at the second last dot point on page 900 and the eighth dot point on page 903. How is the initiative working? What are the predictions for future outcomes?

[9.20 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The behaviour management and discipline outcome program, which we put into place for years 8 and 9 last year or the year before, has been one of the best initiatives implemented since the Government took office. It is clear that a major issue existed with discipline and parental perception of

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government high schools and behaviour management that needed to be addressed. The challenge was to address it in a way that people understood and that gave parents some confidence that the matter was being addressed directly. We provided the resources for high schools to implement their own programs with flexibility. That enabled them to address the situations for their students that they identified in their own schools. They can develop their own particular models rather than use a template one-size-fits all model delivered by the department, which may not have had the desired effect. The program has been in place for 12 months. After the first six months we received reports from the schools. It would be fair to say that, universally, the program has delivered very good outcomes in those schools. Some year 8 and 9 class sizes have been reduced in the schools that accessed the resources. Ninety-three per cent of the average year 8 class sizes have been reduced to 25 or fewer students and 89 per cent of the average year 9 classes have been reduced to 25 or fewer students. Seventy-four per cent of the schools have demonstrated improved student attendance and/or a reduction in the number of unexplained absences. That is an extremely pleasing outcome. More kids are at school. Twenty-five per cent of schools have reported improvements in student attendance and unexplained absences for 2002 compared with the previous year.

Twenty-two schools achieved a reduction of 50 per cent or more in the number of year 8 and 9 students who were suspended. More than half the schools reported a reduction in the number of suspension notices issued and a reduction in the total number of year 8 and 9 students suspended in 2002 compared with the previous year. Many schools reported a significant decrease in the number of referrals for inappropriate class behaviour. The program is in its second year. I would like to put more money into the program and replicate it in years 4 to 7. I intend to do that if the resources required for it can be found.

During the election campaign, the Labor Party was committed to spending \$7 million a year for four years to continue this program in years 8 and 9 at a total cost of \$28 million. The program has been extended into the forward estimates. Forty-four high schools are involved in the program. A total of \$3 million was spent on reducing class sizes and \$2.5 million was spent on behaviour management programs in 30 schools. Incidentally, some of the schools involved in the program have used the money to appoint more teaching staff, some have used it for chaplaincy programs and others have used it for school psychologists. A range of programs was individually targeted for each school environment. The member will know that through the schools in her own electorate. One million dollars was provided to train 2 000 teachers in 2002. Forty teachers in the metropolitan area and 40 teachers in country areas are engaged in extensive train-the-trainer programs and \$500 000 has been provided to boost district support to schools. This is the approach that both sides of politics should take to try to deliver better outcomes for schools generally rather than take the flat-earth approach. As I said, the one-size-fits all approach whereby the same programs are applied with the same level of resources given to every school regardless of the need and circumstance is not the way to go. Class size reduction is a perfect example of that. Class size reduction might achieve nothing but the resource would have been expended. A better outcome could be achieved using additional resources to employ a part-time specialist or additional speech therapist hours, for example.

I have not received any criticism of this program; I have received only broad support for it. It is one of the best things the Government has done. The program has provided some spin-off benefits. For example, the Toodyay police reported that youth crime had reduced and youth behaviour after school and on weekends and so on had also improved. It is a very good program and it will continue at least at this level. I would like the funding for it to be increased. I would also like to increase the breadth of it into the upper primary school years because it is an extremely good program.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to the last dot point under significant issues and trends on page 900 of the *Budget Statements*. What is the major advantage of the merger of the Departments of Education and Training, particularly for regional students? What outcomes can they expect over the next 12 months and beyond? Does the minister think the merger will improve the year 12 retention rate? Will the minister explain to me in simple terms what the annual cost savings of that merger to the Government are?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thank the member for the question. There were two points of impetus for the amalgamation of the departments. The first was my belief that we needed to do a lot better in the provision of education and training outcomes for post-compulsory age students, or youth - many of them are not students - that is, people 15 years and older. That could not be done with the structures that separated education and training. The Government must provide the maximum number of opportunities and maximise the use of its resources. I want there to be an easier transition between school and training, technical and further education, co-enrolments and so on. I was told that that was not possible - although I never accepted that it was not possible - with two separate departments for a variety of reasons that are too numerous to go into.

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The second impetus was the Costello functional review through which the Government was trying to sharpen its economic financial performance in the way it delivered its commitments. There is absolutely no doubt that merging the two departments provides better opportunities for post-compulsory school-age people. The challenge in some country areas is whether more can be delivered than what is currently delivered. It will be more or less difficult to improve the outcomes depending on the size of the location and the resources situated around that location. I will give members an example of where I think it will be basically straightforward. I use the example of Karratha Senior High School all the time, so I ask those members who have heard it a million times to forgive me. Karratha Senior High School was built in the 1960s or early 1970s; the building is tired. It does not have a particularly good year 12 retention rate, although it is not terrible. There is an increasing demand for vocational education opportunities for years 10 to 12. However, those options cannot be provided because of limitations on the physical and human resources of the school. The school received some money from the AlintaGas pipeline sale, which enabled it to spend a small amount on improved designer technology and those sorts of courses, although not to the standard or quality that is required. Mark Whisson, the principal of Karratha Senior High School, directed my attention to the TAFE college a couple of kilometres from his school. He suggested that I look at facilities at the TAFE college and see what conclusions I could draw. It is probably the best appointed TAFE college of its kind anywhere in the world, but not many students attend, especially school-age students. The member for Peel knows the situation. The potential synergies were clear. I think that is what Mr Whisson hoped I would conclude. If the TAFE resources were better utilised for school-age students, we could provide opportunities that those students had been denied; that is, access to the facilities without having to leave school and enrol at TAFE as a separate mode of education delivery. Those two campuses are being amalgamated, and both the physical and human resources at each campus should be available to all students.

[9.30 am]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is that what the minister sees happening in other major regional centres?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Definitely.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: At Narrogin, for example?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Physical collocation is not always possible, but we are pursuing it in Karratha. In the short term, one need not be physically collocated to amalgamate and open up the courses for students at either campus. We are doing that at Karratha, are we not?

Mr ALBERT: Yes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is happening this year. In places like Albany and Narrogin, which have substantial TAFE facilities, I anticipate a replication of the move being pursued in Karratha. I will make it happen. A student aged 15 to 19 years may be enrolled part-time at Narrogin High School, may do part-time studies at TAFE and may be engaged in part-time employment. The bottom line, member for Wagin, is that if one's region has a resource that is tagged "TAFE", that should not be denied a student because he or she is at the high school - that is the case whether the TAFE facility is across town or next door.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I have no problem with that notion. How does the minister see the smaller towns without TAFEs linking into the regional towns? I agree with what the minister is saying. Can the minister see that working? Is that his aim?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It becomes more difficult, obviously, in that situation. However, it is conceptually no more difficult in delivering education to small towns. Potentially, more limited opportunities will exist for students, but that does not mean it should not be provided. One must be able to provide those opportunities.

I read from a note on the issue, in the light of what I have just said: four strategic projects have been established to examine the whole-of-department provision of education and training, with particular reference to 15 to 19-year-olds, apprenticeships and traineeships, career development and guidance, and TAFE-university articulation. Another component of what I was talking about is under way as well; that is, encouraging universities to offer course entry at some level to students in non-metropolitan locations and metropolitan locations where they may not have otherwise gained entry. The WA Higher Education Council, which comprises the vice-chancellors of the universities, including Notre Dame, and which I chair, has been reshaped and refocused. One of the first actions after the amalgamation was approved by government was to call a meeting of the vice-chancellors and put to them a proposition: they had complained for a long time about the lack of cooperation and articulation between TAFE and universities, and this presented an opportunity to do something about it and to provide better opportunities for people to access university courses who otherwise would not have been able to do so. This could be achieved through co-enrolments and joint recognition of qualifications. That work is under way. There

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is an argument that the tyranny of distance has been overcome, but the member for Wagin and I emanate from country locations - we know that distance from major metropolitan centres will always be a problem. However, we can always improve on the current situation. If we get the amalgamation of education training right - we are in the process of doing that, and conceivably we could make mistakes - and course articulation and cross-enrolments are right, we will improve the opportunities in education and/or training for people wherever they live. The location does not matter. It may be that the big metropolitan areas and big regional centres will be able to provide more options for students. That does not mean that we should not make provision in smaller centres.

Ms J.A. RADISICH: I refer to page 900 of the *Budget Statements* and the major achievement in dot point four of the "Getting it Right" literacy and numeracy strategy. This refers to the appointment of 66 FTEs to focus on early childhood education intervention. What is the minister's assessment of the success and impact of the program, and what general contribution has it made to literacy and numeracy in that age category?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It has made a significant contribution. I thank the member for the question. This was another of the fundamental policy initiatives the Labor Party promised to deliver in the election campaign. I did a fair amount of work in policy development in opposition as this area clearly needed attention; namely, improving literacy and numeracy across the board, with a focus on the early years. Education experts and all the theory indicates that the earlier one addresses the issue, the more likely is the student to be successful. We promised to spend \$28 million over four years to provide 200 additional staff in our primary schools across Western Australia. These were to be literacy and numeracy experts to provide direct tuition in literacy and numeracy assistance to students. Just as importantly, they were to profession-develop existing staff to be in a better position to assist students in the early years. We have put in 147 staff so far in the third year of government. The promise was to provide 200 extra staff.

Ms J.A. RADISICH: Is it 118?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: More than 40 extra staff will be provided during this budget. That is correct, is it not?

Mr ALBERT: Yes.

[9.40 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We are funding another 40 staff this financial year, to take the number up to about 150. We have about 50 staff to go in the last year, and we will achieve the target. However, the target is irrelevant in a sense, as the outcome is important. We must ensure that the highly trained and specialised staff have the capacity to assist students directly and profession-develop existing staff. On current trends, 130 additional schools will be involved in the strategy by 2005. Therefore, by 2005, more than half of all government primary schools will have a specialist teacher to make sustainable improvements. That is an additional 130 schools to those already with such specialist staff.

Three different forms of evaluation and data collection will be used. The Australian Council for Education Research - ACER - has been contracted to undertake a rigorous and independent evaluation. Every school participating in the strategy is required to establish challenging but realistic targets for improvements over two years. These targets must be ratified by each school's director of schools, and schools must report at the end of each year tangible evidence of student improvement. Thirdly, ongoing implementation of the Western Australian literacy and numeracy assessment - WALNA - program will track statewide improvements in literacy and numeracy over that time.

I supported the implementation of compulsory testing for literacy and numeracy, even though the teachers union did not and still does not, which occurred under the previous Government but at the direction of the federal Government. The Western Australian system was the first to take it up. It is important to give parents an indication of their children's literacy and numeracy skills in comparison with others in those early years so that they know whether their children need particular attention. Just as importantly, it gives the system an indication of if and where there are problems with literacy and numeracy. The difficulty that was being faced was that the diagnostic program was in place but the remediation was limited because of a lack of resources, and something had to be done about it. This program is basically aimed at remediating problems when they are identified, and not only through the Western Australian literacy and numeracy assessment program. That is a very important tool in the identification of issues. Compulsory testing for literacy and numeracy started in years 3 and 5 and it is now compulsory in year 7. That is a very good thing. A lot of state ministers still do not support it. They see difficulties with it. However, I think it was a good initiative, as long as that essential component of remediation after diagnosis is in place; otherwise it is probably pointless. It has been a very good initiative and one that will continue. It has been funded into the out years in the budget.

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: As a follow-up question to the previous theme, can the minister be specific about how \$5 million in savings will be found in the 2003-04 year? The item for the Functional Review Taskforce on page 904 of the budget papers shows \$5 million of savings, but page 53 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* shows that as a result of the integration of the Departments of Education and Training, there will be \$10 million of savings in 2003-04. Why is there a discrepancy and how will funds be saved?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will defer the second question to Mr Albert. In answer to the first question, my understanding is that those savings have already been identified through staff savings; that is, the 100 positions.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Can the minister provide more information about what those positions are?

Mr ALBERT: We have been given \$5 million to help with the implementation of saving \$10 million in redundancies, system changes and so on in the forthcoming financial year. We have already identified \$6 million through the 100 positions to be saved and approximately \$4 million in on-costs, various consultancies, duplicated contracts and so on. We are well up to the \$10 million.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Effectively, the cost of the merger was \$5 million.

Mr ALBERT: No. That is what has been allocated to facilitate the savings.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: To pay redundancies.

Mr ALBERT: Yes, to pay redundancies, put more software in place, replace PBX machines and so on. The money is to help find the savings.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is unusual that there is an apparent discrepancy between the two papers.

The next issue relates to the increase in funding for schools. I refer to output 1 on page 905, primary education, and output 2 on page 909, secondary education. According to my calculations, funding for primary schools increases from \$1 362 million to \$1 402 million, an increase of \$40 million in the next financial year. Funding for secondary schools increases from \$937 million to \$961 million, an increase of \$24 million. That is a total increase for schools of \$64 million, which is only 2.75 per cent. At best, that roughly equates to the rate of inflation, or it may well be a decrease in real terms. Negotiations are taking place at the moment for a new certified agreement with new salary claims for teachers. They have made a submission for an increase of 10 per cent a year over three years. Not many people expect that they will get the full 10 per cent. Given that they received four and a half per cent a year over three years in the last enterprise bargaining agreement, which was negotiated when the previous Government was in office, and given that about 90 per cent of school running costs are consumed by teachers' salaries - if that is not the case, the minister can clarify otherwise - how much has been allocated in this year's budget for salary increases for teachers and how will the system cope with an increase of only 2.75 per cent in actual terms?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That was a multifaceted question and I will get Mr McCaffrey to address the issue of the two different sets of figures. However, in general terms, I agree with the member's comment about the anticipated increase in the cost of salaries in the EBA; I think most people probably have the view that 10 per cent will not eventuate, simply because we cannot afford it. That is the bottom line. In its heart of hearts, the teachers union knows that we cannot afford it. I understand that that claim is being made consistent with claims made in every State. All the union branches in each State are asking for 10 per cent. The budget basically incorporates an increase of three per cent, in line with government wages policy. There is a bit of a discrepancy between three per cent and 10 per cent. The negotiation process is taking place now, and it will be a difficult negotiation.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What does three per cent equate to in dollar figures?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think one percentage point is about \$10 million or \$11 million, so three per cent is \$30 million or \$33 million. Two per cent was factored into the forward estimates, and 10 per cent would be in excess of an additional \$100 million a year, which is out of the reach of the Government at this time, unfortunately. The member made the assertion in question time the other day that 95 per cent of the education budget is made up of staff salaries, and I said that I did not think that was right. It is something less than that; it is about 75 per cent. Nevertheless, the member's point has been made; that is, any increase in salary has a significant impact on the overall budget position.

We have come to the completion of the negotiation with TAFE lecturers, and their union representatives have accepted and will put to their members a three per cent increase, in line with the government wages policy. Obviously there are some additional costs and various other conditions, but the position that was negotiated with their union representatives to be taken back to their members is three per cent. Mr McCaffrey will provide the detail of the question asked by the member for Darling Range. Mr McCaffrey is the chief finance officer.

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[9.50 am]

Mr McCaffrey: With regard to the output and appropriation summary, in primary education the \$40 million is largely salary related. It covers the three per cent that is factored into our budget for the enterprise agreement. There is also the full-year impact of the initiative that started last year to reduce class sizes in years 1 to 3, which has a flow-on effect in primary education.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is it possible to give a breakdown of the component parts of that \$40 million?

Mr McCaffrey: The full-year impact of the reduction in class sizes in years 1 to 3 is about \$7.7 million. The full-year effect of the preprimary initiative in early childhood is an extra \$5 million. The balance relates to general salary increases for what was approved in the previous year, and also the three per cent that has been funded for the Government's wages policy to start in 2003-04. That is in primary education. In secondary education it is largely the EBA figure of around \$17 million that we have factored in. There are also some election commitments. That will have a bearing on the second year, notably the full-year impact of the behaviour management program that will come to fruition this year. They are the major components. I would like to add that the table that the member referred to on page 904 - the output and appropriation summary - is a bit misleading as to the amount of actual funding that the Government has provided as an appropriation for the schools sector. In the way that table is arranged, a number of adjustments are made for accounts receivable, accounts payable and superannuation, which are end-of-year financial adjustments that do distort the figures. I therefore refer the member to the capital contribution on page 899, under delivery of outputs, which states "Item 95 Net amount appropriated to deliver outputs". That is the actual amount of funding that the Government has appropriated to the Education Department, and it represents about a 4.2 per cent increase overall in the funding that we expect in 2002-03.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: How much of the \$2 407 260 that Mr McCaffrey referred to as the actual appropriation comes from the Commonwealth Government?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Not much!

Mr McCaffrey: We operate on a net appropriation. The net appropriation is adjusted as a revenue item in our financial performance statement. The commonwealth portion is not included in that amount, but it is about \$200 million. That includes capital works. There are three components of commonwealth funding. It can be found in the bottom table on page 923, under commonwealth programs. The commonwealth programs for schools are general recurrent programs, capital programs and specific purpose programs. The capital grants program is, and has been for a long time, \$23 million a year, and that will be the same for the next four years, so not much growth is happening there. Funding for 2003 from the Commonwealth for general recurrent programs is \$504 for each primary school student and \$748 for each secondary school student. The combined estimated allocation for 2003 is \$141.929 million and for 2004 is \$146.211 million, so it is an extra \$5 million. That is the general recurrent program. There are also specific purpose programs, for which the estimate for 2003 is \$21 million and for 2004 is \$21.7 million. I will run through the programs. For languages other than English, the estimate for 2003 is \$622 000 and for 2004 is \$644 000. For special education programs, the estimate for 2003 is \$883 000 and for 2004 is \$914 000. For English as a second language for new arrivals, the estimate for 2003 is \$2.6 million and for 2004 is \$2.7 million. For special funding for students in country areas, the estimate for 2003 is \$3.051 million and for 2004 is \$3.157 million. For special programs for indigenous students, the estimate for 2003 is \$9.337 million and for 2004 is \$9.594 million. That is the complete program allocation from the Commonwealth for this and the next financial year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I thank the minister for that information. To conclude the issue, for the moment at least, of the teachers' salaries claim, I understand one part of the State School Teachers Union claim is for primary school teachers to have the same duties other than teaching time as secondary school teachers. What will the cost of that be? Is that claim likely to be agreed to; and, if so, has the cost been factored into the estimates?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We are negotiating on that issue.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: My understanding is that it may well be agreed to. We would like to know what the cost will be.

Mr HUTS: My understanding is that the cost of additional DOTT time of one hour for primary school teachers is approximately \$14 million. I would need to check that figure.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Has that been included in the forward estimates?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No.

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the tenth dot point on page 901, Operation Refresh. Has the minister had any feedback on the effectiveness of Operation Refresh?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

[10.00 am]

Ms J.A. RADISICH: The member for Girrawheen stole the question I was going to ask, but it is so important to me I will follow it up. Operation Refresh has been extremely successful, particularly for high schools in the east metropolitan area. I know that Eastern Hills has benefited from the program. In relation to the relevant dot point on page 901, I note the sentence -

The individual projects were identified from formal building condition assessments.

Who actually performs these assessments? Is it the department or private contractors; and, if it is private contractors, what opportunity does the school council or the principal have to sign off on the assessment to provide some sort of accountability for the quality and accuracy of the assessments which are undertaken?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will add a little bit of flesh to the response I gave to the member for Girrawheen. This program came out of two things: first, the realisation that a lot of schools look as though they need to be refreshed when looking at their general appearance from the front. We were targeting high schools because one of the responses we receive back from parents and students when they are talking about going from their local primary school to the local high school is how the school looks. I know from my own experience in my area that Melville Senior High School needs to be spruced up and some changes need to be made to the appearance of the school to make it look as though it is a place of excellence. All the programs can be put in place and they can be very good, but if the first impression is poor then the school is behind the eight ball. We had the opportunity to do something about it because we made some savings out of RiskCover insurance. The member may recall when we announced this that the funding came about because the level of damage that had been inflicted upon the schools had declined following increased spending on security, school fencing and those sorts of programs. We received a return of some \$5 million from RiskCover and we wanted to reinvest that into the schools that had a need for it. We matched up the requirements with the windfall amount of money that has come back from RiskCover because of our better performance with security and so on, and we launched into this program. As the members have said, all schools think this is good. This year I intend to duplicate this program if we can and spread it into other areas that have not received the benefit of it.

The member for Swan Hills asked me who makes the assessment, how that is done and the detail of it. I will ask the facilities manager, Mr Harvey, to respond.

Mr HARVEY: The building condition assessment report is done every 18 months. It is contracted out through the Department of Housing and Works, and we have done that for the past four years. The quality of the report has steadily improved. It is not done every year; it is done every 18 months, because that is a reasonable amount of time to view the quality and standard of facilities across the State. It is done on a standard nine point analysis. It is done in conjunction with the school registrar - probably not the school principal - who will accompany the contractor when the analysis takes place. Operation Refresh referred in particular to secondary schools, and where the building condition assessment report identified external painting and carpets that needed to be replaced. The last report that was done would be about eight months old now, but still fairly current.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I refer the minister to the last dot point on page 899 under significant issues and trends where reference is made to the need to upgrade facilities within or to replace old schools, as well as to build new schools in rapidly expanding urban areas which is a challenge for the capital works program. Does this mean that the capital works program is falling behind?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, it does not mean that. This year we are spending more on capital works than we have ever done before - close to a record - an amount of \$133 million. The capital works spending is going up.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: How many schools are in desperate need of an upgrade or is there a listing for maintenance?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There are something like 800 school sites around Western Australia and I have been to approximately 250 of them - probably 300 by the end of this year - and a lot of the schools, particularly those built in the 1970s and before, are in need of significant upgrades. I do not have a figure available off the top of my head. The average age of schools in the system is 50 years.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: Does the minister have an estimate of what money will be needed?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have asked this question of the department before; the better question is how much could we spend. We could probably spend \$1 billion on improving the school infrastructure. We are now

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

putting in place Internet connections and extended bandwidth capacity which require capital works for a lot of schools. At one stage I asked the facilities manager, Mr Harvey, how much could we spend, and he said at absolute tops the amount we could manage is \$200 million. It is a question like how long is a piece of string. We could spend as much money as we could possibly get improving and upgrading our schools. The cost of building a replacement primary school in the metropolitan area is about \$5 million. We are replacing the primary school in Onslow, for example, and I think that will cost \$7.5 million. There is a 50 per cent increment when we get into those more remote areas. The district high school at Fitzroy Crossing is hopelessly outdated and needs to be replaced at a cost of at least \$25 million. I am not trying to avoid the question; we could spend as much as we could possibly get. The Department of Education and Training says that we could spend up to \$200 million a year. We are spending \$133 million this year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Presumably the department has a realistic estimate of the cost of maintenance and renovation needed in each school.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Maintenance is a different issue.

Mr HARVEY: In respect of maintenance, we have done an analysis of our outstanding maintenance need within the department and it is calculated at \$57 million. We will always have a certain amount of outstanding maintenance; it will never get down to zero, nor is it desirable. Best practice has it that the figure is anywhere between 1.5 per cent and 2.2 per cent of the asset base. Our asset base is \$3 billion, which places it between \$44 million and \$66 million. The figure of \$57 million sits within that range. Our view is that while we could spend a lot more on maintenance, it is within the best practice range.

[10.10 am]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The minister knows that I have a particular interest in this area, because the schools in my electorate tend to be in the older rather than the newer range. I want to follow up on this, because the member for Dawesville has raised an important issue. On page 913, the second last dot point under education refers to a \$5.3 million new works commitment to provide library resource centres, upgrade administration and staff facilities and replace or upgrade toilet facilities in schools. That is only the tip of the iceberg from my point of view and my knowledge of the schools in my electorate. On page 918, the estimated expenditure on those three items is not very much. It is \$100 000 on administration upgrades for the next financial year, \$381 000 on library resource centres and \$800 000 on the toilet replacement program. Where does the \$5.3 million come from? Over how many years is that? Can the minister also tell me how many administration upgrades we can get for \$100 000, how many library resource centres for \$381 000 and how many toilet replacements for \$800 000? The amounts are very small.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am certainly aware of some of the schools because I visited them with the member. I agree with the member that it is obvious that some of the schools in her electorate are old, established schools, many of which, if not all, probably need an upgrade, at least to make them capable of being equipped with modern communications fittings and so on.

Mr HARVEY: The member is not seeing the whole picture, I guess.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is what I am asking for.

Mr HARVEY: I will go through it. An amount of \$100 000 is listed against administration upgrades for 2003-04. However, the total expenditure in the capital works program is \$1.9 million, to which we need to add another \$2.6 million, which comes out of the smarter schools program. That gives us a total of \$4.5 million for administration upgrades. That will provide for 20 school administration upgrades. A total of \$2 million is allocated for library resource centres. Each library resource centre costs approximately \$500 000. Therefore, that amount will provide about four library resource centres.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I could do with four in my electorate alone. That really is the tip of the iceberg, and I see that as the most important area.

Mr HARVEY: A total of \$1.4 million is allocated for toilet upgrades, with \$800 000 for this financial year. They average out at about \$140 000 each, so that is about 10 projects. The member will not notice covered assembly areas in the new works program. However, the works in progress figure is \$8 million over four years. Therefore, we are spending \$2 million a year on covered assembly areas as well.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: How many would that buy?

Mr HARVEY: That would buy six to eight.

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I refer to the capital works program. I know that renovations and the upgrade and maintenance of schools are needed. However, when I was reading through one of the balance sheets, I thought I picked up that the amount allocated in this year's budget is \$499 000 less than the amount allocated in last year's budget. Did I make an error? On what page can I find it? I have gone back through the budget and I cannot pick it up again.

Mr HARVEY: Last year's capital works program was \$133.499 million.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: What is the figure this year?

Mr HARVEY: It is \$133 million.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: It has gone backwards. I am right; I did pick it up. There is a \$499 000 decrease in the allocation, yet there is a need to increase it. That is interesting.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Perhaps I should give an explanation. Over a period of years, the capital works budget is a bit lumpy, because some projects cost up to \$125 million, and they will come to an end. For example, in the year before the last election, the figure was very low - \$70 million or thereabouts - because quite a few projects had been ongoing, but they had come to an end and been realised. The Government is now embarking upon a range of new projects. Therefore, the capital works budget is higher than it was, say, three or four years ago. I believe the member will find that is the situation.

We had similar questions from various members about the amount being spent on capital works in their own electorate. Although it is difficult to ascertain which schools are in which electorates because they border them, sometimes it appears that the capital works spending in a certain electorate has decreased dramatically. However, it is because a project - a new primary school, a new high school or whatever - has been completed and another one is on the go in another electorate. The capital works program for the Department of Education and Training is probably as high as it has been in the past couple of years. The forward estimates show that it tapers a little. I believe 10 new primary schools will come on stream. A huge number of programs are going on now, and they will ultimately come to an end. As Paul Keating would have said, there are bumps in the figures.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The department's big problem in finding sufficient funding to do what needs to be done is the Perth to Mandurah railway, and the particular route that this Government has decided to follow, which will gobble up a huge amount of money that would otherwise be available for building schools, police stations and so on.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, we are dealing with budget estimates, in which case a dot point in the budget needs to be referred to.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There are capital works projects across the budget papers. That program is a big one. It does not help explain why we are spending more on capital works now than when the coalition was in government.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: You are not in real terms; it has gone down.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, it has not.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to the fourth dot point under major achievements for 2002-03 on page 900, which has already been referred to by the member for Swan Hills. It deals with the appointment of specially trained literacy and numeracy teachers. Is there any evidence to suggest that literacy and numeracy standards are lower in regional schools than in metropolitan schools? There seems to be that trend. Of that total number of specialist teachers, how many or what percentage are or will be located in regional areas?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In general terms, the point the member is getting at is undeniable. A greater proportion of students in country schools tend to be at the lower end of literacy and numeracy achievement levels. That is partly explained by the relatively high number of indigenous students as a percentage of the total student body in country schools. That impacts significantly. The figures for literacy and numeracy of Aboriginal students are still well below what they should be.

In relation to the allocation of placements, I do not know whether we could provide any specific information about the allocations to rural and non-rural schools. If the member puts a question on notice, for example, I will provide him with the whole allocation of teachers and in which schools.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Could that be provided as supplementary information?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have some information with me. The specific information the member wants is the allocation of teachers, is it not?

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, or even the percentage of teachers. If the minister has information on the teachers, that would be helpful, but a percentage -

The CHAIRMAN: For clarification, will the minister tell me exactly what he is prepared to provide?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Wagin is seeking a breakdown of the allocation, in percentage terms, of additional literacy and numeracy teachers in rural and non-rural schools. We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

[Supplementary Information No A33.]

[10.20 am]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to what, in broad terms, is Aboriginal education by the dot point at the top of page 901, in particular the Swan Valley Nyungah Community. What has been the educational attendance of school-age children in the community over the past 12 months. Has it been acceptable and appropriate? If not, what has been done to assist the community in educational attendance and participation in the school system? I have another question about the general issue.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is most unfortunate that Hon Peter Foss put his own ego ahead of the wellbeing of the students of that camp.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That is an offensive statement. If the minister knew what Hon Peter Foss knows and what I have been told since, he would not have made that statement. It is not a matter of Hon Peter Foss's ego.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is an absolute disgrace given that the member for Ningaloo said in this Chamber that the day the Government announced the closure of the Swan Valley Nyungah Community was the best day he has had in politics.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The Government needs to deal with the substance of the issue.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition supported that position and he knows why. The Government of Western Australia wants to close down a camp that has led to untold misery for young people and women in this State for a long period. The Liberal Opposition is foolishly demanding that the camp stay open. That is an absolute travesty.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What will happen next? Of course the wrongdoers need to be dealt with. Some senior government officers have major concerns about the way this Government is dealing with the problem.

The CHAIRMAN: I think both sides have made their points. Let us come back to the budget.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I would like an answer to my question.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It was a question about student attendance.

If we could provide a safe environment for the people at that community there would be far fewer difficulties. It is a shame that the member for Darling Range's party has not supported us in that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That is absolutely wrong. I am sure that we both share a desire to ensure children in particular are protected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member should support his leader in over-ruling Hon Peter Foss, who has put his own ego ahead of the wellbeing of the people in that community. The situation is absolutely terrible.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: You should speak to some of the officers dealing with the issues on the ground.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do. I am also the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and I go to all the meetings and hear exactly what is going on down there. The heads of the department are of one voice that that place is not a safe environment for students or children and the best option is to close it down.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It should be dealt with effectively.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Darling Range is pretending that he does not understand the power dynamics that operate at that camp. The only way to deal with it under the Opposition's model would be to have a 24-hour guard sitting there to ensure that certain people never go in there. The present situation is an absolute disgrace. I am very disappointed with the position the Opposition took in here, supported by the National Party - and still supported by the National Party. The Bill was not supported in the upper House, which has resulted in a most unfortunate impasse. While that situation exists at that camp, all sorts of tragic events will occur. It is a great shame that we were unable to maintain unanimity of opinion between all parties that the place should be closed.

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Since the minister has introduced this theme, what changed in the past two weeks to cause the Government to take this so-called urgent action.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We received information from people associated with the camp, who told us that it must be closed.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Why? What changed? Why was it not done a year ago?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: From the moment the coronial inquiry gave its findings my position was to close the place and that has been my consistent position. I thought, following discussions I had with a range of people on the opposition side of the Parliament, that they agreed that was what we should do. Now, our side has been convinced that it must be closed. In this Chamber, of which the member for Darling Range is a member, the National Party supported it, and it was described by members of the Liberal Party as the best thing that has happened since they became politicians. When the issue reached the upper House, unanimity fell apart.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Where would the women and children be housed? I understand there are only two vacant houses in the area? Would they go to Cullacabardee where the problems will continue?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They can be rehoused. Swan Valley Nyungah Community is a closed community, ruled under a particular power structure that makes it impossible for people to penetrate.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Does the minister know what is happening at Cullacabardee? According to people in authority who have spoken to me, the problems are at least as great, or greater.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is a different environment.

The CHAIRMAN: I let that discussion go to make sure both sides had the opportunity to air their grievances. I ask that questions come back through the Chair.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I have asked a question and I would like an answer. The minister went off on a great tangent.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It was not a tantrum. The situation is utterly tragic.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Absolutely. It is a matter of dealing with the substance of the issue.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. It was a tough decision to close the place down and to make sure that those people would be rehoused in a safer place. That is what we must do.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: With genuine consultation with the Opposition, this matter could be resolved. That has not occurred.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the specific answer to the member's question?

Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH: The consultation needs to take place between your leader in this House and the people pulling his strings in the upper House.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: No. The Premier should sit down with the Leader of the Opposition and have a sensible discussion. That offer is in place.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Peel! Does the minister have a specific answer?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The children at the community attend Culunga Aboriginal Community School, a non-government school, so the capacity is limited for the Department of Education and Training, which is the division we are dealing with now, to monitor attendance. I have requested the Department of Education Services - I do not know what time that division is being heard today - to give me a full account of the attendance details of the students from the Swan Valley Nyungah Community who attend Culunga Aboriginal Community School. I am not sure when that will be. Later today, when we deal with education services, I will provide a report, which I have asked for from that department.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Has the department been recording those details over the past 12 months?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. As far as I am aware, it has been attempting to monitor the attendance rates of students at that school. My understanding - I am reluctant to assert it too strongly because I do not have the detailed report - is that there has been some difficulty getting the information. That brings me back to the point: we cannot have government officers 24 hours a day, from police, community development, education services and God knows where else, stationed at that camp. It is an impossible situation.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What is being done about similar camps elsewhere?

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Aboriginal attendance at schools is an issue across the board. The member asked specifically about students from the Swan Valley Nyungah Community. I hope I can provide the member with more detailed information later in the day.

Mr O'KEEFE: There is not just a problem of normal attendance of those students at the Culunga Aboriginal Community School; a fair amount of transience is involved. As the minister said, we are investigating the relationship between the attendance figures from Culunga with the number of students we assume are living at the camp. A report will be available on that as soon as possible.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It sounds as though it is being done far too late. If there were a problem, it should have been dealt with 12 months ago, not now.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: When the coronial inquiry into the death of Susan Taylor reported, I think people were genuinely shocked by what was revealed. At the time, the Premier announced that a response had to be made and he established the Gordon inquiry to look into child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities all over Western Australia. That was an appropriate response. My advice at the time, based on all the information I received, was that we should first shut down the camp.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Based on what professional advice to you?

[10.30 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Based on all the information that came from the coronial inquiry and a raft of concerns raised with me by a range of people from the time I became Minister for Indigenous Affairs. Frankly, I had no idea of what was going on there. When I became Minister for Indigenous Affairs, I was very surprised that a long line of leading Aboriginal people said that that place should not be allowed to stay open. They said that one person in particular was not fit to wield power in that camp.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That can and should be dealt with.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That person has power over other people. Hon Peter Foss pointed to examples whereby the person sits in on interviews and people are not free to give evidence or provide information. Since that time, the Government has stepped up supervision and surveillance of the camp in an attempt to make regular contact with the residents. However, the Government is continually frustrated because of the arrangements that are in place that will continue for as long as the camp operates. It should be closed. It is like something from the Dark Ages. We are living in the twenty-first century, yet a component of our society is living in the Dark Ages where people are routinely bashed, raped and possibly murdered, including two-and-a-half-year-old children.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That is totally unacceptable. Major change must occur. I will tell the minister what happened to the reserves legislation after it went from the Legislative Assembly to the Legislative Council. Debate occurred in the Assembly without the Opposition having had an opportunity to be briefed or consulted. The legislation was given bipartisan support on the basis of accepting the Premier's word in good faith. After the Bill left the Legislative Assembly, the Opposition received good information about major concerns expressed by people in authority regarding the approach the Government was taking. Therefore, it was entirely appropriate for the Opposition to question, challenge and seek to bring about changes that would meet the overall objectives of protecting innocent people at the camp. On the other hand, we wanted to make sure the residents were not thrown out of the camp without any adequate plan in place for where they would be housed. The Opposition received that information after the Bill left this Chamber. The legislation was debated in the Assembly under very unusual circumstances. It was introduced and debated there and then, which is an extremely unusual situation.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am not doubting that the Opposition received information. I tried to take away a school classroom from that camp that had not been used for four years. The classroom had to be closed because the safety of the staff, let alone the students, could not be guaranteed. The place was closed down and locked up. It took me nine months to get the classroom out of the camp. It is a straightforward operation that should have taken a day or two but which took nine months. People came out of the woodwork and told me that it was a terrible thing to do and that the Government was neglecting the children. There will always be people who say that although the camp has its faults, it is providing good accommodation. That is wrong. The historical evidence shows that. Some kids live there on a permanent or semipermanent basis. A number of kids just like young Susan Taylor, who are not permanent residents, end up there. They get caught up in a series of activities and either drift through or stay there. The worst possible outcomes imaginable befall them.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is the minister saying that senior professional government officers who deal with the situation on the ground are wrong?

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. The Government has meetings with the most senior government officers. That is how the Premier came to the decision. The heads of the department told the Premier that the safety of the children could not be guaranteed and the best option was to close the place. It is commonsense. If it were any other group of people, for example, a religious group or whatever, the place would be closed and the people would be moved to safe locations. However, because of the complex political and social environment we live in with regard to Aboriginality, we are frozen and the people who live there will continue to be punished and suffer because we are frozen.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Remove the threat and then look at the circumstances.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Darling Range must ask a specific question relating to the budget.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The minister just referred to the issue of the classroom that was removed from the site. I do not doubt the minister's word that there were problems with providing lessons in that classroom. Were any negotiations conducted, was any interest expressed by any organisation or was any offer made, for example, by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, acting on its own or in conjunction with any other organisation, to pay the full cost of that classroom so that it could be used for the benefit of the community? If there were any such discussions or offers, why were they not taken up? What was the cost of legal advice to the Department of Education and Training or the Government on this issue?

Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH: When did you find your backbone? You were not rattling on like this last week when you had the opportunity. You suddenly found your backbone over the weekend.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Peel!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: An offer of purchase was made from the Swan Valley Nyungah Community. However, that misses the point by a very wide margin. I am surprised and have a modicum of disappointment to hear the line of questioning, particularly from this member, over this issue.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is not a matter of protecting wrongdoers in the community; it is a matter of providing outcomes that will substantially improve conditions for people.

Mr N.R. Marlborough interjected.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am talking about the issue of a classroom if the member would care to listen.

Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH: The member is talking about doing a backflip. He is not talking about Aboriginals at all.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The reason I decided that that school classroom should be relocated was that, through evidence to the Gordon inquiry, I found out about the history of the classroom. Some four years previously, the attempt to provide an educational environment to the children at that camp had been forcibly abandoned because the physical safety of the staff and the students could not be assured. Therefore, the classroom was closed and the students were ultimately relocated. They went to Culunga and the staff were taken away.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That is not the issue. We are not arguing that Department of Education teachers should have continued to use the classroom.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know what the member is saying. I did not know any of that because it happened before I became the minister. I was not aware of a lot of things to do with Robert Bropho and the camp before I became the minister. It could be said that my views have been converted. I will not go into too much detail about that, but it is pretty obvious what that conversion might be. It came to my attention that there was a school classroom at the camp at the same time that there was a shortage of transportable classrooms around Western Australia. No-one had sought to take away that classroom. I do not allow people who take a bullying position to get the better of me. That is a Department of Education and Training facility.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: An offer was made to pay the cost of it so that the funds could have been used to provide a classroom at another school. The minister is saying that it could have been used in another school at that time. That could have been done anyway.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Why would I want to accede to that? I repeat the point I made at the beginning. A Department of Education and Training classroom sat at the school and I decided to put it to good use. However, the Swan Valley Nyungah Community, Robert Bropho and Iva Hayward-Jackson objected to that. They asserted that the classroom was being used for educational and cultural purposes and that it should stay. As I pursued the issue, I discovered that the classroom was not being used. It was a Department of Education and Training classroom. It was decided that we should have it back and put it where other students and children could use it.

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At some stage of the debate, an offer was made to buy the classroom. Why would I want to let them buy the classroom?

[10.40 am]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Because they might want to use it for the benefit of decent people in the community for other purposes. The minister would still have had the funds available to provide a classroom at another school, which he said he was seeking to do. Why did he not take that up?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Member for Darling Range -

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Did the Government just want to appear tough in dealing with the issue? That is what is being put to me by people who know.

Several members interjected.

Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH: An assertion put by you!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: By public servants, if the member wants to know.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr P.W. Andrews): I will step in here. The questions and answers have been repeated. We will move on. Does the member for Churchlands -

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think this is a very important point. I would like to finish it.

The CHAIRMAN: This response is the last one before we move on.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I referred to the cost of legal advice.

The CHAIRMAN: That is fine. We will then move on.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will tell the member what happened. Subsequent to the coronial inquiry, and subsequent to all the information that came to me, the mental process I went through was to consider whether I wanted to do anything to see the young kids at that camp effectively kept even closer and in a more closed environment in that camp than they are in at the moment. Did I want to provide the people running the camp with the opportunity to say, "We can provide education outcomes for our kids. They don't need to go out at all"? Did I want to do that? Absolutely not - no way. That was the process. First, they had no right to have that facility there - it was not theirs. They asserted proprietary rights to it and asserted a cultural site of significance, which was nonsense. They appealed to the federal minister. Fundamentally, was I going to be party to some process by which, through an illegitimate method, they would be able to keep the kids in the camp at greater risk than under the current situation? At least at the moment they are required to exit the camp to go to school. Whether they do so is another issue. Did I want to close that off? No, I did not.

The second point is that the Department of Education and Training had need for the facility. It took nine months to gain the classroom, which was a ridiculous length of time. I was not going to back down because a person with that background and record demanded that I do so - no way. We got the classroom out, and it was reallocated to a school in the south of the State.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That was not the issue. Another classroom could have been funded anyway.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is the issue to give in to what they wanted and have children effectively locked in the camp 24 hours a day without access to government workers and at the mercy of people there with the knowledge we have of what took place in the camp? It was unthinkable.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: And changes should occur. What was the cost of legal advice?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Did we get any? I do not recall us getting any legal advice.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Was there any legal advice in relation to -

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Why would we need legal advice?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: There was a legal challenge.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No. They appealed to the federal minister, and I wrote a submission outlining why it was ridiculous. They appealed on the basis that the school had cultural significance, and, under the national heritage Act, stated that the Commonwealth should override the State and let them stay. It was patent nonsense. It was the sort of nonsense he indulges in on a frequent basis.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is the minister saying no cost was incurred, either internally or externally, for legal advice?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Internal legal officers maybe, but I never sought legal advice about it.

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: Did the department?

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Churchlands has the call with a specific further question.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a follow-up question relating to the Culunga Aboriginal Community School. This goes to the heart of the issue. I preface my question by stating that I understand the sensitivities involved. Properly, the Department of Education and Training of WA can register, deregister and inspect non-government schools. The minister said in his comments that if it were any other school, be it religiously based or whatever, he could have closed it down.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No. That was the camp.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The minister talked about the school.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No. I have no evidence on which I could make that decision.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I presume it is a non-government school registered in the State. It is possible to deregister schools and inspect schools. Given the complexities - I understand those - all of us in this room would agree that it is important for the children to have the best opportunities in education. How bad does it have to get before the minister will close down the school?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have not been provided with any information that would warrant the closure of Culunga.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are looking at some of the issues now.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: When I said closure, I was referring to the camp - the member may have heard it as Culunga. If it were a closed community, a religious community or some sort of cult - which it is - we would move in and close it. As a result of the complexity around aboriginality, to which I am very sensitive, we are hamstrung. The Opposition is easily talked out of the right course of action.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to the children and their education.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In relation to Culunga, I have asked the Department of Education Services to monitor students' attendance the best it can. I have asked for a report from a Mr Carruthers. I expect the report today. I anticipate that at some stage during the estimates, we will have the Department of Education Services people in here who will be able answer questions directly about that school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Will it be possible to table that report?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will look at it and see the information provided. As the member would appreciate, some information in the report might have been provided confidentially. Otherwise, I do not see a problem. The member understands the potential.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes.

Ms J.A. RADISICH: Dot point six on page 899 makes reference to an ageing work force in the department. I am keen to know how younger entrants might be encouraged into the education sector. Does the minister have on hand the average age of teachers in the system?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thank the member for the question. I have some notes on that issue, as chance would have it. It was looming as a major issue. The demographic profile of the teaching community presents some problems, not only in Western Australia but broadly. Everybody knows about the gender balance issues. Age profiles are also relevant. The Department of Education and Training under the previous Government commissioned and produced a report titled "Teacher Supply and Demand 1999 to 2005" which highlighted the potential crisis looming because of age profile. A large percentage of the teaching work force at that stage were over the age of 45 years and moving into the latter part of their careers. They were not being replaced at the training stage by a sufficiently large number of young people to keep up the supply requirements. In broad terms, that age profile issue has been addressed. Enough young people have entered training. Programs were put in place to encourage people into education courses at university and teacher training programs. A range of scholarships and other incentives were provided. The average age of the teaching work force is 47 years, which is probably about the perfect age. That means half of them are younger and half are older.

The CHAIRMAN: It is an age of great wisdom, minister.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: How old is the member for Wagin?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Fifty-two.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am 46 and just reaching my peak.

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The average age is 47. We have an extensive scholarship program for students when qualified and contracted to teach in subject specialisations and geographic locations of need for three years. It is a good program. A limited number of scholarships were offered before we came to government. This Government stepped them up. It is a good experience to attend the launch and see the graduates heading off to schools or being awarded scholarships - it is an invigorating process to see many highly skilled young people moving into the teaching profession.

Young and mature teachers have been surveyed to better understand the needs and aspirations of the teacher work force to assist the department in developing strategies to retain teachers through and beyond the first 10 years of their careers. Many teachers exit early, which is another issue. There is a range of reasons for that. Programs to address specific shortages such as scholarship programs and incentive programs for teachers in remote and difficult to staff schools will be maintained. I have some figures, but I am not sure what they mean. In addition, the department will continue to promote itself as an employer of high-quality teachers and new graduates. The anticipated shortage of early childhood teachers was averted through the early childhood education recognition of prior learning project, which was established to fast-track primary school trained teachers to an early childhood education qualification. Mr Huts may be able to provide some additional information about combating the potential for problems related to the ageing work force in the teaching community, which might help the member for Swan Hills.

[10.50 am]

Mr HUTS: I think the minister has covered that ground. One of the issues with the ageing work force is the entry point of teachers. The actual average age of graduates today is 28 years. No matter what attempts are made, the average age of teachers can be reduced only marginally.

Mr ALBERT: Currently, there are 223 scholarships in place, rising to 250 in this financial year. We also have the shaping young lives campaign, which has been very successful in attracting young people to be interested in teaching; in fact, the average tertiary entrance rank for people entering teaching education has risen quite dramatically. Two recruitment officers tour schools and speak to years 10, 11 and 12 students. They also speak to undergraduates and postgraduates. They are very good role models for teachers. They are teachers themselves and can speak with some authority about teaching in rural localities because both of them have taught in rural localities. They are an excellent advertisement for the teaching profession. We also ran some radio advertisements. We ran advertisements for the shaping young lives campaign in community-based newspapers. A lot of interest has been shown as a consequence of those advertising mechanisms.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: As a follow-up question, I know that in the United States there is a big program to attract into teaching people in their second or third careers. Rather than going for young people, which obviously has merit, the program goes for people who have experience in all sorts of fields and attracts them into teaching. Is any effort being made in that area? I think it is important and very valuable.

Mr ALBERT: Yes, there is. Some of our scholarships were awarded to people from other professions entering the teaching profession. The average age of our new graduates this year was 28. Obviously that demonstrates that a number of older people from other career areas entered the teaching profession.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Are you actively seeking people who have had a career in information technology, computing or those sorts of areas?

Mr ALBERT: Certainly we are seeking people in areas in which there are shortages of subject specialists such as science, IT, enterprise, languages other than English and mathematics, but particularly science and mathematics. For example, we are very interested in ex-engineers who want to enter the teaching profession, because there are potential shortages in future years in both science and mathematics.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I refer to the fifth dot point on page 899, which refers to the commonwealth legislative requirements for students with disabilities. They are likely to place an increasing resource burden on the school system. What resources are being allocated by the State Government to cover that negativity from the east? Does attention deficit disorder fit into the disability classification?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will give the member some reassurance. In the lead-up to the election, we committed to spend an extra \$4 million on children with disabilities and \$3 million on children with special learning needs - a total of \$7 million. I suppose that every minister has the same experience when he gets into office; he realises that a fair bit more needs to go into the disability area and that the costs are astronomical. We have put that funding in place, but there has been a boost of about \$10 million, rather than \$7 million, for children with disabilities and special learning requirements. An ongoing review has been in place. There will always be a need to have a review of the way in which services are delivered to children with disabilities, because the needs change continuously and the demands continually escalate. Ms Banks will provide the member with more detail.

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Ms BANKS: One of the issues is not just the change in the legislation, but also the increasing number of students with disabilities and the changing community expectations of the way in which students with disabilities are supported and their entitlement to the full range of services, education access and participation that students without disabilities are able to access. The review has been focused on a very extensive consultation process to determine the needs of the students, as well as the adjustments to our policies and practices and what we will move to in the future in order to meet legislative and community expectations. One of our major strategies is a program called building inclusive schools. It provides professional education and support to administrators across the system so that they understand the requirements for the future. One of our main resource strategies is aimed at the parents of children with intellectual disabilities who wish to enter mainstream programs. This has been extensively expanded to 172 places this year, compared with 87 places last year. It provides for education support time, teacher support, teacher training and resources for the students, particularly assistive technologies so that they can access and participate effectively in mainstream programs. Our other education support services will continue to be maintained, because many parents make the choice to use an education support centre or an education support school, so that the range of services are available in that area.

Another area in which resources have been utilised is the speech and language development centres. We have expanded by providing an additional centre and an outreach program to enable additional students to receive support, because about 3.7 per cent of students require additional language development support in their early years. The resources have been utilised to assist with speech therapy, and the expansion of those services and the outreach programs will enable greater access by large numbers of students.

[11.00 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Just to clarify what I said to the member for Dawesville, we have made a commitment to spend an additional \$4 million over four years - that is not a lot of money, but it is additional - for children with disabilities. What we will have this year, for example, additional to what was already being spent, is \$2.55 million for children with disabilities and learning difficulties, and that will go to \$3 million in the next two years. Over the four-year period, we have committed to spend, over and above what was being spent, \$7 million for children with disabilities and learning difficulties; and we will spend an additional \$11 million on what would normally be spent on the incremental programs.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: In what category would children with ADD be?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: ADD would come under children with learning difficulties. Most children with ADD are not also classified as children with a disability. It is a bit of a vexed issue.

Sitting suspended from 11.01 to 11.15 am

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to page 902, the third dot point under major initiatives for 2003-04, which states that a plan will be prepared for the management of the half-cohort. I have raised this issue previously in the estimates. What is involved in that plan? What aspects of children's education, planning, finance, capital works, teacher development and so on will be involved in that plan? Time is marching on. It is less than six years until the beginning of 2009, when these children will be in year 7. Recently a number of the schools in my electorate have raised the issues of what will happen when these children get to year 7, and will they stay in their primary schools or go on to high schools. As I am sure the minister is aware, there are enormous implications, both financial and educational, in the decisions that will need to be made.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I, like the member, think this is a significant issue. I have found it interesting, since I have been taking a closer interest in this matter, to look at how the system already deals with multi-age groupings and so on, and what flexibility there may need to be in the future and whether we will have a standard model for all children who are born at a particular time and so on. The year 7 students at Ballajura Community College are already in with the years 8, 9 and 10 students, and at Kinross Primary School, the groupings begin with years 6, 7, 8 and so on. Already a variety of options are emerging that may be the answer to the conundrum that we potentially face. Incrementally, I think there will be more fracturing of the traditional age cut-offs as new school environments are developed and communities seek different structures in the education program delivery and the resourcing of the schools in their areas. The plan is an initiative for the forthcoming year, not something that we have developed hitherto.

[11.20 am]

Mr ALBERT: We have done two things. Last year we prepared a report looking at middle schooling and issues such as the year 7s - do we continue with the sorts of structures we have; what about the variety of structures that seem to be developing, such as Kinross, Ballajura and so on; and what approach the department should be taking in terms of structures to the half-cohort issue? As a consequence of that report, we have a project under way this

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year, chaired by Kerry Usher, looking at what has happened with the half-cohort entering preprimary and now entering year 1 in terms of the type of children, their level of development in relation to the curriculum, and what this will mean as that half-cohort moves through, because they will enter year 8 in 2010. We are looking at what implications this will have for the curriculum and school structures, the staffing implications, where will it have the most impact and on what schools, and so on. That project has just started and we have a target date for completion of October-November this year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I can understand the thinking behind having some flexibility and choice for parents, but at the end of the day does the minister not think that educators and the minister must make a decision about this aspect? My electorate is a very good example, where there is a senior high school and a high school with a middle school. There are already rumblings that some people would like to see year 7 at City Beach High School, but if that happened, and it was a free choice and parents could decide what they wanted, it would be very good for the high school and there would be strong educational argument for having years 7 to 10 in the middle school. However, it would have a devastating effect in some of the primary schools. They may lose so many of their year 7s - I am guessing - that they would become K to 6 schools by default. I would have thought some direction and educational leadership would have been really important. That fits in not only with financial issues but also teacher-training and curriculum issues, which are really important. As educators, we should be making those decisions and not taking almost a cop-out that choice would be a good thing. In one way it is a good thing, and in another way maybe it is not.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I agree.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I hope those issues will be looked at in great depth.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I agree, and I also agree with the corollary that we need to have leadership and direction in this area; it is not something we should leave to the market as an ad hoc arrangement. I do not know whether I mentioned the word choice in this context.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The minister spoke about flexibility.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not envisage a situation in which parents will be able to choose to have their child at a primary school or a high school. However, if there are a variety of models in greater number than there is at the moment - we already have a variety of models - and parents want to transport their children all over the place to go to school rather than go to the local primary or high school, then I suppose that indicates an element of choice. I agree with the member. We must make a decision about how we will manage this thing as a cohort, because there are important flow-ons for teacher-training, preparation and resourcing. There are resourcing differentials between the district high schools in the primary and secondary components. Those sorts of decisions have to be made, and the decision must ultimately come from the top, with advice obviously prepared and sought from the department and the community. That is why when it occurred to me that this would be an issue, I think last year or the year before, I made it clear that we must have some sort of strategy to deal with this issue and not just think that somehow it will sort itself out; hence, it is in the budget papers as an initiative.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: When will the minister expect some resolution of this, or a report that can then go forward?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr Albert said October.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: For the group that is mentioned in this document?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That might be a little bit optimistic, but if we are still in our respective places next year, we will be discussing this strategy.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: The third dot point at page 899 deals with a subject close to my heart and my electorate, and that is the retention of Aboriginal students and their performance when compared to the rest of the student cohort. What strategies does the Government have to improve the retention rate in this area?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In general terms, if the member looks at all the initiatives we are putting in place across the system to try to assist students who would otherwise be struggling, there is a basis from which we can then rise up to specific programs and address issues that are particular to Aboriginal students. Lower class sizes are very important in the early years of education because of the one-on-one capacity of the teacher, along with literacy and numeracy programs and the getting-it-right strategy to provide greater expertise and assistance. The behaviour management and discipline programs in years 8 and 9 will assist students who would otherwise be, or are, at risk of becoming alienated from education. This will be assisted by the implementation of more culturally appropriate materials for Aboriginal students in many circumstances, which program was in place to a lesser

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degree than it was when I became minister. There are also some good language and cultural programs, but not a very consistent approach to that issue. We developed a strategy to be implemented in the schools called "follow the dream" to combine significant industry and cross-agency collaboration as part of the secondary school retention strategy in 36 schools across Western Australia. The strategy was based on the Gumula program in Roebourne and Karratha, and other programs of that kind involving Aboriginal students who have been achieving at or above warmer benchmarks in year 7, and providing them with an opportunity to join the program. In so doing they receive cross-agency personal development support in years 8 to 12 designed to support success. The Gumula program has been very successful. We had - I may be overstating it - an almost undreamt of level of success in Roebourne a few years ago where we now have students who are not only getting to year 12 level, but also into university courses in medicine and law, which is a huge achievement. This will have knock-on effects for the rest of the community. If one child in a family is seen to succeed, there is no reason other siblings cannot follow suit. We have specific program initiatives related to geographic locations as well as the more culturally sensitive materials, teaching methods and language programs. Some very exciting programs are going on in the member's own area.

[11.30 am]

Mr O'KEEFE: The follow the dream initiative is based on what was really a local initiative in the Pilbara. The Gumula-Mirnuwarni program was such a success that the Commonwealth has picked it up and has provided money to all States and Territories in an attempt to replicate the program across Australia. I suppose we have been in the fortunate situation of being able to look at the benefits it was bringing for a couple of years now, so follow the dream was a further development of that program. This not only has a partnership with industry to help fund the program, but also close connections with students, mentoring support and study support for those kids. In addition, the next phase is cross-agency support, working with the Smith Family, providing not only support for the students themselves but also for their entire family and siblings, as well as providing employment opportunities through the Red Cross First Steps program and a whole range of other programs to do with leadership and resilience-building skills. As the minister said, the intention is to roll it out to at least 36 schools over the next couple of years. We put about \$2 million into it for the 2002-03 budget, and that is expected to expand substantially over time. Certainly, one of the sites that we have anticipated is the eastern goldfields - Kalgoorlie - as well as a range of other sites in that area. Esperance is another one that is currently being rolled out. Our assumption from that is that we will see a substantial increase in the number of students not only exiting year 12, but also broadening their options. Many of the students who were getting through to year 12 previously were taking the easy way out. We are now finding that a lot more of those students are seeking university access. We are very excited about the program. We believe that, in a sense, we have cracked the nut for students who remain engaged in the school system. The challenge for us now is to work our way through this. The merger provides opportunities to work with students who have tended to be disengaged from the school system.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will ask Mr O'Keefe to give a brief thumbnail sketch of the project in the Ngaanyatjarra lands.

Mr O'KEEFE: Certainly. The project in the Ngaanyatjarra lands is the result of an agreement between the Department of Education and Training and the Ngaanyatjarra Land Council. It is in its second stage of operation, and a major focus of the work this year is phase two of a language and culture program, which has essentially been based around one of the area directors. She is an Aboriginal woman from the lands who is working with the communities to develop culture knowledge based on the stories of elders. This year is phase two of that program. That will be put into the schools, with the elders facilitating teachers to support students in that process.

As a result of that agreement, a major focus of the work this year is to examine the provision of secondary education in the lands. Basically, people are finding that when students finish primary school, they tend to finish school. There are a lot of cultural reasons for that. It is lore business for a lot of young men and women at that stage, and they tend to see the primary school as an inappropriate environment for them. They also see older brothers, sisters and cousins sitting around the community doing nothing really, after having done years 8, 9 and 10. Therefore, a major focus this year is to embark on a large consultation process with the community aimed at ensuring that post-primary people - that is, students currently at high school - as well as the broader community have a much more developed notion of a seamless education, training and employment process. Essentially, from that consultation process we expect to get a result that will provide some sort of educational and training facility, which will build on the advantages that we have now as a merged department to provide opportunities across the lands. We will also be urging all the communities to think more closely about what they will do in their own specific community.

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This week I attended a council meeting with the Ngaanyatjarra Education Area Council at which there was agreement that we would trial in Warakurna the creation of an adult learning environment that would merge education and training opportunities as a model that we might use for each of the other communities. There is substantial support from the community for this and a real expectation and a sense that future leaders will come from that process, which is what those communities want.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will provide a couple of statistics. First of all, this year there has been an improvement in retention rates of Aboriginal students to year 12, but the figure is still extremely low. It has increased from about 22 per cent to 25 per cent or thereabouts. At least the figure is increasing rather than decreasing. A huge task sits before us. Participation of Aboriginal students in vocational education and training in schools has increased by 69 per cent since 2001. That is a very important development. The participation of indigenous students in Aboriginal school-based traineeships has doubled since 2001. The Government set a target in 2003 of 350 Aboriginal school-based trainees, and we are on the way to achieving that. The uptake of school-based traineeships has increased by 25 per cent since 2001. The department also set some performance targets for Aboriginal staffing levels. The department announced that initiative late last year, I believe. The member for Eyre will know from his own experience in his area that the more Aboriginal people we can get into those leadership positions and role modelling in schools, the more likely we are to draw in the students, retain them and see them succeed. There are also other initiatives in the TAFE area as opposed to the schools area.

Mr GOFF: As the minister has indicated, the area of Aboriginal participation in vocational education and training is indeed one of the perhaps unheralded success stories of recent years. The figures that I have in front of me show that while the Aboriginal community represents about three per cent of the total population, the participation rate in vocational education and training is double that at six per cent. Of course, it provides important social and economic outward mobility opportunities for this group. Specifically on program initiatives, the minister and Mr O'Keefe mentioned the Aboriginal school-based traineeship program. Currently, 120 Aboriginal young people are engaged in that program. The target, as the minister said, is some 350.

One of the specific program initiatives is an innovative certificate program in sport and recreation, which one of the TAFE institutes is running in conjunction with the Fremantle Dockers football team. This trains young male and female Aboriginal people in sports and recreation administration. That is currently under way, and it is the first time it has been run.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: There is also the Gerard Neesham football academy, which is operating with great success in my electorate.

Mr GOFF: Yes. There are a number of such programs. From the department's point of view, we are delighted with the success of these programs.

In addition to the targeted student programs, it is important to attend to the support programs and create an environment in a training institution - in this case a TAFE institute - that is supportive of this group. All TAFE institutes are engaged in running comprehensive staff awareness programs, using trained Aboriginal trainers. That is in the second year of operation. Most TAFE institutes have dedicated Aboriginal centres that provide a range of support services within the institute and beyond it to support the personal and family needs of those people, as required. In short, dovetailing with the work going on in schools, clearly the intention is to provide opportunities in the post-school environment that will ensure that Aboriginal people coming through the school system can pick up their skills training and key it into a job outcome through the various training institutes throughout the State, both public and private.

[Mrs D.J. Guise took the Chair.]

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I will ask one more question about that aspect. I do not know whether the minister can deal with this matter because I am not sure whether it comes within his portfolio responsibilities. It is one thing to do what the department is doing, but the reality is that unless there are jobs at the end of it, it all falls down, does it not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: From my perspective as Minister for Indigenous Affairs, my view has become increasingly that until we address the underlying economic circumstances of Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal families and Aboriginal individuals, there will be major social issues that we must try to counteract through various initiatives across government, as well as major impacts on health, justice and community development - the whole gamut. To that extent, I agree with the member. We must first get the students into a position where they are able to take up employment. A sufficient education base and literacy and numeracy skills are obviously a prerequisite. Other issues may inhibit their transfer to employment. The member for Peel is not in the Chamber at the moment, but he identified them in his review of the training requirements for the

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Burrup Peninsula development. Aboriginal people have problems with motor vehicle licensing, drivers licences and those sorts of issues. Before we can reach sustainable employment, we must have an educational background training program so that, like everyone else, Aboriginal people acquire skills that can be sold in the employment market and have the capacity to move from education and training into sustainable employment, rather than be in jobs that are sustained by a government program. To a large extent, that has been the history. The member for Darling Range may have had this experience when he was minister: one of the most rewarding realisations I had when I became Minister for Indigenous Affairs was the amount of work private companies such as Rio Tinto and BHP do in this area, particularly in the mining industry. I do not know the time frame of their programs. They were leading government by a long way in developing employment opportunities and demand for Aboriginal employees. They have been running programs since this Government has been in office. They deserve great credit for the amount of work they have done in providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

[11.40 am]

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: They are coming from a low base, are they not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Not as much is done for Aboriginal employment in the member's electorate. In the goldfields, smaller companies have less flexibility and less money for training and education programs. The big companies in the Pilbara and the Argyle mine in the Kimberley run excellent programs. The Government, to some extent, has been able to plug into partnerships with those companies to further enhance opportunities. In addition, non-government agencies such as the Smith Family Foundation, which has been in Western Australia for the past couple of years to develop educational and employment opportunities for people in low socioeconomic areas, heavily focus on Aboriginal people. It is excellent. One of the secrets to the success is to have sustainable partnerships with non-government agencies and businesses, with clear objectives in mind. What are we trying to achieve and for whom? We are trying to educate people not just for the benefit of education itself but to make them employable.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Eyre have a further question? This is not an opportunity to have a conversation across the Chamber. Other members are waiting to ask questions.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: As soon as there is a gap, whether it be from primary to tertiary or tertiary to TAFE and to employment, they will fall through. They do not have a structure to lift them back up to where the rest of society is.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not agree with that view. If we use the analogy of landscape and refer to gaps and crevices, people can fall through - but not everybody will. Many Aboriginal people are able to cross the bridges when they arise. Seamlessness would be more desirable than all sorts of structural societal obstacles that get in people's way. One of the reasons we amalgamated training and education was to remove structural obstacles from people moving back and forth between education and training. There are many partnerships with employers and non-government agencies so that people might be employed part-time while they are doing part-time studies to lessen the likelihood of what the member for Eyre described as falling through gaps and not re-emerging.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Mr Goff referred to the number of Aboriginal people who are doing the trainee scheme. Is it possible to provide a list of districts where that is occurring?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does the member mean Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes.

Mr O'KEEFE: Is that not the traineeship program?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I thought a figure was mentioned of, I think, 80-odd.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is the member referring to school-based traineeships? We will provide a regional breakdown of the number of Aboriginal students involved in school-based traineeships as supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A34.*]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In the minister's general comments a moment ago, he referred to all the major issues that would lead to success for Aboriginal students. I refer to the quality and effectiveness information on pages 907 and 908. Anyone's heart would sink who read the figures for Aboriginal students in each year group for reading, writing, spelling and numeracy. It looks as though they not only start from behind, but also their situation gets worse as they go through years 3, 5 and 7. The performance of the education department - I am not being

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critical; it is an issue we must deal with and seek ways to improve - is either treading water or going backwards. What major resources should we be providing to improve the situation, because we see similar results from year to year? If these children are to be successful later in the training programs so that they can go to university and gain employment, this is where it all starts. However, we are not getting anywhere with it and we need to find answers.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I agree with the member for Churchlands about the dimension of the problem. However, it is true to say that we are getting somewhere. As the member knows, and everybody in this Chamber knows, enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal students in education is a very complicated issue. In an environment like this, we focus heavily on what is happening in schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: These are our benchmarks and we must base some of our thinking on them.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. A huge amount is being done in government to try to address the broader issues that impact on student performance in schools. Earlier, we touched on domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. Underpinning this are massive issues that must be addressed and are being addressed. Anyone casting an eye over the numeracy and literacy outcomes would be struck by the low percentiles of Aboriginal students. We cannot get away from that. The education department is painfully aware of them. We are seeking to address all the programs we mentioned before.

Mr ALBERT: We must be a bit wary about comparing the 2001-02 to 2002-03 figures - that is not to be defensive; when the benchmarks were originally set, they were not that well defined. When the students sat the test, which was set for a particular day, attendance was very low.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In which year are you saying the second figures are more accurate than the first lot?

Mr ALBERT: The second set of figures is more accurate and more realistic.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We have a problem because they look worse overall.

Mr ALBERT: They are more accurate because a higher number of indigenous students was involved in the testing program. In addition, we have changed the way the tests are run. They were run on a certain day. Now schools can run the tests all week. The next figures are more realistic. If we compare these figures with monitoring standards in education testing, which, as the member for Churchlands is probably aware, commenced in 1992, they show a general improvement, albeit still at an unsatisfactory level today. We need to exercise a little caution in the way the figures are interpreted. The second lot of figures are probably more realistic than the first lot.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is it possible to receive supplementary information that demonstrates that slight improvement?

Mr ALBERT: The department is happy to provide that information by district. However, we are unhappy to provide the figures for each school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I would like a global picture.

[11.50 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Churchlands will recall that when the tests were first implemented, there was a considerable amount of opposition to their imposition. Action was taken at various schools and many students did not sit the test. The previous Minister for Education excused some schools in Aboriginal communities from taking the tests because in his view the tests were not relevant. We now have a clearer picture of how the test reflects upon the skills of the students. A couple of things have come together. The director general is pointing out that the indications should not be read as a decline in performance. It is absolutely correct that the performance is not good. However, the figures from the first year were misleadingly optimistic - everything is relative - because fewer Aboriginal students were likely to sit the tests. Subsequently, the test was not considered particularly rigorous.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The explanation is very important. If I can have that supplementary information, everyone can have the full picture.

The CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of Hansard, will the member clarify what he has agreed to provide.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Churchlands is seeking information on the district by district performance of Aboriginal students who sat the Western Australian literacy and numeracy assessment over the past two years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The director general referred to figures going back to 1992.

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They were monitoring standards. We will provide the member with all the relevant material we can.

[*Supplementary Information No A35.*]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to dot points eight to 11 under major achievements for 2002-03 on page 900 of the *Budget Statements*. I refer specifically to the greater integration of information and technology into schools for the use of students and teachers. I visited the set-up and was very impressed. Who will be responsible for the maintenance of school computers and information technology in our schools? Country schools have problems accessing maintenance. Does the Government plan to provide technical specialists for regional schools? What is the estimated cost of annual maintenance and replacement of computers and information technology in our schools?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Bevan Doyle is the best person to provide the member with that specific information. Under the previous Government, \$80 million from the sale of AlintaGas funded the rollout of information technology in schools. That was extremely well-intentioned. I have no quibble with the motivation. However, it created massive problems, including all sorts of logistical problems; for example, the capacity of schools to hook up the equipment and provide the wiring etc. There was also the issue of the professional development of staff to enable them to use the technology, as well as the technical support breakdown. I visited Nullagine Remote Community School and met with the principal, Lucina Cross, who is a very good principal. The school had been provided with its quota of computers and an Internet link to the main office, but not to the rest of the school, which was the case in many of those environments. If there were 12 computers in the computer lab, nine were out of service and there was no ready access to technical support. The computers had been out of service for some time, which is why the strategy had to be rethought.

When I was in opposition, I was shown data on how much the information technology changes cost. It was a huge amount - in excess of \$200 million - and the required outcomes were not being met. As the member knows, we had to reshape the whole strategy to provide professional development for staff, more user-friendly hardware and software and also to provide better access to technical support when it was required.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is the key point.

Mr DOYLE: The issue of technical support is obviously very complex. Currently, each school gets an information and communications technology grant. The minister mentioned that the grant includes funding for various technology purposes; for example, access to technical support, which is a big issue in regional areas. The overall strategy the minister mentioned with regard to reconfiguring our approach included the rollout of a major telecommunications network to all schools, which will enable those schools to be permanently connected during and after school hours, thereby providing additional support from the centre. We will be able to examine issues that appear in the complex infrastructure of the administrative and curriculum servers that exist, and service students' desktop computers.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Can schools telephone a service centre and get their problems fixed from the centre?

Mr DOYLE: That is exactly what happens now in terms of the administration of the schools. We have been connected to the administration of the schools for a number of years. Funding has been provided for a program to upgrade 100 schools' networks where appropriate and improve their infrastructure. When we connect to those networks, we will provide a significantly enhanced support level. We will work with those 100 schools over the next couple of years to develop sustainable and appropriate support models. There will always be a need for someone in the school to switch a computer on or off etc. However, the aim of the strategy the minister referred to is to significantly reduce the support burden on schools by bringing together all these initiatives, including telecommunications, improving the infrastructure within schools and delivering an enhanced support model across the system. Over time, that support model might develop a local district presence. In other words, it might move from a central location to a hub from where we can provide local support and respond to the local schools. The programs mentioned will enable us and inform us of the best and most sustainable way to deliver that support.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is important. Currently, at a lot of smaller schools, good teachers have to leave their classes for an hour to fix the computers. People keep raising that point with me. That area requires some priority wherever possible.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to outputs 1 and 2 relating to primary and secondary education. I refer also to the "Investing in Government Schools: Putting Children First" report, which was completed in July 2001. The minister knows it well. The report focuses on increasing support for our schools and improving the educational conditions. Page 101 of the report states that the task force noted the overmanagement of some of the district

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offices. It also refers to a high level of managers in district offices, as opposed to professional support that would assist teachers or provide additional support to the schools, such as psychologists and so on. The task force believed there was a strong case for distributing the excessive management resourcing to provide a more effective support service to schools. How does the minister reconcile that general recommendation in the report that was commissioned by and presented to him in 2001 with what appears to be an increase in senior managerial positions in district offices? By my calculations there has been an increase in the number of level 7 and above positions in the Canning district from eight to 13, in the Swan education district the number of positions has increased from nine to 15 and in the Perth education district there has been an increase from eight to 16 positions. What is happening in reality is different from what is recommended in the report. We have a significant increase in the number of senior managers, as opposed to positions that actually provide support to teachers and schools.

[12 noon]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: A reconfiguration of the district office set up has seen some amalgamations of district offices; that would account for some of the figures. In all district offices, level 7 managers of Aboriginal education have been appointed. Could Mr Albert give the specifics on the amalgamation?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Which district offices amalgamated in the last 12 months?

Mr ALBERT: We have redefined the district boundaries so there is a more balanced representation of the schools in each district boundary, and to ensure that each director has responsibility for no more than 40 schools. A major issue outlined in the Robson report was that some directors had 60 or 70 schools; therefore, it was not humanly possible to undertake school review programs, and so on. We redefined the boundaries and reduced the number of metropolitan districts from six to four, and have moved resources according to the number of schools in the areas. That would explain some of the anomalies to which the member alluded.

Also, the Robson report identified a lack of high-level expert support for country areas. We have taken some FTEs off country districts and provided them with access to the same number of full-time equivalent staff, but they are able to be more flexible in application. Rather than a country district having only an English specialist in the curriculum area, they can use the FTE to access high-level expertise across all curriculum areas. A major review is being conducted to see how the district restructure is going. The main point was to reconfigure resources so that better services could be provided to schools. That is why we played around with the boundaries and tried to balance the number of schools with the number of support staff. The overall salaries budget has not increased. Resources have been moved around.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr O'Keefe may be able to provide additional information.

Mr O'KEEFE: The major focus underlined in the Robson report was a greater responsiveness to the needs of the school. An important part of the process was to build mechanisms to ensure schools had some input into the profile of district offices. That process occurred to create them in the current form. Also, 2003 is regarded as a transition year. We are establishing a process of monitoring and evaluating that process to ask the fundamental question: has service delivery improved for schools? That will be our unrelenting focus.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: When does the minister expect an answer to that question?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr O'Keefe.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Have schools had an increase in effective support?

Mr O'KEEFE: The assumption is that the evaluation will be completed two years after the commencement of the operation. We are setting in train a series of monitoring mechanisms to enable us to intervene if problems arise. A major change in the district structure is the creation of councils, which give a greater say for local school representatives, principals and so on, in providing mechanisms for establishing profiles. They indicate clearly that needs have been unmet. As you are aware from the Robson report, some schools felt districts were unresponsive to their needs. The establishment of councils and charters of operation will ensure that districts are more responsive.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Do you mean school councils?

Mr O'KEEFE: They are new councils. They are not school councils, but councils to operate in the district comprising the director of schools and services and local people from the school community. They are not the school council. It is a council from the district to advise on the profile of the people in the district office to support schools. We are in the process of preparing profiles for 2004, and we are asking major questions: have you got greater flexibility? What are you doing to create greater flexibility to respond to the needs of schools? The increase in level 7 officers has resulted from the provision of 10 new managers of Aboriginal education.

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Aboriginal education is a priority area for the department. Therefore, it was seen to be necessary in 10 of the 14 districts to appoint at senior level a manager of Aboriginal education. They will work in an integrated way with managers of curriculum and student services to provide an integrated service. The approach was to not forget that the focus of the process was a greater responsiveness to the needs of schools. We will monitor that aspect as the system is rolled out.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: When and where are the district councils established?

Mr O'KEEFE: They are in the process of being established now. Councils are moving at their own rate. All of them would have a substantial amount of work done in creating the council to determine their profile for 2004.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Who is making decisions about the appointments to the councils?

Mr O'KEEFE: They are largely principals.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Do they need ministerial approval for the appointments?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The councils largely comprise principals of the schools. I am not out there telling people in various communities that they are anointed to serve on councils. They are school principals and district staff of the department.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Through the Chair, I might have missed something, but are parents involved with the councils? Is this the same principle as with the health advisory council the Government will establish?

Mr ALBERT: They are just a mechanism at the district level to provide the opportunity for school principals to have an input into how district resources are allocated. One of the criticisms made about the previous system was that school principals had no say in the allocation of district office resources. Locally, they call them councils, but really they are internal advisory committees.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I refer to the third last dot point on page 903 relating to the timber workers assistance package. How many displaced timber workers have been assisted through the program so far, and to what degree?

[12.10 pm]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: This is a component of our protecting old-growth forest policy inherited by me through the former Department of Training. The department is accountable for the budget, but the program is coordinated by the cabinet subcommittee for the implementation of the old-growth forest policy. The budget allocation is \$30.6 million over the life of the program to provide a range of entitlements and support services to assist redundant forest hardwood timber industry workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the old-growth forest policy. That has impacted on the member's electorate and also that of the member for Warren-Blackwood. It is anticipated that 1 000 workers will be made redundant and they will access their entitlements over the life of the program. The forest management plan process has been delayed - we are all aware of this - and the final outcome is still unclear. The average assistance payment, including the top-up redundancy payment, to displaced workers at the end of March was \$22 213. In addition to the management of workers' entitlements and employment assistance for displaced workers, the cabinet subcommittee for the management of the old-growth forest policy decided that the workers assistance program budget would meet the costs of the Sotico Pty Ltd reimbursements, \$262 000 would be provided to UnionsWA for the employment of two employment advisers and \$900 000 would be paid in compensation to piecework fallers. The work assistance program budget is balanced so that the forest management plan will be managed successfully. The program has been in operation since June 2001. When the budget documentation for this budget was finalised, 600 workers were accessing the service. That figure will have increased. To the end of March this year, 464 top-up redundancy payments had been made. To the end of March this year, 335 displaced timber workers had accessed employment. The remaining 69 workers seeking employment continue to receive employment development assistance. In relation to the workers assistance program specifically for training, 600 workers have accessed the service.

Ms J.A. RADISICH: I am interested in the new works listed on page 917. A number of additions and improvements to various high schools throughout the State have been listed in the current budget. The figures are not clear because there are no projections beyond the estimated expenditure in this financial year. I am curious about where the department believes new high schools will be developed over the next few years.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know the member has a particular interest in Ellenbrook.

Mr HARVEY: There are pressures in a number of areas across the metropolitan area that will need secondary facilities. In particular, there are pressures in Ellenbrook, Butler, Atwell and Kwinana. We need to also address

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the growth in Warnboro. Decisions will be made over the next month and recommendations will be made to the minister for a new high school or high schools for 2006, because that is the next lot of high schools that will be provided.

Ms J.A. RADISICH: To be opened in 2006?

Mr HARVEY: Yes. There is provision within this budget to allow for those schools to be opened in 2006, although they are not specifically identified as such in the budget. The funding for that can be found in the fees for new high schools under the new works item.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We must make some decisions in a short period about our allocation of funds for new high schools in those hot-spot areas and when we can get them online. It should be done before the next election.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have some questions about minor capital works. The third last dot point in the list of capital works programs for education on page 913 refers to \$1 million to improve traffic management and parking around schools, which is a subject dear to my heart. Over what period will that \$1 million be allocated? How does a school put up its hand for some funding, because I have a school that really needs it? All jokes aside, there is a big safety issue with parking and traffic at the Churchlands Primary School.

Mr HARVEY: The allocation of \$1 million is spread over two financial years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is what I was afraid of.

Mr HARVEY: Yes; however, we have a works in progress figure as well. We spend about \$1 million a year on traffic management and safety around schools. The money is normally provided on a 50-50 basis with local government authorities. The type of work includes road embayments and improvements to entries and exits around schools, but not often car parking on school sites. We work with local authorities to improve traffic management around schools. The way in which that money is allocated is that schools make applications through their districts for funds and our people work with the local authorities to develop joint proposals for how the money will be spent every year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Another issue under capital works relates to a situation in older schools; for example, parents from the Wembley Downs Primary School have raised \$26 000 towards airconditioning. That was the amount they needed to raise. They have raised that money over several years and have worked hard to do so, as parent groups do. They now find that they cannot install the airconditioning because the school needs an electrical upgrade, which will cost at least that amount of money or more. That is very dispiriting for the parents who worked so hard to raise that money. Is some contingency fund available whereby there can be a partnership with the Department of Education and Training? New schools have an adequate electricity supply, but older schools simply do not. It seems to be one of those issues that falls between the cracks in budgeting. I would like that sort of issue dealt with in some sort of partnership way with the Department of Education and Training. These are very serious questions about older schools.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I agree. I appreciate that position, especially for the schools in the member's area as well as those in my area. Parents have gone to great efforts to try to raise money. I do not know whether the member has raised the issue with me directly.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have written to the minister, but I have not received an answer.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: When did you write?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was months ago - earlier in the year. It is the principle. We can deal with the specifics another time. When such a situation arises, how do we help schools?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I take exception to anybody suggesting that it takes months to get a response from me about anything. I will check when you wrote.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not say that; I said that I wrote earlier in the year. As far as I know, there has been no response.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: You said "months ago".

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is not the reason I raised it.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know, but I do not like it when people say that sort of thing.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is three months since I wrote.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will check the dates and if there has been an undue tardiness in response, I will apologise.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is not an easy question either; I recognise that. I was not criticising the minister. I want to try to solve the problem.

Mr HARVEY: Wembley Downs Primary School is not in a zone in which we provide air-cooling.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is why the parents are doing it.

Mr HARVEY: We are aware that the supply of electricity to schools is a major issue. It is not just air-cooling; it is computers in schools and the like, which places demands on old schools. What we would not support is airconditioning, as opposed to air-cooling.

[12.20 pm]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Well, whatever it is that they have raised the money for.

Mr HARVEY: I think they are seeking refrigerated airconditioning. The power demands for that are significantly greater than for air-cooling. With regard to air-cooling, we are trying to identify within our maintenance vote over time the improvement that is required to upgrade electrical systems within schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Where is that found?

Mr HARVEY: It is in our maintenance vote. It is not in our capital works budget.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Page 918 has a line for additions and improvements to primary schools, South Kalgoorlie, \$2 million. That school is not in my electorate but many of the people with children who go to that school live in my electorate. What will the \$2 million for that school get for the people of the goldfields?

Mr HARVEY: We are providing a major upgrade to South Kalgoorlie Primary School. We have completed the feasibility study into what is required. Essentially we will be upgrading the entire school to meet the standard generic brief for primary schools. It will include a new entrance to the school, including the demolition of the Bristle brick classrooms; alterations to the existing car parks; a new staff car park and visitor parking; the demolition of the old library, which is small and in poor condition, and its replacement with a new library resource centre; and a new covered assembly area, including a canteen, sports rooms, music rooms and a dental therapy clinic. We are planning to spend, I think, \$500 000 this financial year. The project will be completed for the start of the 2005 school year.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Page 902 lists the major initiatives for 2003-04. I do not see any direct initiatives for incentives programs to attract and retain teachers in regional and remote areas. Are there any such incentives programs; and, if so, where can they be found in the budget? I refer particularly to staff permanency, and also to programs to encourage teachers to do their practical training in the country.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thank the member for the question. Incentives are certainly provided. The previous Government and minister I thought did a particularly good job in providing incentives to get teachers to stay in remote schools. The salary increments were quite substantial and effectively stopped the rapid turnover of teachers in remote schools. What we have now is a much more enhanced scholarships program. One requirement of some of the scholarships is that teachers must teach for a particular period in a place of our choosing.

Mr HUTS: This year we have allocated 62 final-year scholarships worth \$10 000 each to attract teachers to country areas. The recipients are required to teach in areas of need in rural locations. It is anticipated that we will offer 84 scholarships for the next school year.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is also the student rural experience program. Fifty-four final-year students have received stipends for the first semester of this year, and it is anticipated that a further eight will claim the \$600 stipends in the first half of the year.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is that program continuing?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. It has been very successful.

Mr HUTS: It has been highly sought after.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I have raised with the minister in the Parliament this year the possibility of giving teachers permanency incentives. Has that been considered, or is it part of this program?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is the member talking about whether people can access permanency more quickly if they go into remote areas?

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Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, particularly if they are acting in a position. If they then gain that position substantively, they should not have to do another three years to achieve permanency in that position. That is commonsense. Has anything been done about that?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We have raised with the department the issue that when people who are in an acting position get that position substantively, the period that they have spent acting in the position is not taken into consideration when they are trying to gain permanency. I agree with the member, and that is an issue that we are trying to resolve.

Mr HUTS: One of the strategies that we are discussing with the State School Teachers Union of WA in relation to the certified agreement is awarding graduates and newly placed people in clear vacancies with permanency from day one, subject to satisfactory performance and meeting the requirements of the contract; that is, staying for two or three years.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: We will watch for that with interest.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to major policy decisions on page 904. The first item under the Functional Review Taskforce entry is science and innovation grants. What will be the effect of the cut of \$1 million a year in the science and innovation grants? The second item is revenue increases. What are the details of the revenue increases that will occur over the following three out years to produce the \$5.775 million increase in income?

Mr ALBERT: The revenue increases expected arise partly from the recommendations of the functional review that has been held into the public sector generally. A range of issues has been raised with the department, in particular the place of international education and the capacity of an expanded international education program to produce increased revenue for the department. These are estimates only. However, there is some potential for them to be achieved. For example, the department is currently involved in a bid for a significant training program in the Middle East with a British company, and should that bid be successful, it is highly likely that we will achieve revenue of that order.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: You mentioned international education. Are there any other aspects to these revenue increases?

Mr ALBERT: Not at this stage.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The revenue increase refers only to international education?

Mr ALBERT: It is only international education at this stage. However, the way the proposed revenue increases are set out is that they start in 2004, so we are not talking about 2003-04; and they are estimates only for an expanded international program.

[12.30 pm]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I asked about the size of the innovation grants cut, and now I want to ask about educational priorities and how those funds will be split.

Mr GOFF: The science and technology innovation fund was an initiative introduced by the former Department of Training. Following the Premier's initiative to establish a science and technology unit within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, it was determined through the functional review process that the two should be integrated, and that is what has happened as a consequence. It is intended therefore to phase out the former Department of Training's science and technology innovation scheme this year, and thereafter the science and technology initiatives will be coordinated through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: To summarise: is a reduction being made in the grants for this sort of purpose?

Mr GOFF: My understanding is that money has been transferred.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Where is it entered as a positive amount elsewhere in the budget papers?

Mr GOFF: The Department of the Premier and Cabinet's budget estimates will show an allocation for this initiative.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We have a breakdown on how the increased funding for educational priorities will be spent and in this coming financial year that is \$6.555 million, rising to \$43 million and so on in the following year. Presumably that relates to the aim to increase retention rates and increase the minimum school leaving age up to 16 or 17 years of age.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am advised that that line refers to the enterprise bargaining agreement.

Mr A.D. McRAE: I refer to the fifth last dot point at page 903 dealing with the TAFE-university pathways initiative that is proposed to be implemented in 2003-04. I congratulate the minister for getting that into place.

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That debate has been going on for some 20 years, so getting it into place is a breakthrough. I am also concerned about the nature of the students who will be participating in that initiative and the effect of the continuing loss to Western Australia of more than 1 200 university places on a per capita basis that the State misses out on because of the federal funding arrangements for higher education, and then the knock-on effect on students who miss out on those 1 200 higher education places and then choose TAFE as their articulation path, and the further knock-on effect that that has on students undertaking vocational education and training in schools with a clear objective of continuing their training and education from school into the vocational education sector of TAFE. This domino effect of knocking people out of the system is caused by the failure of the national allocation of funds to recognise Western Australia's population entitlement.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What is the question?

Mr A.D. McRAE: The question is this, and I made reference to it initially: my concern is for the implications of this articulation pathways initiative, when there is a serious blockage at the upper end of education in universities and the flow-on effect that will have. Are there any remedies, or will this assist in pushing people through the VET-articulated system faster?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thank the member for the question. This is a major issue confronting Western Australia in particular, but subsequent to the commonwealth budget it may well confront every other State to some degree. I have spoken to the federal minister, Dr Brendan Nelson, about the number of university-funded places in Western Australia being numerically well short of where we should be just on an equity basis with the other States. The figures that the university vice-chancellors in Western Australia agree as the minimum is 1 200 places short, but in reality it could well be much greater than that. I was of the view that Dr Nelson had, yes, conceded that that was the case; and, yes, that Western Australia had a good argument for improving and increasing quite significantly the number of HECS-funded places for our publicly funded universities in Western Australia and that we would see some significant indication of that. Unfortunately, other issues have been addressed by Dr Nelson and the federal Government in a way that will make the situation worse rather than better, not only in the short term but also in the long term for Western Australian students and therefore the entire community, but particularly students who aspire to university. I do not think they would have been overjoyed by the results of the federal budget which led us to the ultimate conclusion that university places will be more costly and therefore, like it or not, less accessible to large numbers of students. We can argue about that, but I do not think it is a contestable point. A large number of students, because they will be faced with greater costs, may not be able to access university, and there is not the number of HECS-funded places anyway. At the same time we are belting away, for all our imperfections, at school and TAFE levels trying to ready more people for university entrance, and with some modest success in our first couple of years. More students have successfully completed year 12, and there has been growing pressure and demand for university places; so a bottleneck is emerging. At one level the State is trying to produce more potential university students and people who want to improve their lifetime opportunities by going to university but are finding their entrance points more difficult to access. What do they do if they cannot get into university? We could go on at some length about the kind of courses that will be denied a lot of people because of the costs, but in general terms TAFE then looms as the alternative. There is a big demand on TAFE places already. We would like to be able to guarantee every person in Western Australia a place in TAFE if they wanted to access it, which was an initiative taken by a previous Labor Government in the late 1980s, but the pressure is already on TAFE to provide a number of places. I can only visualise this pressure getting greater. We must move from the industry sector to try to improve the skills base of our Western Australian work force, and that was highlighted in the review of the skills required for the Burrup initiatives through the task force led by the member for Peel - there is a greater demand for TAFE involvement and more demand for TAFE places. A bit of a pincer movement is happening and I am fearful that the pressure on our system and on TAFE will become much greater. How that will impact on the capacity for students to access the courses of their choosing, rather than courses that might be available, we will have to determine when we see what the numbers are. Mr Goff might be able to give us some indication of how he thinks this might play out.

[12.40 pm]

Mr GOFF: It is interesting to note that in any one year about 10 per cent of the Western Australian work force enrolls in a TAFE college. Specifically in respect of the articulation issue, the trends TAFE-university and university-TAFE are quite interesting. What could be thought of as the traditional means of articulation, that is TAFE-university, suggest that nationally just under 20 000 TAFE graduates enter universities each year. The most recent figures I have seen are about two years old and there is no reason to think that the trend has not remained the same if not increased. The national figures for what is referred to as reverse articulation - that is, university to TAFE - indicate that just under 80 000 university graduates enrol in TAFE. That is a ratio of four

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to one. For every TAFE graduate who goes to university, about four university graduates enrol in TAFE. That is for a variety of reasons, such as getting job skills and becoming job ready and so forth. It also indicates the logjam to which the minister has referred previously. As we put in place these documented articulation arrangements through a project that the minister has initiated, which involves the department, TAFE institutes and the Western Australian universities, clearly that will facilitate an improvement in the articulation from TAFE to university. The issue is that with the limited number of places - of course, the places are determined by federal government policy - the vocational education and training graduates seeking entry to university will be competing with school leavers. At best, there will be a displacement. In fact, the only incentive for a university to take on additional students will be if there is accompanying full fee payment, either domestically or with overseas students, which again bears out the logjam that the minister has described previously.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will add one tiny snippet to give the member for Riverton an indication of the view from the window. In this Chamber, the Minister for Health has previously quoted the figures that show Western Australia's relative disadvantage in accessing university places. I believe the figures he gave in this Chamber were that the tertiary entrance rank score to get into nursing at Edith Cowan University is 75, and the tertiary entrance rank score to get into nursing at the RMIT University in Victoria is 55. Obviously, in Western Australia the pressure to gain entry is far greater and the capacity to do so is far less.

An ideological debate is going on now about the structure of higher education and the impact of that structure as it flows into the schools and the TAFE sector. What I see nationally - this is supported to some extent by the comments of national media commentators that I have read in the past couple of days - is an increasing requirement for individuals to invest in themselves and less of a recognition that the community might want to invest in the individual to a greater extent. As I said in the Chamber during question time last week, I think, it reminds me of the education debates that were going on in Australia 25 years ago when we were students about whether students should pay their own way and the user-pays principle.

I appreciate that the Commonwealth Government faces issues with increasing demands for funding for higher education, although I do not believe the current federal Government has embraced the responsibility to provide that increased funding. I am fearful that the direction in which we are now going will create very significant problems for people in Western Australia who are on middle and low incomes and are trying to access university education. It seems that some of the people of my vintage who benefited from easier access to university in the 1970s and 1980s - I include Brendan Nelson and Peter Costello in that - have forgotten the advantage that they were able to enjoy because of government policy at the time, and that is a shame.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: However, a Labor Government brought in the higher education contribution scheme, did it not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: A Labor Government did bring in HECS. I recognise the need for broad-based support for the system from the participants, but it must be at an affordable level and be accessible to everyone. We are moving away from that now; we are taking a first step away from it being affordable for everyone. The more we go towards that user-pays model - I do not know whether the member disagrees with me - the wider will be the gaps. Governments must make decisions about investing in the community, and I believe the federal Government has failed to do that, at the peril of all of us.

The CHAIRMAN: Three members are waiting to speak. Although that was a lengthy answer to a lengthy question, I suggest that if members want to get through more questions and answers, the questioner and the minister might like to keep their comments more succinct.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to the sixth dot point of major achievements for 2002-03 on page 901, which relates to inclusion programs for children with intellectual disabilities. I notice that this year there was a major increase in the number of students for whom places would be found in mainstream classes. In the coming year, is any increase planned, and what is the financial implication of that increase?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will answer that to the best of my ability, and perhaps I will get Margaret Banks to provide more detail. A total of 172 students with intellectual disabilities are participating in the inclusion program and the supported education program, which enables them to be enrolled at their local school, with support from the Centre for Inclusive Schooling and the district education office teams. The department will continue to strengthen the availability of supported mainstream enrolment as an option for students with intellectual disabilities, in line with the objects of the School Education Act 1999, and to minimise the risks to the department of disability discrimination, which is a real issue with which we are now confronted. The department remains committed to the provision of a full range of facilities and the services required to meet the educational needs of all students with disabilities.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will check one figure with the minister. I think he said 172 students. However, according to the sixth dot point, it is 187. Which is the correct figure?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is 187. The figure of 172 was correct when the papers were put together, I assume.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is now 187. What is the target for next year?

Ms BANKS: This year we have worked to accommodate all those who applied. We have made every effort to accommodate parents who have made this choice. As part of the review process, we are looking at our current allocative mechanisms for directing funds and into which areas. Currently, about \$120 million is used across the system to support students with disabilities. Our review is examining how we can allocate those funds differently in response to parent choice. In the provision of the number of places, we cannot identify exactly how many more we would want. This year we have been able to provide according to need, and we will be working with that goal in mind. We do not believe, from our consultation, that we will be flooded with an excessive number of parents wishing to enrol their children in the inclusion program.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Will the minister give me a general rule of thumb for the sort of support that each child would have? Is it one-to-one support with a staff member? Is it five-days-a-week support for the child? What is the general rule of thumb for the inclusion program?

[12.50 pm]

Ms BANKS: The level of support is responsive to need. The level of disability will determine the need and the adjustments required to enable the child to participate effectively in the classroom. As a broad brush approach, it usually involves some level of teacher assistance support, professional development for the teacher and ongoing support services from our Centre for Inclusive Schooling with a visiting teacher service that will work alongside the teacher in the classroom to assist with support for the student in the classroom and the management.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: With reference to students with disabilities and support units, how many high schools and senior high schools have ed support units?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Thirty.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Are they staffed full-time, five days a week?

Ms BANKS: We have education support units, education support centres and education support schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am referring to whatever is attached to, or is part of, senior high schools.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Some education supports are collocated with a high school and some ed support units are support units where mainstream is more common within a school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Perhaps the answer to the question could refer to both centres and units.

Ms BANKS: They operate five days a week. We are encouraging integration, so they work in conjunction with mainstream school. Teacher ratios generally are 10 students to one teacher plus teacher-assistant time.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Could it be possible, for example, for a unit to be staffed only four days a week and on the fifth day the staffing be worked out some other way within the school?

Ms BANKS: Flexible arrangements like that could apply. It would be difficult to respond generally. They generally operate five days a week. However, the students move in and out of mainstream classes as well as participate in specific programs.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Are you referring to City Beach?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes. It is a problem.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That school has been brought to my attention.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It needs to be examined.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: On some Fridays -

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think it is every Friday and it is particularly difficult.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is all mainstream, and it is creating an issue. It was brought to my attention a couple of weeks ago.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to major initiatives 2003-04 on pages 902 and 903. Have any provisions been made in the budget to include an adjustment or factor in any potential changes to staffing formulas or to increase teacher professional development? That issue is brought to my attention on a regular basis.

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 21 May 2003]
p151c-189a

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Which dot point?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I was looking under major initiatives, but I did not see anything.

The CHAIRMAN: Nice try, member for Wagin!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It was a genuine question.

The CHAIRMAN: It could relate to general outputs.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Has an allocation been made for staffing formulas or proposed changes?

Mr ALBERT: We have no intention of changing staffing formulas at this point because we are in the middle of an EBA process; therefore any change would arise from that process.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think I understand the history attached to that question. A review was undertaken of the staffing allocations in primary and secondary schools as a result of the lower class sizes and the impact of the half cohort in primary schools. It was undertaken by Dr Barry Bastow, who raised with me a proposition to alter the staffing formulas for secondary schools in districts, which is probably what the member for Wagin is talking about. I considered that it could potentially negatively impact on some schools and said it would not happen.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: What about teacher professional development?

Mr ALBERT: Through the school grant, substantial money is given to schools for professional development, and through the curriculum improvement program, again a substantial amount of money is for professional development of teachers. Likewise, I guess for the impending changes for the post-compulsory review, the department is presently assessing the extent to which that will impact on the need for professional development. We will make an allocation once it is done.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Have those allocations to schools been increased for the next year to allow them more flexibility in that area?

Mr ALBERT: Only by consumer price index.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a quick follow-up question on student teacher formulas. It seems to me we can have formulas and try to put everyone in little boxes, but sometimes schools have issues that need to be developed. How much flexibility is in the formulas?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member and I probably think along similar lines about this. I refer to the class size issue. It costs a lot of money to reduce class sizes by one or two students across the board. Class size reduction is not an end in itself. It is a matter of what we are trying to achieve by the reduction; namely, a better educational environment for the students. We should have much more flexibility in the way we spread our resources across the system. This is part of the negotiation on the new EBA. It is the world view, which is not necessarily shared by everybody, especially not in relation to class sizes. Other issues will emerge with schools with particular student behavioural issues, which is why I described it as the behaviour management discipline policy, which was to differentially resource schools on the basis of need as much as possible. The member for Wagin and other country members have raised issues of declining school population sizes and the potentially negative impact that removal of one or two staff might have because if we applied the formula we might lose a subject. Due to the falling numbers over the forest industry policy, the members for Warren-Blackwood and Collie lobbied strongly on behalf of schools that we would retain staffing numbers at Manjimup and Pemberton High Schools, irrespective of the formula. That has occurred at those schools and a couple of schools in the wheatbelt. At one stage, Geraldton High School had 23 students above the staff formula for its upper secondary levels.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: They were lucky.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. The outcomes did not reflect the aspiration; it was quite the opposite. There has been a degree of flexibility. As the member will appreciate, we must have a base to work from, otherwise it will be helter skelter. Within the possibilities, we try to allow flexibility based on need or special circumstances.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That should apply to schools not only in rural areas but also in my electorate.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It applies to all schools in the metropolitan area. As I said, the member for Churchlands and I probably think along the same lines. Ideally, we resource schools according to their needs regardless of where they are. Differential resourcing is the optimum.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is encouraging to hear the minister say that.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The closer we get to that the better.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I wish to return to the major policy decisions, and the advice by the minister that the notional increase in funding shown against educational priorities over the next four years is for the teachers' enterprise bargaining agreement being negotiated at the moment. My assumption was that, given the wording of educational priorities, that would have included a substantial allocation for the implementation of the desire expressed by the minister to increase school retention rates, in particular to increase the minimum leaving ages for school students to 16 years of age, and then to 17 years, within the next four or five years, if I recall correctly. The minister has made a big thing of that policy. ABC radio held a live studio debate about the issue earlier this year, and the minister put out a media statement about it last year, and has made comments since. I am surprised I cannot find any specific dot point related to this issue, which is quite a major one. There does not appear to be any additional funding in the next financial year or the following out years to implement this policy, which will cost quite a lot of money if it is to be followed through. I would like the minister's advice on any funding allocated to this program.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member is right; I have made it the subject of as much discussion as I have been able. There is no allocation of funding in this budget that could be identified as being specifically dedicated to raising the school leaving age.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Would the minister agree that that is a matter for concern, given the priority he has given to implementing this policy? Is it the case that he has tried, but been knocked back in the overall budget process, and that his desires will not be able to be put into effect?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have not been knocked back in any sense, but as the member would appreciate there is a process by which we would have to formalise a change of that nature, including the drafting of legislation. We have not been able to tag funding to it on a speculative basis. I am still very committed to the desirability of raising the school leaving age to the equivalent of year 11 in 2006 and to 17 in 2008. However, I must deal with what is hard, fast and real at the moment, and that is what is in the budget. It may well be that, by this time next year, if we have legislation or broad-based agreement that that is the way to go, there will be a budget allocation. There is no allocation this year, not because of any rejection but rather that it has not been set as hard and fast reality yet. We must pass through a number of obstacles and hoops before we can do that, including gaining the support of Parliament.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Has anything tangible been done to implement this?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes; the sorts of things the member has talked about, in the way of debate. My expectation is that I will be able to raise community support. I am working on a paper that I will hopefully be able to release for public discussion. I want this measure to be supported broadly by the Opposition and the community in general. That is one of the tasks I have over the next 12 months.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It seems like there is a long way to go.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member can assist me in shortening the journey.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer the minister to page 907, which provides supplementary information on quantity, quality and effectiveness. I am looking at the non-metropolitan student full-time equivalent subgroup. From the figures given, it appears that there is a decrease of 818 between 2001-02 and 2002-03. Did that actually occur, and does it represent an attrition rate of families living in the country, or more students attending school in Perth? Will the minister comment on that decline?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: If the member examines the other subgroups, he will see that the metropolitan figure has also decreased by about 2 000. There has been a small decrease in the number of students in non-metropolitan areas. There has been a slight fall in the number of students enrolled in schools across the State. I do not have any information that would lead me to believe that there are particular problems. The drop in student full-time equivalent is partly caused by a slight downward trend in enrolments, and partly by the introduction of the new school starting age. The half cohort moving through kindergarten, pre-primary and into year 1, together with the shift from eight to 10 sessions for pre-primary accounts for just over half of the fall in full-time equivalents from 2001-02 to 2002-03. Although there may be some decline in school numbers in the wheatbelt area, I am not sure how great that would be over the past 12 months. In the south west corner - to which the member is moving - there has been rapid growth, and that has been categorised as non-metropolitan. This area includes Busselton, Bunbury and Mandurah. I do not believe that the slight decline would be attributable to any particular cause, other than those I have just referred to.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I refer to the output and appropriation summary, which shows that education district offices received \$1.5 million. Where will that money be spent? Just recently the Peel education office in Mandurah was restructured, and there is no longer a chief executive officer for the region. Three chief executive

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officers work from Fremantle, and each has an area to control. The educators I speak to believe that that is a backward step. There is no personal presence, and one and a half hours is wasted on the drive from Fremantle to Mandurah and back. It seems a backward step for Mandurah. Has there been any analysis of how that system has been working? It has been going for only six months, but I feel it should be looked at. What will the money be spent on?

[2.10 pm]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, late this morning a question was asked that related in substance to the same issue. I take on board the member's comment about what some educators have said. There are people who oppose everything and people who support everything; that is the way life is. Mr O'Keefe might be able to provide some information - an abridged version - on the impact of the amalgamation or the reconfiguration of the district offices and the evaluation of its success or otherwise.

Mr O'KEEFE: The Peel-Fremantle cluster is intended to provide a greater range of services to people in a more specific way. With smaller groups of people one cannot provide services with a certain level of specialisation. In the early days of this reconstruction, people in the Peel area were understandably concerned that it looked like a Fremantle-isation of the system. I have spoken with the director of schools and services quite recently about that matter and my sense is that there has been quite a lot of dialogue with local principals and teachers about the arrangements set in place. There is a gathering acceptance and understanding that that is the sensible way to go and a realisation that it will meet their needs more effectively. While I acknowledge that what the member has said was originally the case, my sense is that it is going through a process of change and that people are now feeling more comfortable with the arrangement.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I do not know who Mr O'Keefe has spoken to, but it is not the people who have come into my office and said that it is a detrimental step.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: As I said before, I take on board the member's comment.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: My question relates to page 901 of the *Budget Statements* and the ninth dot point that refers to the computer financial management and information system that used to be based on Oracle Financials. I assume that that is the system throughout the schools. I have a specific question to do with that -

Mr McCAFFREY: No, it is not a school-based system. It is the system that is run through central office.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Is there not a school-based system? I want to ask a question about the three-quote system and I cannot find anything about it in the *Budget Statements*. I am looking for an excuse to ask the question, if I may -

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I understand there is a three-quote policy for purchases made by schools. If a school wants to buy a \$20 book, it must get three quotes for that book. There are two or three schools in my electorate that find this very difficult. It is time consuming and it wastes the time of staff. Everyone is aware of the need to be accountable, but could a ceiling be put on that whereby some discretion is used by the principal or whoever is making those decisions? For heaven's sake, teachers in classrooms who want to buy a book should not have to get three quotes if they can use some sensible judgment in doing so. Please, can we soon have some resolution of this matter?

Mr McCAFFREY: Yes, that is true. The State Supply Commission has guidelines that suggest that three quotes should be obtained for everything purchased with a value under \$5 000. There are also a number of common-user contracts that are let through the State Supply Commission and the other agencies into which schools can link. Some of the advice we give to schools is that the expectation that they will get three quotes is not necessary on every occasion. The schools can get a quote at the beginning of the year to make sure that they check the pricing in the market and they can then record that on their purchases. However, that does not mean it is not a problem for schools.

The director general has made a number of representations to the State Supply Commission and the issue has been raised with the Under Treasurer, who is now responsible for procurement. With regard to the Government's shared services functional review implementation and the issues of procurement and state supply, only last week a briefing was held in which the parties said they were looking closely at that requirement. We are hopeful that there will be a resolution that will make the purchasing arrangements for schools much easier.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: What the member suggested sounds like commonsense to me.

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If 800 schools each have to get three quotes on \$20 and \$50 items, it is an absurd waste of very important resources that could be used elsewhere.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to the issue of school charges and parent contributions. The minister has made available \$100 per student this year, which he has talked about on a number of occasions, to assist parents in covering those costs. Have the collection rates in schools this year changed as a result of that policy? In other words, are the collection rates down, about the same or higher?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I was wondering whether I would get a question along those lines. As the minister who fields the correspondence inquiries and a local member with a couple of high schools in my electorate, my sense is that it is no longer an issue.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is for some schools.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, I have been able to provide information about schools that indicates that their relative financial position this year has improved compared with other years. The member will probably acknowledge that some schools - without naming them - prior to getting \$100 per student, regardless of whether the parents paid the fees, were probably not getting a lot of money by way of fee revenue. When the \$100 per student is put into context across the years, and taking into account the additional assistance that is available through secondary assistance grants and so on, quite a few schools are considerably better off. We have their financial positions available -

Mr J.H.D. DAY: If the minister is talking about bank balances, that is a different issue.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Money has to come from somewhere -

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That is a different issue from the contributions made by parents, some of whom are very irked by the fact that other parents get away with paying nothing when they are hardworking parents who do the right thing and, in some cases, do everything they can to pay the fees.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I take on board the member's point. The level of surplus funds over and above the reserves and the committed funds in schools at the end of 2002 was \$33.8 million compared with \$26 million in 2001, \$20 million in 2000 and \$14 million in 1999. The level of reserves that schools had at the end of 2000 was \$51 million compared with \$43 million in 2001, \$42 million in 2000 and so on. I use that bit of information - a chart is also available - to substantiate the point that schools have more financial resources available subsequent to that policy decision than they had prior to it.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The minister is not comparing apples with apples. We all know that those funds operate buses and pay for gas, electricity, replacement photocopiers and all those sorts of things.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is the case every year. There are three broad categories of funds: the reserve funds - the sort of fund to which the member has referred; the committed funds, which are allocated against specific projects; and surplus funds. Having worked in the public sector for a short time, I know that some areas build up surplus funds and then, at the end of the financial year, think of ways to spend them. However, in this case we have surplus funds of \$38 million at the end of 2002, which is a considerable increase on the previous years. That is my point. The member may have a different point of view -

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I actually asked about collection rates.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The information given to me by Mr McCaffrey is that total fee collections for 2001 were \$29.9 million, and for 2002 they were \$32 million - an increase of \$2.1 million.

[2.20 pm]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: As a result of parent contributions.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Fee collections. I take the point of the member that some schools will show this collection. None has been brought specifically to my attention as yet that identify a significant problem. I believe there were two schools, of which Girrawheen was one. I was going to say Australind, but it is not one of them. That school has considerable funds in reserve. I used to make that point to the member for Mitchell. One or two schools did require a top up but, in general terms, it has not had a negative impact. If a person were to step outside the argument that the member and I are having, he would accept that if at least \$100 were given for each student, a lot of schools would be better off.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The minister should speak to some of the principals who have concerns about the policy. Some of the principals are operating -

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know. I have had meetings with principals. I have spoken to assembled gatherings of 100 or more principals. I had one deputy principal raise with me the assertion that his school was suffering financially because of the lack of fee contribution. Unfortunately for him, I had all the information at my fingertips and I was able to demonstrate to him and everyone else in the room that the school was substantially better off than in the previous year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That is not the only issue. The main concern of principals is that some parents do the right thing even when they are not financially well off. Some parents drive around in flash cars and their children go on ski tours, but they refuse to pay on the basis that they have been told that fees are voluntary. Principals and other parents regard that as unfair.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know they do and so do I. It is most unfortunate. That is why I get particularly angry when I hear someone like the member for Mitchell tell people that they should not pay their fees.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Therefore, would it not be fairer to require parents to pay unless they can provide a good reason to the school? If they can provide a good reason, no-one will argue that they be given special consideration.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is my strongest possible view that parents should pay. We are getting off the financial argument and dealing with the underpinning argument of whether the policy is right. There are upsides and downsides, and the member has pointed to a downside. The upside is that we do not face the real prospect - quite possible under the legislation introduced in 1999 - of people going before the courts because they did not pay school fees. It was a real prospect. That was why the penalty was in the legislation. From the member's and my experience as members of Parliament, as well as our human experience, we know full well that a lot of people who get in that position are often mothers who have to bear the full financial burden of a family because of an unsupportive partner. It is just not acceptable; it is a trade-off.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Of course it is not fair to drag people like that before the courts. It has not happened. People like that often have health care cards.

The CHAIRMAN: Order, members! This is a classic example of what happens when members stray from the budget. Let us return to the budget.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The question by the member for Darling Range related to resources available to individual schools. Is the minister able to indicate the total amount of money raised by parents and citizens groups each year that is contributed to schools in the State?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I may have to take the question on notice. I do not have the figure off the top of my head. Mr McCaffrey might know.

Mr McCaffrey: I have to use data provided by the schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is fine.

Mr McCaffrey: The schools must use a code to identify all parents and citizens donations. I have a figure for donations and parents and citizens donations.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That includes fundraising and quiz nights.

Mr McCaffrey: And possibly donations from industry. The figure is \$7.3 million.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Thank you. It is a major contribution from parents.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I refer to the works in progress at page 914 of the *Budget Statements*. Mandurah Senior College is to receive \$2.5 million for the second stage of its development. Is the minister in a position to tell me whether in the second stage the college will receive recreational grounds such as an oval or gymnasium? It appears to me that it is the only high school in Western Australia that does not have any sporting facilities. I am hopeful that it has been considered as part of the \$2.5 million.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mandurah Senior College?

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: It combines years 11 and 12. It is an extremely successful innovation for the city and the region. There is no gymnasium or playing fields.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will ask Mr Harvey to tell me when the proposition and plans for the college were developed.

Mr HARVEY: About two years ago.

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Mr A.D. MARSHALL: The second stage should have those facilities.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I take the member's point, but if he thinks about what was just said he will take my point. I ask Mr Harvey to respond.

Mr HARVEY: It is a senior campus that deals with post-compulsory years 11 and 12 as opposed to a middle school and senior campus. We do not provide ovals or gymnasiums at senior campuses but we do provide a weights room. That is something more akin to an adult environment as opposed to an oval and gymnasium. By way of comparison one could look at Mindarie Senior Campus, which has no oval. Kalgoorlie is another example. Ovals are not required as part of the curriculum. Notwithstanding that, there is examination in Mandurah of a joint development with soccer for students, who will have access to open grounds. As far as the development of the second stage is concerned, it is not envisaged to develop an oval.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: The University of Western Australia has numerous playing fields. It is very well noted for producing good cricketers of all grades; it has a very strong club. Students in years 11 and 12 are being prepared for a tertiary education. They will go through a system that bonds them together. Am I led to believe that when students in Mandurah leave middle school - where they play sport and are part of a team - they go to years 11 and 12 and lose what they have gained? If they are lucky, they will pick it up again when they attend a tertiary institution; that is, provided they have not lost interest by then. Is that what will happen?

Mr HARVEY: We are not providing ovals or gymnasiums as part of the facilities required for years 11 and 12.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: It is just as well the appropriation for sport and recreation is coming up next. I will have to look into this.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There are no such facilities at TAFE colleges either. However, I take the member's point.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: Students will be thrust out of a system with organised periods to one with a lot of free time. They should have sport as well, because if they are fit, they will study better. We are training students to leave controlled environments in which they are used to doing things on time. Sport will keep them fit. We are breaking down that system. That is not a good thing for the future.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I must support what the member for Dawesville has said. I understand that sport and physical education are not part of the curriculum in years 11 and 12. The Minister for Education is also the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Should we be looking into the lack of facilities in high schools if only for the general wellbeing of students? It reminds me that there is very little organised sport and competition in high schools in Western Australia. That is a major difference between government and non-government schools. It is well worth looking into in the future.

[2.30 pm]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In general terms I am a great believer in young people being able to readily participate in sport. I take the member's comments as valid. The issue of providing sports facilities for people in the post-compulsory years has probably emerged because we are now providing senior colleges or campuses in a format that did not exist previously; that is, only for years 11 and 12. There is some validity in the points the member is raising.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Perhaps there is a place for sharing facilities with the community and not necessarily going to the major expense of providing more facilities, because most communities these days have reasonable facilities that could be shared to encourage young people to play sport. I am talking about not so much the facilities but encouraging young people to be involved in sport.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is still a high level of encouragement for young people to be involved in sport through our school system; and I have a list of points that I could go through. The comparison the member makes between the government and non-government school systems is contestable. It may depend on which non-government school the member has in mind. Some schools have a greater focus on sport than others. However, there is some validity in the points the member is raising about the desirability of organised sport and recreation and about whether the move towards establishing a model for senior colleges and campuses that does not include sports facilities or an oval is a desirable model. That is why I asked the member for Mandurah for clarification about when that plan for Mandurah was first developed.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I thought it was in the second phase. That is why I asked the question.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No. On the other hand, Shenton College will be getting a \$1.6 million synthetic hockey turf, developed in conjunction with the Department of Sport and Recreation and local government authorities.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: My shared-arrangement model!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. That is a good model and one that we are trying to pursue more broadly so that we maximise the use of facilities and get better leverage of the resources available. Tom Price Senior High School will be getting a \$4.1 million sports hall and performing arts facility in conjunction with the Shire of Ashburton - again another partnership arrangement. That is a good model to pursue.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: If I can come back to the point that I would like the minister to consider, I have never considered it in depth until now, but we have cricket senior high schools and tennis senior high schools. Applecross Senior High School is the tennis school of Western Australia, and it is now also the tennis school of Australia. The people who are playing in those school teams would mostly be year 11 and 12 mature young athletes. It seems to me that if we are creating this new idea in regional areas of having year 11 and 12 students come together from the middle schools but are not giving them the facilities for recreation and sport and everything that comes out of that, such as fitness, comradeship and discipline, we are going backwards; the regional areas will not have the same opportunities as the metropolitan schools. I feel uncomfortable about that. Does the minister agree? Does the minister think we should be looking into that?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, I do not think we are going backwards. The member has had particular experiences. I reflect back on my time at Albany Senior High School. We had a school oval and so on, but the upper school students never used it; they used the town facilities because they were superior and were nearby. The oval does not need to be inside the school grounds. A lot of the non-government schools that the member is drawing a comparison with, which are charging \$10 000 fees for their students and are also getting huge benefits from the Commonwealth Government, are obviously able to provide facilities for their year 11 and 12 students that some of the government schools cannot provide. That raises another issue about equity and the distribution of public funding to the government and non-government school sectors. I do not think we are going backwards, but I take the point the member is making; that is, if students are interested in pursuing sport and being active, we should make accessible the facilities that they need and do our best to encourage the other students to use those facilities as well.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I agree that the issue of extra curricular activities is important. The "Investing in Government Schools" report made the recommendation that there should be an increased availability of extra curricular activities for children attending government schools. It also made two subrecommendations; namely, that funding should be sought to increase the availability of such activities; and that as part of the enterprise bargaining process, increased flexibility in the school day to enable key staff to be available to provide motivated and rewarding extra curricular activities for students should be put into effect. What is being done to provide better access to extra curricular activities and to increase the flexibility for key staff in schools to be available after hours for those sorts of activities?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not have with me a list of schools and initiatives, but just off the top of my head the member would be familiar with the redevelopment at Mt Lawley Senior High School, which will facilitate increased extra curricular activity for the students at that school. My daughter goes to John Curtin Senior High School, which is about to be beneficiary of a \$5.5 million new theatre to allow better access for students to performing arts and theatre arts activities. In my daughter's case, that requires her to attend the school every Sunday afternoon from 1.00 pm until 5.00 pm to be involved in that program with staff of the school. A range of activities need to be supported, and as best I can I am ensuring that they are supported.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is increased flexibility for teachers being sought in the current EBA negotiation process?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have not personally been involved to date in the EBA arrangements. We obviously do not want to give away too much about those negotiations.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We can tell! That is pretty normal!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I must say that there has been a leaking of the goodwill that used to exist in the education system and in the willingness of teachers to make themselves available for weekend and after-hours school activities. Frankly, I think I can pinpoint fairly accurately the period from which that change emanates. It was in about 1994-95. At that time there was a major dispute between the Government and teachers, and all after-hours school activities and so on were just canned by the teaching staff. I had people tell me at that time that the loss of the goodwill in the system that allowed that sort of activity to take place basically free of charge to the community would take 15 years to re-establish; and here we are 10 years down the track, doing our best.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to page 900, the sixth dot point under major achievements for 2002-03, which states that a review of different approaches to reporting to parents has been conducted. Obviously different

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approaches to reporting have been trialled. Is this initiative linked to the development of the new curriculum framework? When will this initiative be finalised? Is it on time and on budget?

[2.40 pm]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: One of the things that frustrated me as minister was the nature and the adequacy of reporting to parents, because a lot of the reporting was meaningless. It did not pass on to parents any particular information in a digestible form. I asked that something be done to try to simplify, clarify and standardise reporting to parents so that they would know from those reports how their students were going, where their trouble spots were, how they were going in relation to other students and the level of achievement they were reaching. That process is under way this year to simplify the reporting process and produce a template for reporting to parents, and it will set explicit standards of student performance, which has been lacking. This is one of the spin-offs that has occurred because of the changes to the curriculum framework and outcome-based education and so on. Teachers have not had a clear picture of exactly what they are supposed to be teaching at what stage to what age of students. Moderation and teacher judgments will be made more explicit; and teacher guides, including models of best practice and professional learning modules, are to be prepared. From what the member is saying, we share similar concerns about the nature of the reporting from the system - the teachers - to the parents and the adequacy of that reporting. I wanted to make sure that we achieved the results I said we would achieve; that is, clarity, simplicity, standardisation and information that parents can understand.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: When will that be finalised and come to fruition? Is there a planned timetable for that?

Mr ALBERT: The aim is to have a template prepared for reporting by the end of the year. We have been collecting information on the way in which different schools have been reporting to their parent groups, and we want to produce something that parents can understand, because there is a wide variety in the current reporting processes.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is it likely to be in 2004-05?

Mr ALBERT: Our intention was to make the template available for 2004.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Has there been any increase in staffing in the public and media relations section of the Department of Education and Training in the past 12 months or so?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I certainly hope not.

Mr ALBERT: No.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I refer to the second dot point under major achievements on page 900 where reference is made to 350 additional primary school teachers being appointed in 2003 to enable schools to have class sizes of 24 in years 1 to 3. Did these teachers come from within the system, or were they the new teachers for 2003?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They are additional. In 2003 an additional 350 full-time equivalents were placed in years 1 to 3 through the new staffing formula. The additional FTEs had the effect of reducing the average number of students in classes 1 to 3 to no greater than 24. The additional cost, which was substantial, was \$18.2 million per year. They were additional FTEs. Some of those FTEs may have been in the system working part time or whatever, but there are an additional 350 FTEs in the system, which is why it cost all that money.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: That is a feather in the minister's cap, and I congratulate him. Does the minister know the ratio of male primary teachers coming into the industry?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: This is an issue, and it links with a couple of other issues the member has raised in sport and recreation.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I agree. I raised it in 1993 in connection with the North Dandalup Primary School, and it still has not come to fruition.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Approximately one in five or one in six teachers in primary schools is male, and in secondary schools it is 1.4 to 1.5 - it is much the same; that is, the same number of men and women. This huge imbalance has developed in primary schools. Not everybody thinks that is a bad thing, but issues arise because of it. We have done our best to promote primary school teaching as a desirable profession for men. We have offered scholarships and so on, but this is a worldwide phenomenon that Governments everywhere, if they are interested, are seeking to do something about.

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: The idea is to have class sizes of 24 in years 1 to 3. Has this been achieved?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: Does that average apply in every school?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is not an average. That was the difference between our position and that of the previous Government, when it negotiated through the EBA. Although the previous Government said in the EBA that the maximum class size would be 24, the funding to match that promise was based on average class sizes. Our commitment was to maximum class sizes. All schools are funded so that no class in years 1 to 3 need have more than 24 students, but there is flexibility. With the agreement of the staff, schools can make arrangements for more than 24 in those years, which may be traded off with an additional staff member who is particularly capable in specialist areas. However, the funding that goes to each primary school is such that no class in years 1 to 3 need have more than 24 students.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Some small country schools have years 1 to 3 in the same room. Is that where that flexibility comes in? Is there any requirement in those instances for class numbers? The Isolated Children's Parents Association raised the fact that we could have more in those classes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The same applies. The issue might arise where years 3 and 4 are in the same room, because for years 4, 5, 6 and 7 the class size is actually 32. Perhaps I could get some response from the Director General, but 24 is the upper limit for years 1 to 3.

Mr ALBERT: We have built that into the funding formula. No class from years 1 to 3 need have any more than 24 students. Those country schools that have small enrolments will benefit from the change in the staffing formula, but it may mean they have class sizes in years 2 to 4 of more than 24.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: But they get the benefit through the new staffing formula?

Mr ALBERT: Yes.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I have a couple of questions on notice about class sizes to which I look forward to receiving answers before too long.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will provide that information.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: My question relates to teachers and the report on investing in government schools. Recommendation No 29 under section 5, status of teaching, draws attention to the need for additional professional development to be provided for teachers in a whole range of areas, particularly information technology. What has been done about that? Recommendation No 30 states that the quota for level 3 teacher positions should be increased and an incremental scale should be added to the current single salary point. What has been done about that?

[2.50 pm]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The number of level 3 positions has been increased by 100 a year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: How many are appointed each year now?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr McCaffrey or Mr Albert will respond.

Mr McCAFFREY: Under an initiative that we had, 100 additional senior teachers were appointed every second year. The minister referred to the extra 100. That has enabled us to put on 100 each year. It is a cumulative figure. Therefore, over the four-year period, we would expect extra teachers to be in place.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I inform the minister that a number of what appear to be quite experienced and highly qualified teachers find the process of appointment of level 3 teachers very difficult and intimidating, and that people are not necessarily selected on the basis of true merit. Under the process, in many cases people are selected on the basis of how well they can write submissions rather than on the basis of their expertise.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have been told the same thing; I am aware of that difficulty. Somebody may be able to provide more information than I. However, when the previous Government established the level 3 teacher positions, it had a fairly limited number of positions available and a fairly rigorous process to go through to obtain level 3 status. Many people who applied for such positions and who, on the basis of merit, were capable of carrying out the duties and should have been appointed if there were no limitations on the numbers were not so appointed. They felt a bit distressed about that. That issue has tumbled along. That is one reason that I thought it was important to try to increase the accessibility of level 3 positions to try to alleviate some of that concern. I take the point that whatever structure is put in place, if people who feel they are adequate for the task apply for the position and do not get it, they do not feel good about that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What about professional development for teachers?

The Chairman (Mrs D.J. Guise); Mr Alan Carpenter; Chairman; Mr John Day; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Arthur Marshall; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Norm Marlborough; Mr John Bowler; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony McRae

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I believe we need to do more to improve the career structures for classroom teachers. I would like to see a couple of additional salary points built into the structure. However, we are dealing with a structure that has a historical base rather than a modern base, and a large number of people are involved. An amount of \$1.5 million has been allocated for professional development in information and communications technology. However, I do not think the member was asking about that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It included ICT, but more generally as well.

Mr ALBERT: The general professional development budget is included in the school grant. There are also professional development components in a whole range of programs from Getting it Right - the literacy and numeracy program - to the behaviour management program and so on. Each of those programs has a component dedicated to the professional development of teachers.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Professional development of the lecturers and teachers in TAFE also takes place through the TAFE system.

Mr GOFF: In fact, we have embarked on some initiatives in this area. Late last year a major report was commissioned on the future skill needs of TAFE lecturers - the TAFE lecturer of the future. The skills profile was identified. It included a commitment to information technology and the use of online delivery strategies returned to industry to maintain the currency of the industry skill base of the lecturers. Prior to that, a peak group was put together. That group came out of the review of TAFE that was undertaken by the member for Riverton, Mr Tony McRae. That peak group, which included not only representatives from the TAFE institutes but also unions, universities, school representatives and Curriculum Council of Western Australia representatives, is overseeing the rollout of the professional development program. Already \$1.5 million has been allocated in 2002-03 for professional development plans that have been commissioned by the TAFE colleges and subsequently approved by the department.

As a part of this, there is a renewed commitment to introducing a TAFE teacher education qualifications framework. That has been agreed in principle as a part of the TAFE teachers enterprise bargaining agreement, to which the minister referred previously. One of the innovative strategies within the EBA, which includes the commitment to TAFE teacher education but more generally professional development, is the opportunity for lecturers to accrue 37.5 hours of professional development. This is at no cost to the system; they do it in their own time. This is for approved professional development. If they accrue the 37.5 hours, they are able to get time off for one of the non-contact weeks during the year. This is a significant commitment to professional development and mirrors some of the other professional practices whereby there is a requirement for professional development credits to be accrued on an annual basis.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The fifth last dot point under education on page 913 has already been mentioned today. It refers to the covered assembly area program, which involves \$8 million over four years, including \$2 million for this year. Have the allocations been made to the schools this year? If so, is it possible for a list of those schools to be provided?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am advised that the allocations have not yet been made. We need to get the budget through the Parliament first.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Fair enough. That is all I needed to know.

The appropriation was recommended.

[3.00 pm]