

EDUCATION AND TRAINING, ROCKINGHAM

**930. Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH to the Minister for Education and Training:**

What is the State Government doing to deliver quality education and training to young people in the Peel region, particularly Rockingham?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

The Government undertook an interesting local education plan in the Peel-Rockingham area. I am very grateful to the members for Rockingham and Peel for being active in bringing together people in the area and for putting forward outstanding initiatives for education in that area. To be quite truthful, the Rockingham-Kwinana area education infrastructure has been sadly neglected over a long period. At the request of the member for Peel, I visited Kwinana Senior High School. That visit started the whole process. The area has a chronic need for superior physical and human education infrastructure. We are in the process of putting both elements into place.

A very exciting project is about to come into effect in Kwinana. I take the opportunity to advise the House of a \$17 million middle school to be built at Secret Harbour south of Rockingham in time for the start of the 2006 school year. Construction will begin as soon as possible. This is a very important development for a rapid growth area. It is testament to the drive of the residents in that area who have been advocating for a longer-term vision for education.

We are also about to provide overdue relief to the overcrowded Warnbro Community High School, which will receive \$4 million worth of permanent additions by late 2004. This is part of the capital works program for government schools in Western Australia that the Government is in the process of implementing. Embedded in the previous question was an attempt by the former Minister for Education to give some sort of lesson in financial management to the current Treasurer. I have told this House before about the amateurish, reckless financial management with which the former Minister for Education dealt with the Department of Education. Surely in the history of Western Australia there has never been a more incompetent financial manager of any major portfolio. I have told the House before that the member for Cottesloe -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Do you mean the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: He overspent the budget in one year by \$100 million. It is almost inconceivable; only the fact that it is true makes it believable. In a period of about four years the aggregate overspend of his budget was almost \$300 million. There has never been a more reckless, incompetent financial manager of the education portfolio in Western Australia.

I take the opportunity to point out that at the moment in Western Australia we are in the process of delivering outstanding changes for the forward movement of education and, at the same time, managing our budget during a period when we are subject to some restriction by the Commonwealth. Because of the financial management skills of this Government and the current Treasurer, Western Australia currently has the lowest unemployment figures in Australia for 14 years. It is almost impossible to believe the audacity of this person in trying to lecture the current Treasurer on financial management.

Two days ago the member for Alfred Cove raised a question about Melville Primary School. As members will know, I am intimately involved with the school through my children. The member raised the prospect of the Commonwealth Government providing additional finances -

Dr J.M. Woollard: Under the capital works program.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is to assist in the redevelopment of Melville Primary School, so that it will be able to meet the ambitions of a group of parents who do not want any of the current site to be sold. I have had my office contact Hon Dr Brendan Nelson's office to make sure that I understand exactly what is on offer. He is saying that we should feel free to allocate to Melville Primary School some of the \$23 million that the Commonwealth has allocated to capital works in government schools. No additional money is on offer. To fulfil the ambition that the member is espousing, we would have to take money from another project.

The sad reality is that 10 years ago, out of a total capital works budget of \$69 million for government schools in Western Australia, the Commonwealth Government - I think in the form of the Hawke and Keating Governments - contributed \$25.5 million. That has been reduced to \$23 million in dollar terms, but in real terms the Commonwealth Government has halved the amount of money that it provides to government schools in Western Australia for capital works. It is a national scandal.

I will finish on this note: three days ago I was at a meeting at which I listened to the best political analyst in Australia.

*Point of Order*

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This is supposed to be question time. The answer the minister is now giving bears no relationship whatsoever to the question that the member for Peel asked. The question related to a school at Secret Harbour. All we have had is a diatribe and an attack on the previous Government and the Leader of the Opposition, and an answer to questions from the member for Alfred Cove.

The SPEAKER: The question is now finished because of its length. Before I give the call to the next member, I would appreciate it if whoever was responsible for allowing the person with a mobile phone into my gallery, in future ensured that people who enter my gallery do not have their mobile phones switched on.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*