

SCHOOLS — HIGHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

95. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:

I refer to recent reports of chronic overcrowding at Highgate Primary School, which is leaving parents and families pleading with the state government to take action to provide space for staff after the loss of their staffroom to another classroom, as well as to provide more access to green space for students and additional carpark space for staff. I note that enrolments are rising towards 1 000 students.

- (1) After seven years in government and a mishandled land deal, what are the minister's plans to address the immediate needs of students and staff who cannot wait four years for new facilities?
- (2) Can the minister empathise with the frustrations of parents who have raised their concerns with their local member of Parliament, Hon John Carey, without tangible results? Has the local member dropped the ball?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

I have a couple of things to say.

- (1)–(2) As usual, the premise of the member's question is wrong. There has been no greater advocate than the person sitting in front of me. The local member has been on this since day one. We have a plan. It will cost money. Does the member want me to spend that money paying the City of Perth for the land or does he want me to use it at Highgate?

Point of Order

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Once again, as I have said every day this week, this is for the Minister for Education to answer, not me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, member. Carry on, minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: I went to the school last year. I have been in contact with Highgate Primary School. It is a very popular school. It has a great local member. People keep moving into the area because of the great local member—that is half the problem!

As the member would know—or he does not because he maybe does not know the inner city—when retrofitting old inner-city schools that were servicing not-so populated areas when they were first established, it is incredibly challenging. We have been working non-stop to find solutions to the issues that the member raised. If he actually went there, he would see that there are some great facilities, but there is a space issue. We have a number of measures that we are looking at to try to alleviate the issue. I am working closely with the local member, the Minister for Planning; Lands, and the government as a whole to address the issues that the member raised.

Have you visited the school?

Mr P.J. Rundle: I said I was there last year.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You were there last year were you? That is good. Would you also agree that it actually has some good facilities? Would you not agree that that is the case?

Mr P.J. Rundle: It has got good facilities.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, that is good.

It is a school with high demand. Like a lot of areas, it has high demand. We have a capital budget of \$1.5 billion. We have to deal with a lot of issues and schools and also build new schools. For a couple of days you have been going on about us and trying to tell us to pay the City of Perth more than we should. Where do you think that money comes from? What about the opportunity cost? Have you ever heard of a thing called opportunity cost in economics? Have you? No, you probably have not. Maybe get your arguments correct without coming into this place and criticising —

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member for Roe asked a question. He did not want to enter into an argument. He cannot respond or he will be called to order. I ask that you ask the minister to respond with an answer to the member for Roe, rather than a series of questions for the member for Roe.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! It is actually my job to respond to the point of order, not yours. There is no point of order, Leader of the Opposition. The minister is allowed to ask rhetorical questions. You do not have to respond to them. Carry on, minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: Our plan for Highgate is to look at issues regarding that site, which we are addressing. We are also looking at having a whole inner-city plan, which will include building a new primary school in East Perth. Only one thing is holding that up at the moment, and the member for Roe knows what it is. He came in here over the last couple of days and championed one of the obstacles to us building this new inner-city primary school. For the member for Roe to now get on his feet and criticise the state government about Highgate just shows that he does not know where he stands on anything!