

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND  
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**2014–15 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2015**

**SESSION ONE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Members**

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)  
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Liz Behjat  
Hon Alanna Clohesy  
Hon Rick Mazza**

---

**Hearing commenced at 9.31 am**

**Hon PETER COLLIER**  
**Minister for Education, examined:**

**Ms SHARYN O'NEILL**  
**Director General, examined:**

**Mr DAVID AXWORTHY**  
**Deputy Director General, Schools, examined:**

**Ms JENNIFER McGRATH**  
**Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration, examined:**

**Mr STEPHEN BAXTER**  
**Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery, examined:**

**Mr ALAN DODSON**  
**Director, Evaluation and Accountability, examined:**

**Mr JOHN FISCHER**  
**Executive Director, Infrastructure, examined:**

**Mr CLIFFORD GILLAM**  
**Executive Director, Workforce, examined:**

**Mr LINDSAY HALE**  
**Executive Director, Statewide Services, examined:**

**Mr PETER TITMANIS**  
**Executive Director, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Good morning. On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Firstly, can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed the document headed "Information for Witnesses"? When asking that question, I will ask those both at the table and any of the witnesses who may be called up to the table later to indicate that they have read and understood that document.

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge.

This hearing is being recorded by Hansard, and I should also mention that for the first time yesterday and today the hearing is being broadcast. Your staff should be able to send you texts if you get anything wrong! A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private either of its own motion or at the witness's request. If for some reason you wish to make

---

a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question.

Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to review agency outcomes on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values your assistance with this.

Does anyone wish to make an introductory statement? If not, we will move straight to questions.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I asked a question in Parliament about the time taken to handle misconduct allegations and the like. Can I ask some questions around that? It is on pages 45 to 47 of the annual report, if you need a reference for that. I will start by asking how many allegations are currently being investigated by the department's standards and integrity directorate.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I did not give you that information?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No. I will quickly remind you. The question on the last day was about the amount of time taken to resolve allegations. It was by the respective categories—physical, assault et cetera—and then the number of days, the longest time, the shortest time and the average time. What I am trying to get a sense of is: at any one time, how many cases, if that is what you refer to them as, are ongoing at any one time, to get a sense of the scope of it?

**Ms O'Neill:** I refer to the annual report to give you, in broad terms, an idea. On page 45, which I think you might have referred to, you will see that in 2014–15 we received a total of 619. Of course, there is always a difference between what is received and what is resolved because there is the flow-on from year to year because the person goes on sick leave or it gets taken up into a criminal matter. It is not necessarily received in one year and resolved in one year. Obviously, that would be ideal, but it is not always the case. I will give you a broad indication of the numbers that would be dealt with, and that is at a varying degree of concern and severity. As you can see in a year, taking 2014–15 as an example, we would receive around 619, and then there would be some from the previous year.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you. To get my head around it properly, if a series of allegations are made against the one individual, is that 619 each different allegation that is made or is it 619 people against whom allegations have been made? I will give you an example: someone is accused of inappropriate behaviour but they are also accused of one of the other categories as well, in the same incident, if you like.

**Ms O'Neill:** The footnote at (a) refers to the number of allegations, so these represent the number of allegations. It is not unusual in one complaint for a number of matters to be contained in there.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The other day I was asking what is the longest time it takes to resolve things, what is the shortest time and what is the average time. For some of those, for example, the longest time was two years to resolve physical assault, two and a half years for inappropriate behaviour and one and a half years for fraud or theft. Can you talk me through how many cases would be at that higher end of the time taken to resolve them?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I would imagine that the higher end would be the ones that need to go through the court processes, but I will ask the director general to confirm that.

**Ms O'Neill:** I do not have the question you are referring to in front of me.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am happy to flick it over to you.

**Ms O'Neill:** It might help if I can look at the categories you are referring to. I do not have a breakdown of what falls into what group. As the annual report shows, if I go back to that table on page 45, using 2014–15, 354 are the local management with central oversight. That means that in terms of the order of the alleged offence, it is at the lower end and able to be resolved more likely through mediation or discussion. The 265 gives you the impression, at least at the allegation point

---

received, that they would be considered matters of more serious conduct. I do not have the proportion of those that take the longest time to resolve, but they are fewer, obviously, and they are the ones that end up being either long-term sick leave or there have been a couple of cases in which some of the witnesses have moved interstate or overseas, so we are having trouble tracking those people down or it is held up as a matter going through the criminal system. I do not have the proportion out of that that would fall into that number.

[9.40 am]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** As you can imagine, being the opposition shadow for education I get contacted by people not happy with the process. Some of the people who have contacted me are teachers against whom allegations have been made. They say to me that the fact that the system takes so long to bring matters to a conclusion either way means, “I am working in an environment with, effectively a sword hanging over my head.” People know some sort of allegation has been made, but quite often people do not know anything about the actual detail. At the teacher and principal end they are saying to me that the fact it is taking so long to resolve matters means their reputation is tarnished, whatever the outcome, because it takes so long. The parents who contact me—in particular, lately I have been contacted by parents whose children are witnesses to something—are saying, “My nine-year-old keeps being asked to be questioned about the circumstances. I just want this whole thing dealt with quickly and efficiently and let’s move on with my child being a nine-year-old.” Are you able to comment to me about that, because it does seem, at the top end of the time taken to resolve those issues, a long time to me?

**Ms O’Neill:** There is a number of things you have raised there. I think the first thing we should say is that it is a difficult position when people are in the midst of those processes; I do not think we would want to pretend otherwise. It is true to say that there have been and are some cases that take longer because in the order of priority—in terms of, for example, child protection—they fall further down the list of priority. It is obvious to everyone that our central priority is around the immediate concern of child safety, so those matters always take precedence over others. Sometimes, because they are deemed lower down in the priority list, it can take longer than we would want. The resources are reasonable in that area. Because we take child protection matters seriously, we have always sought to maintain the resources in that area, and obviously, over time, we have improved since some many years ago when we had particular issues around this. I just want to respect the fact that there are some parents and some teachers who would say that it takes longer than it might. It would be very unusual—I would be happy to consider any detail you have—and it is not my experience, and certainly it would not be advised, if we interviewed children over and over. That is not our practice, and we are held in high regard nationally for our practice in this area as a result of changes we made some years ago. I would be very surprised to hear that that would be the case.

In terms of teachers being subject to an investigation and it taking a long time, if it is a long time because it is a serious issue we make no apology for the time taken to get it right. They are serious matters, particularly when they involve children. If there are issues that are taking longer because they fall down the priority list, that is a matter that we are always trying to improve on, but in the scheme of things we have to deal with the most difficult ones first. They are not trivial issues. If they are being dealt with more locally—they tend not to take so long—it is because they are at the lower end of the scale. If it is a serious issue I would be surprised to hear that it is taking a long time, unless it is subject to those external factors.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Are you able to give me a sense of the resources in the unit? If you cannot do it today, perhaps you can take it on notice. Are you able to give me the FTE in there and maybe the levels?

**Ms O’Neill:** Yes, sure. The FTE, from memory, sits around I think 25-ish, but we can confirm that for you. As to the levels, we have an executive director—public service executive director class 2 or

3, as I recall. We have a director, more around your level 9; and then I think we have in the vicinity of four level 7s. That whole group, under those two—the director and executive director—are the investigators, essentially, and they work in groups. I think there are four level 7s, and after that there would be a bunch of level 6s and level 4s et cetera. It is a group, and the resources in that area have remained stable over the period.

**The CHAIR:** I think you said you would provide the exact number as a supplementary.

**Ms O'Neill:** We are happy to provide that.

*[Supplementary Information No A1.]*

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I take on board your offer to deal with issues around the parents. Two sets of parents have contacted me about delays recently, so I will talk to them and if they are happy for me to provide their details I will. You will, I suspect, need to take the other question I want to ask you on notice. For each category in 2014–15 and 2015–16 to date—that is, physical assault, inappropriate behaviour, fraud/theft and verbal abuse; they are the categories I asked about in my question in the house the other day—how many of those allegations have been unresolved? I listed a series of periods of time in my question: zero to three months; three to six months; six to nine months; nine to 12 months; 12 to 18 months; 18 to 24 months; and 24-plus months.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We might take that one on notice.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I thought you might.

*[Supplementary Information No A2.]*

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will move on my next area if that is all right, Chair. I want to ask about FTE, which, if you need a broad reference, is on page 7. Basically, given the current—I will be generous—economic times that we are living in, how are you managing your FTE numbers? Maybe you can make some comments around that.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Do you mean across the board in teaching and in the department?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** In schools, really.

**Ms O'Neill:** You will remember that with the new funding model we do not allocate FTE, so schools would all decide how to expend that and put on staff themselves. As at pay date 19 November we have 25 147 FTE, but that includes 136 in regions and 388 school psychologists. I think overall, as a comparison with 25 147, at the same time in November 2014 there were 24 420.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That fluctuates, of course, from day to day within the department. As you would know, we did maintain teacher numbers last year to the previous year so there was no increase. I am not sure of the exact number that was increased—that is, they were funded, but it does not mean they necessarily increased because it is up to the schools to determine their FTE now and their EAs et cetera.

**Ms O'Neill:** Overall, our employee benefits expense—so our cost of payment of employees this year—is up by \$57 million on last year.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** So with positions that are vacant now in schools are there any constraints, restrictions on ways of filling those positions?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I do not think there are any positions. I do not know.

**Ms O'Neill:** This is just the ordinary day-to-day movement.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** So if a principal's position becomes vacant, there are no restrictions on how that principal's position is filled?

**Ms O'Neill:** There are the normal operating guidelines that we have. If a principal's position is vacant it goes to advertisement. Usually the local regional executive director chairs the panel, IPS schools have the school board chair on it, so it is business as usual.

---

[9.50 am]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** And that is the case with every other category in schools.

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes, business as usual.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** So there is no contemplation of, for example, filling in vacant principals' positions on a kind of case-by-case basis?

**Ms O'Neill:** Under the act, schools have to have a principal.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Of course, and they can have an acting principal, but I mean actually filling the substantive position. There is no restriction contemplated.

**Ms O'Neill:** No; it is just business as usual. Often what will happen at this time of the year, given that we have eight days of school left, if a principal declares today that they are retiring and we did not have prior notice, then we are unlikely to be able to run a full panel in time. So it is normal practice for us to fill that with an acting person and then, when the year begins, we will run a new process.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will move on to ICT, which, I have to say, after parking, is the single biggest issue that is raised with me when I talk to school communities. I am not sure any of us can fix the parking problem, but perhaps we can fix the ICT problem. I understand the Auditor General is conducting an investigation and that will take its course. My question is about the rollout of the SOE4. As I understand it, there is an expectation that it will be rolled out by September 2016, but maybe you can talk to me about that.

**Ms O'Neill:** Almost all schools will have what is called SOE4 by June next year, which is a fantastic outcome. SOE is standard operating environment. The benefit of that is that our systems then can run efficiently and effectively in each school—our base systems. That has not been the case to date. We have been building the SOE since 2003 and it represents what people would say is industry best standard, so it is a great thing that we will be able to finally bring that to completion. At the moment, we have 474 operating under SOE and the others will be completed by then and it will be the new version of SOE4.5. There is a handful—eight schools in fact—that will remain outside of SOE for the moment, and that is their decision on the basis of specific curriculum needs, and we will talk to them about what their needs are going forward.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can you talk to me about to what extent is a school responsible for expenditure in respect to the rollout versus central expenditure?

**Ms O'Neill:** My advice is that we pay for the full rollout of SOE. It is a system nominated or acquired system—department-required system. Therefore, we pay for its rollout. If, in that, schools opt to do some other enhancements or add-ons that they choose to or elect to get done at the same time—if there was anything like that—they would pay the addition. But I understand we pay for the total of the SOE across all schools.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There is nothing that the schools need to pay for in terms of their own infrastructure to give effect to the full rollout of SOE4?

**Ms O'Neill:** The SOE4, as it is provided to schools in its standard format, is funded, as I understand, by the department.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** And it is ready to go?

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think that will do on ICT. If I can, Chair, I will finish off on one which should be easy. How many schools have closed or will close this year and can you tell me which ones?

---

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am pretty sure it is four—Buntine, Latham, Tincurrin and we closed Grass Patch.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Are you able to—you probably cannot do it now—tell me on notice how many staff were at those schools at the point at which they closed?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am not sure. It will be very few. We might need to take it on notice.

**Ms O'Neill:** In principle, in most of those schools there would usually be perhaps a cleaner, a gardener—perhaps the same person doing both—sometimes an ed assistant, very often the principal has already vacated and a teacher redeployed. Once the schools get that small, we are kind of down to that number, and then we will seek to redeploy those people.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you for that. Are there any who are on a kind of watchlist for 2016, where enrolments are a bit low?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** If the school has been for two years below 15 students, it would be considered for closure. The policy of the government is to ensure that those students are provided with a quality education, and in that forum they are probably better placed in a more dynamic educational environment, and the department constantly monitors that. If there is some sort of leeway—if there is an opportunity and the department can see that there are going to be two families moving into the district and they will bring with them four students—that will be taken into consideration. But if there is a consistent decline in student numbers—unfortunately, in the regions that is happening more and more—it is deemed that—in all of the four schools that we are talking about here, in those instances, those schools were below 15 or even below 10. One of them—I think it was Buntine—had, I think, 13, but three of them were 7s, that they had made the decision to stay in 7 and they actually had 10, and so they were going to continue to decline.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can you perhaps take on notice if there are any on that kind of 15-or-less watch for 2016 and provide that?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, certainly. There are no plans for any in 2016 but we will have a look.

*[Supplementary Information No A3.]*

**Ms O'Neill:** Chair, could I just clarify? It might be useful, in the time frame, we will have a better idea when school starts when we do the census early next year. Have you got a 10 day —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, but I am relaxed about when I get that.

**Ms O'Neill:** Otherwise the numbers at this point of the year probably are not going to be all that helpful.

**The CHAIR:** Although I would have thought in those small schools, it is more about local issues than the census and you will have a pretty good idea.

**Ms O'Neill:** That is right. They are pretty keen to attract new students.

**The CHAIR:** I will make it A3. What you are asking for are the schools that are on watch, effectively.

I will explain to you at the end of the hearing that we are giving it through to, I think, 11 January for the answers to come back. Because of the Christmas–new year break, we have extended it over the normal 10 days.

**Ms O'Neill:** We can certainly make that list.

**The CHAIR:** And, as always, we ask that those that you can answer, you answer within that period, and those that you cannot, you can seek an extension for.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Thanks for coming in today. On page 9 of the annual report are the indicators of effectiveness and efficiency. Sometimes it is difficult with these indicators because

statistically a bit of a shift is probably irrelevant, but there are some that stand out. The retention and graduation rates certainly stand out as having overachieved. Is there an explanation for those? Are the targets too low or have we just had a very good year?

**Ms O'Neill:** Would I be able to invite someone from the back, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** We will need them to come forward and find a place, and give your name and the position you hold.

**Mr Dodson:** Certainly. I am Alan Dodson. I am the director of evaluation and accountability.

In terms of the question about the KPIs here, the way that we actually organise what the target is going to be is basically to take the last two years' results and round to the next best percentage as such. It is an interesting year for some of these indicators because we have the half-year cohort in year 12, so you may have a bit of a wobble in the figures because of that. In 2015, when we get the new figures through, there may be some stabilisation. But it is fair to say that these particular three rates at the top of the page have been on an improving trajectory for some time and, if anything, that trajectory is going up, so it is a particularly good result. Obviously, on the back of things like the requirement for students to be at school or in work or training et cetera, those sorts of things obviously make a difference—whether there are good job employment prospects in the workplace or whether the student stays at school or takes some other opportunity. I think that is one of the key reasons why you will see some of these particular indicators at the top doing what they are doing.

[10.00 am]

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Still on that page, and more around the literacy and numeracy attainments. In years 3 and 5 in particular we see that reading especially, but also numeracy, is lower than the targeted or expected? Are there any explanations or reasons for that?

**Mr Dodson:** The two in question—the years 3 and 5 reading—are the two stand-outs that look way off the mark. Unfortunately, NAPLAN is not always the most precise instrument known to mankind when talking about percentages at or above the national minimum standard. Our figures are very high in terms of 94 per cent and that sort of thing. Depending on how many questions you have to achieve to get that minimum standard, sometimes the proportions jump to the next item so you will have big shifts. As to what happened in 2013—this is the biggest issue here—we will take the most obvious one which is year 5, the target there was 95 per cent. That was set on the basis of the 2013 result being 95 per cent; that was way above anything we have ever achieved before. In the following year, 2014, you can see we came down to 89.1 per cent, but that was actually our second best percentage ever, notwithstanding the 2013 one. Looking back through the history of the reading in both years 3 and 5, the 2013 result is just out there; in fact, both of those results look very good in comparison with the baseline of 2008, showing a general improvement across the board. But the 2013 result of 95 per cent, which was used in setting our target—obviously if we have achieved 95 per cent in the past we do not want to go backwards—appears to be aberrant, and the same could be said about year 3. It is the first time we have seen something like this actually happen with the NAPLAN results. It was evident right across Australia, too; it was not just for us and not just for public schools. The data is certainly evident there. Those two results stand out.

I should just say that in terms of some of the other things, even things like year 7 numeracy, 94 per cent was the target. We achieved 93.7 per cent, and that was our best ever. Even though we did not quite make the 94 per cent, it was still the best ever on the back of the way we set the targets. When you are talking about things that high, it is actually very hard to get the extra per cent. Dare I say that if we ever get to 100 per cent, everybody would be looking to get to 101 per cent or something. You cannot do it; it is actually quite difficult. But those two stand-outs are really, I think, based on the aberrant data from 2013.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Based on the explanation you have just presented and to make the annual reports more useful, I guess, to the reader—I like the fact that there is a target there and



I like the fact that it is a high target—perhaps consideration could be given to also providing a column of the five-year average or something like that, to provide an explanation that basically fits into what you have just told us. I will let you consider that as we go on.

**Mr Dodson:** Can I just say that we do that in terms of the mean scores—not the percentages at or above, but in the mean scores—on pages 155 and 156. We certainly do a five or six-year average back to the baseline.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** No worries. But for the reader, of course we always go to the front, do we not?

**Mr Dodson:** Yes.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** I will move on because I have a lot of questions, and, as you know, I have a great interest in this area. At page 13 is the “Director General’s Review”—it is covered in other parts of the annual report, but I am going through it as I find it—where the director general speaks about the move of year 7s to secondary school. In the lead-up, as we know, for a few years there was a fair amount of consternation about that. Can you let us know how that transition has gone in practice in 2015?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, it has been flawless—and it has. The biggest issue was the infrastructure, from the government’s perspective. The human factor was the biggest issue—making sure that the year 7s were prepared. The transition required 29 builds, as in extensions to secondary schools. They were all completed on time and either on or below budget—that was at a cost of around \$230 million. That was the one issue. The second issue was with the staffing. We had to make sure that we had sufficient staffing. The implementation of the Switch program was \$24 million. That was, again, flawless. We had more than enough teachers, and that is right on track at the moment—the Switch program for teachers switching from secondary to primary.

From my perspective, I visit dozens of schools week in, week out, and whenever I went to a primary school I asked last year 6s whether or not they felt that they had had a leadership experience. It was important to me that the last year 6s did not feel diminished in the role they had in the school environment. They were terrific about it. They were very, very receptive to that and they were given leadership roles and graduations. Likewise, when I went to secondary schools this year they felt that the transition was a very positive experience. From my perspective I think it was good; I commend the department and I commend the schools as well for the role that they played in that transition because it was a seismic shift.

There were a couple of areas that were probably of concern initially in the rural areas, whereby some of the country towns felt that they did not want their year 7s to leave for secondary school. I visited a number of those towns the year before last, and we gave them the option for that transition to be for an additional three years. In the end there were only really, in comparative terms, a handful of students—about 41, I think—and most of them now will transition over. But it was made for the right reasons, for a whole host of areas—the changing of the school leaving age, other jurisdictions and the non-government sector, being that nine of our schools were already there. In addition to that, the national curriculum requires that age group cohort to have that specialist area. The Auditor General did a full appraisal of the transition and it was probably the most positive Auditor General’s report I have seen. From my perspective I was pleased with the transition, and I think the department will speak in equally positive terms.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** You said there were around 41 exemptions: was that for the 2015 year?

**Mr Hale:** For 2015, 52 students stayed in a primary environment to do year 7; that includes some of our schools of the air. For 2016 we are expecting 41. By 2017, at this stage we are expecting 19. This is a system in which of course there is some fluctuation because we have made this very flexible for parents; they can opt in or out of this at any time.

---

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** The minister mentioned the Switch training program, which I have had a fair interest in. How has that gone? What are the actual numbers of teachers who have transitioned from primary to secondary?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Offhand I can tell you that I think it was 1 200, and about 400 are in schools at the moment. It has been updated: as of 23 November, 1 380 expressed an interest; 718 have completed or are completing; 610 are currently in schools.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** There are 610 in schools? That is great. Do you have that breakdown by gender?

**Ms O'Neill:** I do not think we have it with us.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Are you able to provide that on notice? The Switch program is fantastic, but I am concerned that it may exacerbate another problem that is a pet topic of mine, and that is particularly males in primary schools. How are we going with that? Are there any specific programs we have to attract males?

**The CHAIR:** Do we want to take A4 on notice before we go onto the next question?

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Yes, please.

**The CHAIR:** You want the gender breakdown of the Switch program?

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Yes.

**Ms O'Neill:** Of those in training or those who are now in school? Can we be clear?

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Both, if you can. Across the board: so how many expressed an interest, how many were in training and how many are in schools?

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

[10.10 am]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Males in the classroom is an issue at the primary level in particular. A minuscule proportion of teachers in the classroom are males at the primary school level; it has declined appreciably. We did start a program with regard to males in the classroom, which has not continued this year. I have spoken to the department about this; I want to continue it. I was actually going out to a couple of secondary schools with some newly graduated male primary school teachers and talking to the year 10s when they were doing their subject selection with regard to the benefits of teaching. The department also has constructed a DVD to go to secondary schools, and perhaps I will get the director general to comment about that in a moment, again to highlight the attributes of teaching as a career pathway. The simple fact of the matter is that fewer and fewer males are choosing teaching as a career. It is very common to go into a school environment and have no males at all in the classroom—none. Even in administration, it is becoming increasingly evident as well. If you are lucky, you might get a deputy or one classroom teacher or a “phys-eder” or the gardener, and that is about it, so there are no male role models in a lot of primary schools the moment. I turn to the director general in regards to the DVD.

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes, on the gender profile, it is a highly feminised workforce. Just to confirm what the minister was saying, if you include teachers and administrators, 21.8 per cent of them are male and 78.2 per cent are female. When you break that down into primary, just ed act staff, just including teachers and administrators, in primary 13.3 per cent are male, as opposed to secondary where you get up to 37.3 per cent. So, it is more particularly a primary school issue, as the minister said. In terms of next year and males in primary—males in schools—we do hope to provide a DVD and further encouragement of our own staff to encourage other people as well, and particularly our own students, so we have a captive audience of secondary students who we want to encourage to give consideration to teaching, and in particular males in teaching. Apart from the normal things that happen with our staff going to universities, for example, we also want to—this is something the

minister has been keen on—have male teachers either online, through DVDs or the like, or in person talking to young men about seeing it as a career pathway opportunity.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** As I said, that is why, when you get these young guys who are going out into the classroom, and they do, the kids really embrace that concept. I became a teacher because of my year 5 schoolteacher, Frank Hayes, at North Kal. He was a great man, a really great man, and I made my decision when I was 10 years of age that I wanted to be a teacher, so that role model concept is very powerful. I think it is important that we encourage as many of those young guys to get into teaching as we possibly can.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** I do not want to eat up a lot of time on this today, but I think this is one of the critical issues facing education as we go forward, and more so in the provision of education and getting young people ready for life. This is not directly related to your department, but you are the users of what the universities produce. Is the structure of teaching programs at university, effectively through a full-time course, prohibitive for males, especially young males who might be engaging in other things at the time and may be able to do a commerce degree part-time or a science degree part-time, but cannot really do a teaching degree part-time; or can you do it?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** You can actually do it. My media adviser is a top bloke—Michael Tetlow!

**The CHAIR:** Does he not expect his career prospects to last long with you, minister? Is that why he is looking for an alternative career? Are you going back to primary teaching?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** He is. Believe it or not, he really is enjoying it. He loves being out in the schools. Next year he is going to start part-time—I do not know whether you know this, Sharyn —

**The CHAIR:** I hope he has told everyone else!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** He is keeping his job; do not worry about that! He loves it; he really loves being out. He has been out with me in the schools; he absolutely loves it and he has just made a conscious decision to do it. So, you can do it part-time. At the ministerial council meeting this Friday, we are talking about pre-service—that is, in a generic sense.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** I think what the Leader of the Opposition referred to earlier as interesting economic times may actually be of assistance to this cause at the moment, so any programs that are targeted to males might be more fruitful than they have been in the recent past.

**Ms O'Neill:** It is also not particular to males, but we have lots of single parents—who are male or female—and one of the things that the ministers have talked about and we have as a state are practicums, for example, where they might need to give up temporarily some of their part-time employment to be able to undertake practicums. So, it is a different demographic in universities and I am not speaking on their behalf—they can do that themselves—but there are some challenges to have men or indeed women who might be breadwinners not only study, but undertake some of the practicum requirements, particularly if we want them to go and do it in the country, where they are in part-time employment to sustain their living, and that cuts across a long-term prac that goes for a term, for example. There are new challenges facing universities and, therefore, indirectly, and in some ways directly, facing our department.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Police overcome that by offering a salary during training.

**Ms O'Neill:** We offer a stipend.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** You offer a stipend?

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** We got some issues about police recruiting yesterday when we had them in yesterday, but that is another story!

---

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I want to go to capital works, referred to on page 61, if you are interested, in the annual report, but it is a more specific question. Are there any plans to build Caversham south primary school?

**Mr Fischer:** A number of sites in the Caversham area have been set aside for future primary schools. The decision to build a primary school is really based on the pressure on existing schools and the demographics of that area, including a new housing development. Caversham is an area that we continue to watch, so at some stage there will be a new school built in the Caversham area, but the timing is yet to be determined.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It was promised in last year's budget; is that correct?

**Mr Fischer:** Not in the budget. There was an announcement made that we would build a primary school in the Caversham area. That was based on projections that were three years out; that was for a primary school to be built in 2017 as part of the package for the public-private partnership.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Sorry, I thought it was 2016.

**Mr Fischer:** It was to open in 2017; that was the announcement.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Built in 2016.

**Mr Fischer:** Built in 2016, but it was announced as if it would be opening in 2017. There was funding for four primary schools. After the announcement had been made, we looked at the enrolments at a number of other schools, and in particular the one in the Byford area had a lot greater demand than Caversham, so we put it to the government that we change that position.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** What was the basis of the decision not to build in Caversham? How many households was that looking at; what were the demographics?

**Mr Fischer:** Caversham Primary School at the moment, I think, is a single stream school of about 270 students. It is a constrained site because of the gas pipeline. With the initial assessment, at the time we were constrained in terms of how much additional accommodation we could put on site.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** But this was a new one south of Reid Highway, so Caversham south.

**Mr Fischer:** Looking at the Caversham school, the location where we could best provide relief was announced as Caversham south. This is off the top my head, but that was compared to growth in west Byford. That was a school that had over 550 students. That was a school that had only been open for two years and was growing well beyond the capacity of the school, including the parking issues there. So, we pushed for a new school to be built in west Byford.

[10.20 am]

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** The capital works budget was limited to choices of only X number of schools.

**Mr Fischer:** With primary schools there is funding in the budget for four primary schools a year, and they are announced, generally, two years prior to their opening.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I will come back to the demographics, so not just the school population.

**Mr Fischer:** Yes.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Caversham school, as you say, is under increasing pressure; I will come back to that in a minute. Can you tell me what the demographics around Caversham are for future use?

**Mr Fischer:** In that Caversham area you have a number of suburbs that are growing—Dayton, and Brabham, I think, is the other one. They are probably to the north of Caversham. The question will be where the next new primary school in that area will open. Should it be south of Caversham or

north of Caversham? That is the reason we monitor housing development in those areas. We actually go and survey houses under construction.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** What are the actual numbers?

**Mr Fischer:** I cannot comment offhand, but we could identify those.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Can you take it on notice?

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I was having a look at it, and five years ago Caversham's population was around 500. In five years' time its population will be about 20 000. I would have thought that having a new school in Caversham might have been a priority on the basis of the projected population.

**Mr Fischer:** As I mentioned, it is certainly an area we are continuing to monitor. It really depends on the priority of other areas in terms of where the demands are and how best they can be met. If we can increase the capacity at Caversham and provide relief either with transportables or even through encouraging students to go to other close-by schools, that may be a better solution than building new schools.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** The existing Caversham Primary School, as you noted, is under pressure because of the increase in population and because of no new primary school. It is experiencing rapid population growth. As such, there is pressure on the school infrastructure. They need a new covered assembly area. Is there any room in the budget for a new covered assembly area because of the growth in the school?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Is that at Caversham?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Yes. That is north of Reid Highway; the population is also growing south of Reid Highway.

**Mr Fischer:** There is a program to upgrade covered assemblies, libraries or admins. Schools apply for that and their needs are assessed on a statewide basis about where the priority might be. If there is a particular need, you should encourage them to write —

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I am fairly sure they have.

**The CHAIR:** It is Christmas, minister: can you not just commit to it today?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I might be giving a Christmas present tomorrow, but I am not sure that is included.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Is there no —

**Mr Fischer:** I cannot comment on the priorities of Caversham against other schools today; I just do not have that information.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Can you take that on notice?

**Ms O'Neill:** If they have applied, they will be in the process.

**Mr Fischer:** We can talk to the school about where they might fit in that process.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Can we take that on notice?

**The CHAIR:** That is the list of the order of priority for those schools.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Yes.

**Ms O'Neill:** Can I just clarify the question? We are being asked for a list of priority schools for what?

**Mr Fischer:** The covered assemblies.

---

**Ms O'Neill:** The whole program?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** And whether Caversham has actually applied.

**The CHAIR:** And where Caversham would fit in that priority list.

**Mr Fischer:** We can indicate, firstly, whether they have applied and how we might best meet that need and where they might fit in the priority listing—high, medium or low. We do not have a ranking of 1, 2 or 3, but we can certainly give some indication, whether it is —

**Ms O'Neill:** Rather than providing the list, as you said it is specific to Caversham and where they fit into that.

**The CHAIR:** Are you happy with that, member?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It would be good to see the scope of how those decisions are made.

**The CHAIR:** Maybe provide some quantum then. If the categories are low, medium and high, how many are in the high category, and of those how many have been fulfilled; how many are in the medium and how many are in the low, without necessarily giving a list as such, but just to give a sense of where everyone fits.

**Mr Fischer:** Generally, we do not build too many covered assemblies under these programs. A lot of the schools received covered assemblies out of the BER program. The school would have made a decision during that time on what it would prefer in terms of a covered assembly, library or teaching block et cetera. They have probably gone through that conversation already as part of that BER assessment.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** BER?

**Mr Fischer:** The Building the Education Revolution program.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** That was a couple of years ago, was it not?

**Mr Fischer:** It was, but that was a program that addressed new facilities.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It was a federal program, was it not?

**Mr Fischer:** A federal program that provided facilities in all primary schools, and as part of that schools were encouraged to talk about what best suited their needs in terms of their particular school.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** But in light of the announcement that there was going to be a new primary school and now there will not be a new primary school and there is increasing pressure—a dramatic increase in population in Caversham—would you not think there would be a need to consider increasing those sort of covered assembly areas and other infrastructure that was covered under BER?

**Mr Fischer:** A covered assembly does not improve the capacity of a school. We would not consider a covered assembly based on —

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It would improve their functionality, would it not?

**Mr Fischer:** There are a lot of things we can do to improve the functionality of schools, but we would not make a decision about a covered assembly based on enrolment growth. The question really relates to the growth of the Caversham area and how we best respond to that. The population is changing in that area. Previously there was growth in the south, and, as I mentioned, it is now further to the north at Dayton and Brabham and south of Gngangara Road. We will look at that as part of our advice to government for a new school.

**The CHAIR:** As A6 I think you listed a whole range of issues you could give us information on earlier, and I think we agreed that we would also try to get at least the number of schools in the high

---

priority, medium priority and low priority, and where Caversham fits within that. Does that cover A6? Are you happy with that?

**Ms O'Neill:** I just do not know that the program works in the way that is being described, because we do not do too many of these undercover areas anymore. What we can do about Caversham is find out whether they have applied and, under the program, the likelihood of them getting what is being suggested.

**The CHAIR:** The priorities may not be about covered assemblies; it may be about their priority for capital works versus other priorities for capital works and whether they are high, medium or low in that priority list. I think that is how you described it. We accept that it is where they fit within that priority list and how many schools are in the high priority list, how many are in the medium and how many are in the low for capital works improvements.

**Mr Fischer:** We will provide an answer in general terms; it may not be framed quite in the way you have described, but we will provide some advice about where Caversham fits in its needs compared with other schools.

[*Supplementary Information No A6.*]

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** I refer to page 22. A statement in the second paragraph reads —

Despite enormous effort and investment over many years, **outcomes for Aboriginal students** remain disproportionately and unacceptably low.

What is some of the investment and effort that has been done over many years?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Substandard, to put it mildly. I guess it is a criticism, but across the board we are all to blame, with all due respect. What has happened with Aboriginal students in the past is that I think there has been enormous goodwill to overcome the barriers between the educational standards of Aboriginal students compared with their non-Aboriginal counterparts, and that is from successive governments. I do not think there would be an educator on this earth who has not had a sincere desire to actually improve things. Having said that—this is just from my perspective; I will get the director general to speak—on the very first day I became education minister I spoke with the director general and said, “My top priority is Aboriginal education. Let’s make that clear.” Do you remember that conversation, director general?

**Ms O'Neill:** I do.

[10.30 am]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I said, “We have to do something to overcome the barrier between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.” I will not take up too much time; it is an interesting point to me, this one. One of the things already in place were the child and parent centres. Early intervention is absolutely imperative to help overcome that distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. That was already in train and we have now opened 16. I am opening another one tomorrow. We will have 21 by the end of next year. They provide not just early intervention, and it is not exclusive to Aboriginal children, but captures a significant cohort of students within the boundaries of the child and parent centres who are Aboriginal. It provides early intervention with literacy and numeracy, early intervention with parenting skills, early intervention with all those wraparound services like mental health, psychology, dietary advice et cetera to ensure that we are getting those students early. That is the first one. If you go to Port Hedland, the very first child and parent centre I opened, there is about 90 per cent Aboriginal. That was the start. The second thing that we did at the start of it was we looked at ways in which we can target, more appropriately, educational curriculum, pedagogy, which is specific to Aboriginal students. That is what the department has been working on quite significantly over the last few years, and as a result of that, our results for Aboriginal students have actually shown improvement over that period in NAPLAN. In addition to that, the new student-centred funding model means that every single Aboriginal child is funded—

every child—and the funding must go towards the enhancement of that child's education, which was not the case before. Coupled with that was an increase in funding for Aboriginal students. It is not just money; we are not just going to throw money at it. Then it must be captured within the new strategies for Aboriginal students. Then, again, capturing the early intervention once again, next year we will be opening 37 Aboriginal kindergartens. That is for three-year-old Aboriginal students. The point of that exercise is to ensure again that early intervention is a key component of that child's education. They will work not just with the Aboriginal students, but with the parents as well. I would dearly love to expand those KindiLink centres—KindiLink is the name given to the new program for next year. There is this terrible little group in government called Treasury who keep on telling me where to go, but I am just going to keep on going for it.

**The CHAIR:** You do aim to be Premier one day!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** They do not like it when I come in the room. But, anyway, I would like to think that those KindiLinks will actually expand in terms of the role that they play and the more interaction that they have with the Aboriginal children. Coupled with all of that, I think we are actually doing an enormous amount in that very vital component of early intervention. That is at the entry level. At the exit level—equally as significant. Too many Aboriginal students are missing out because they do not have the foundations at a very early age. Their desire, their capacity, their motivation to remain at school is negligible. By the time they get to the later part of primary school, the early part of secondary school, their attendance rates are appalling. Getting that early intervention is vital. Making it meaningful, in terms of curriculum development in primary and then secondary, will be a key component. As I said, it is what we are doing in terms of much more targeted curriculum and funding. Then at the end, as I said—the very end—no matter what happens, you are still going to have Aboriginal students that are going to be victims of their environment. That is why we have increased funding significantly to the CARE schools, which are the curriculum and re-engagement in education schools. That is at the exit level. They are students which, again, are not exclusively Aboriginal, but a significant proportion are. What they do is provide tailored programs for Aboriginal students and students across the board, which will see them directed into a career pathway which is meaningful to them. We have 11 at the moment; we had eight when we started. We have more than trebled their funding. I have got a bit more to do in that space, and they know that is coming. I have been working very fastidiously with the CARE schools. At the public education system with those disengaged students, again, which capture a lot of Aboriginal students, the behaviour centres that we currently have are going to be changed completely next year and they will become engagement centres. They will deal not just with students that are not attuned to mainstream schooling, but also with students that have real issues with attendance, again which will capture a large number of Aboriginal students. There will be 13 of those that will open next year, plus a learning academy in Midland for seriously disengaged students, again which will capture a lot of Aboriginal students—so all of that. Sorry to go on a bit much, and I could go on more, but I will shut up now. Suffice to say early intervention is vital and I do think we have done an enormous amount there, plus with the targeted funding and the targeted curriculum emphasis, plus with the exit strategy, I really do think we are making some headway.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** All right. Before you go to the director general, the statement in the report says there has been an enormous amount of effort in investment into Aboriginals, but your opening remarks were that you believe it is substandard at this point in time.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Previous.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Previous; okay. With all those programs you are putting in place, how are you actually measuring outcomes to see if they are actually working?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Fundamentally, attendance is vital. We will see if an Aboriginal child is engaged in school by the level of attendance of that child. You are finding, with the child and parent

---



centres in particular, they really are enhancing attendance. We will not be able to see—I will be out of this job by the time we see some real outcomes. I am talking 20 years down the track.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** As opposed to 15 months, yes!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I wondered if you were awake! You wish! Sorry, I got distracted there.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Easily distracted—C minus!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** You will be out of the job by the time you start to see the outcomes of these programs.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Sorry, in 10 years' time when I retire as Minister for Education.

**The CHAIR:** I thought you were just trying to claim the next 20 years of improvements, minister.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I like to think that particularly those children entering those KindiLink centres next year, they are three years old—I like to think that when they are at the end of primary school, you will definitely see a positive product of the fact that they got that personal attention at that very early age, which they have not had before, certainly not with such emphasis. When I was talking—sorry, just to clarify—previously, I prefaced my comments by saying I was not blaming anyone. I was just saying I was thinking we were pouring heaps of money into Aboriginal education but the outcomes were always parlous. As I said, that was successive governments where there was no lack of sincerity on the part of successive education ministers or departments or directors general; it was the fact that probably not enough emphasis was placed on the things that matter in terms of early intervention and attendance.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Just one more question on that. Earlier you spoke about pathways for training men into becoming teachers et cetera. What programs are in place for Aboriginal teachers and would they actually assist with the Aboriginal teaching program to have Aboriginal teachers?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Without a doubt. Aboriginal and Islander education officers, which assist—they are not teachers; they are education assistants. The problem with that, of course, is that we have difficulty filling the positions at the moment. We reduced the numbers but the simple fact of the matter is we just have difficulty filling that position. There would be nothing better, I do not think, or more powerful than for an Aboriginal child to have an Aboriginal mentor in terms of an Aboriginal teacher. The numbers that are going through the system at the moment are very, very small in comparison to non-Aboriginal counterparts. Again, I like to think, with the improvement in the strategies we are using at the moment, there will be more Aboriginal students who will take up teaching as a career pathway. It is not through a lack of interest on their part. Wherever I go, there is not a lack of interest on their part; it is just the opportunities that are available to them in terms that the enormous social pressures that they face have pretty much extinguished a number of those students before they even start. Ideally, then, I would like to think that through the strategies that we implemented over the last couple of years in particular, we will see an advancement of Aboriginal students taking up education as a career pathway and see them in the classrooms.

**Ms O'Neill:** The minister is quite right, and closing the gap results in this area remain very challenging, but there is encouragement to be taken. Page 32 refers to the improvement in apparent retention rate from years 8 to 12 going from 43.8 per cent to 49.1 per cent. That is a good increase. It is not always well appreciated how difficult it is to get improvements in this area. If you think about the WACE results from 2010 to 2013 as a snapshot, in 2010 there were 335 WACE-eligible Aboriginal students. At the end of 2013 we had 441. The number who achieved a WACE has increased by more than 100. That is not good enough, obviously, but there is cause for, I think, encouragement at least in the results.

[10.40 am]

There are two things I would point to. In terms of staffing, there are over 1 000 Aboriginal people, by headcount, in the department—200 of those are teachers. We have, as the minister said, AIEOs

and teacher assistants—more of those, in excess of 500. There was a program some years ago supporting AIEOs—Aboriginal assistants—to transition into teaching. It is fair to say that there was some mixed success. The people were well supported and ended up becoming teachers. We should not underestimate how challenging it is for some of those people in terms of their literacy and numeracy capacity that they have needed a lot of support in. Also, it is quite challenging—they tell us—to decide whether to go back and teach on country, which brings its own family challenges, or go and teach off their own country in someone else's country, which brings cultural challenges. We were so thrilled this year that our Premier's primary teacher of the year was an Aboriginal teacher for the first time in the general category, which is an enormous celebration, I think, for us.

My final comment is that just yesterday we issued to schools, under the auspices of the minister chairing the Aboriginal sub-committee of cabinet, for the first time in Australia, what is called cultural standards where we set the expectations of all staff about their behaviour and how they will go about teaching and interacting with Aboriginal children and families. We are really excited about that because awareness-raising has been going on forever, but now we have set in concrete, I guess, our very clear expectations—and we are the first state to have done that. There are lots of things happening. Progress is not quick enough, but I think, off a pretty lean base, there is cause for some encouragement—but there is lots to be done.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** On page 23 on recruitment in the third paragraph down, you talk about significant staffing reforms and that recruitment selection has been done at school level. Are there many cases where the principal or deputy principal has been permanently appointed, and then, for whatever reason, they are not working in the school as an acting principal or a deputy principal and is there for a long time?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Do you mean an acting principal at a school over a sustained period?

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Over a sustained period of time.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I would imagine that would be fairly common.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Is it?

**Ms O'Neill:** It does happen. A principal is appointed substantively; they might go on sick leave for two years or they might act on a higher-level promotional opportunity or they might go on secondment for a couple of years, although we have limited that of late. It is not infrequent where a principal, for a number of reasons, goes away from the school and an acting person is put in their place.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** What sort of effect does it have on the school community having that sort of uncertainty between the permanent principal not being there and maybe an acting principal being there, or even the deputy principal in some of those schools? I know that the school in Kinross has been particularly brought to my attention. It had a fairly long-term acting —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Is that Kinross Primary School?

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Yes.

**Ms O'Neill:** In general terms, schools manage well and we ensure that the person who is acting is a good person, and very often is familiar to the school. Aside from perhaps some specific examples and one that you might be referring to, schools carry on pretty well—ongoing, regardless of that situation. Obviously, it is most ideal for the permanent appointee to be in the school but we cannot stop people, for example, taking long service leave—in fact, we encourage it. We do everything we can to ensure that it is sustainable and productive and positive, but, from time to time, communities do write and say that a person has been gone a long time. That is why, for example, leave without pay—we do ensure that it is not allowed for extensive periods of time. We do say to the people that they either need to come back to the school or make some other decisions. We are cognisant of the impact.

---

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can I just follow up on that issue raised by Hon Rick Mazza. The issue, it seems to me, is not the fact that, from time to time, you will have acting principals; that is just a normal function of running the system. The issue that is raised with me frequently, though, is where you have schools that have a series of acting principals and where you lose that important continuity of leadership. With that in mind, I would like it if you could provide me some information about where in 2015 you had, let us say, more than two acting principals at a school and what your anticipation is for the start of 2016. Most recently when I visited the Pilbara, Wickham was raised with me. I got an email—I think the minister did, and probably the director general did as well—from Port Kennedy Primary School in the last few days where they are talking about a series of acting principals. It really is destabilising, obviously not just for the staff in the school, but for the students and families as well. The example in Wickham was one that I am sure is common across the board: when you actually fix it and get someone decent in there and people can start to see the change, for a whole range of other reasons, that is probably going to change again. Are you able to comment on that, and then can I ask you to take on notice the question that I flagged?

**Ms O'Neill:** You would appreciate that there are circumstances where people, for a number of reasons, need to be absent from the school. In those situations, we strive to have a person backfill—is what we call it—in that position for as long as they can, but we cannot force people. I can think of an occasion where someone did it for six months and then they won a different position. That is not poor management; that is life, and we had to get someone else come. Then that person became unwell, so a series of unfortunate incidents can occur. We do not prefer it to be that way, but that is the way and we are governed by public sector standards and we are governed by industrial instruments and people get pregnant and sick, and that is out of my control entirely; I will just make that perfectly clear! Unfortunately, those circumstances do happen. People commit to stay for the full year and then make a different decision. I cannot force them to stay. It is not ideal. It is not what we want. We always prefer sustainability in terms of placements of people, but, from time to time, that just is not possible. I will just check what we can provide. You are after a list of schools where there is a high turnover rate?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** A high turnover I guess—I do not want to put a number on it because, you know, there could be a perfectly reasonable set of circumstances applying at one school that appear to be unreasonable at another school. I want a sense of to what extent turnover is high. My sense, from visiting schools is, of course, the further you get from Perth or a regional centre, the more that is likely to happen and particularly if you are talking about remotes who probably need sustainable leadership the most. I want to get a sense of that if you are able to provide me with that information about to what extent was there serial turnover in 2015 and to what extent are you looking at acting positions starting off 2016?

**Ms O'Neill:** They are two separate questions. The second question is, just so I can clarify, where we anticipate a school starting the year with an acting person. We could provide that, and that will be a point in time because that will change day by day.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Of course.

**Ms O'Neill:** It will be best judgement on that day. The first question, which sounds a little more qualitative—if we can give some numbers we will—is where we have experienced high turnover in schools. That will be for a range of reasons, but perhaps if we could start by giving you where we would judge it to be a high turnover and perhaps just list those schools. Would that suit?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, that would be great; thank you.

[*Supplementary Information No A7.*]

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** On page 62, regarding the last couple of line items there regarding the agricultural colleges at Cunderdin and Morawa. I see on the Cunderdin trade training centre, there is

an increase of nearly 9.3 per cent on the revised budget through a tender. What were the circumstances surrounding that increase?

[10.50 am]

**Mr Fischer:** I do not have the exact details, but Cunderdin is a remote area. With the trade training centres, there was an initial allocation that was based on, I guess, generic-type rates for what would be expected in particular areas. The scope would then be decided, and then it goes to tender. Cunderdin is probably a remote area for the type of works; I cannot give you any more detail on that.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Okay. So it was obviously underestimated.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I do not know whether we would call it remote. It is probably —

**Mr Fischer:** It is remote from Perth, I guess. With these trade training centres, they are specialist-type buildings.

**Ms O'Neill:** It is a higher cost build area than outside of the metros —

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** But you could have taken that into consideration when you did the original budget.

**Ms O'Neill:** We would have.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** There is a difference of nearly 10 per cent there.

**Mr Fischer:** Yes, and there are other savings that are quite the other way. That is just the status of the construction market.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Just on the Cunderdin school, at page 63, under “Miscellaneous programs”, I see that some concrete cancer remediation is being done at \$7.5 million, and then also some ember screen installation. Is the ember screening because that is a fire-prone area?

**Mr Fischer:** Those miscellaneous programs do not apply to Cunderdin. That is a statewide program.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Okay. I just saw Cunderdin at the top of the royalties for regions thing there. So that is a statewide program. How many schools are going to receive those ember screen installations?

**Mr Fischer:** The refurbishment program was finished in 2015, although it was for every school that was on our bushfire register; those schools are assessed as being in high prone areas for bushfires. That number has changed a bit, but I think we addressed about 127 schools as part of that ember screen program that fitted screens on evaporative air conditioning. We have a memorandum of understanding with FESA, where we continue to inspect schools in fire-prone areas, and we do other treatments to buildings, including closing gaps in the eaves and those types of things to reduce the risk of bushfires.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** The fire-prone areas have been declared. There was a map, I think in *The Sunday Times* or *The West Australian*—one of them—that pretty much showed the entire state as being fire-prone. Is this going to be rolled out to other schools?

**Mr Fischer:** It may change our standard for new buildings. The new codes require different building standards and different building materials where there is construction close to those declared zones.

**Ms O'Neill:** The fire zone register does not include all schools.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** No. I am just wondering whether that new legislation will actually change that, though.

**Mr Fischer:** It will have an impact on new buildings in education—all new buildings.

---

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** But obviously the schools that have been built, particularly in country areas, that have been there for decades may need to be upgraded?

**Mr Fischer:** My understanding is that the code is not retrospective. It applies to new construction, where we are going to do some new development at those schools. The ember screen program is really targeted at those schools that were seen as vulnerable to bushfire risk. We had identified those schools with FESA, and this is one of the elements that we did to try to reduce their vulnerability to fire.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Just one last question if I can, Chair; it is just on this. For those particular schools that FESA has identified as being at risk, do you have evacuation programs and that for the students and the teachers?

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Thank you. That is all, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Just on that issue, you say that you did an assessment with FESA, but did that use the same criteria as were used for the maps that were released on the weekend, or could there be schools within those fire-prone areas—in the maps that were released on the weekend, I think it is about within 100 metres of more than one hectare of bush —

**Mr Fischer:** What was released on the weekend is quite a different set of criteria from what we use.

**The CHAIR:** So what are you doing to go back and assess schools that now fall within that fire risk area identified on the maps released on the weekend to ensure they are fire safe?

**Mr Fischer:** The map has not changed the risk. The risk is always whatever the risk is for a school.

**The CHAIR:** It is now an identified risk, so if a school burns down in those areas and you have done nothing about that —

**Mr Fischer:** What the map indicated is that different standards will now apply to construction in those areas that were identified. That will apply to every building that exists close to those areas.

**The CHAIR:** Have you done an examination of the risks at those schools? You talk about ember protection on evaporative air coolers; if they are now listed within that fire-prone zone, within 100 metres of one hectare of bush, you would have to go back and look at and develop a priority list of putting ember guards on those air conditioners for those schools, would you not, otherwise your risk as a department is increased because FESA has identified it as a fire-prone area?

**Mr Fischer:** We will look at how the standards apply to our existing buildings and we will determine what work has to be done.

**The CHAIR:** Even in the media on the weekend they talked about the fact that the map has been available internally within government for quite some time. So you have not been shared that map by FESA or Planning or anyone?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any plans to do anything in the immediate future?

**Ms O'Neill:** If there is any new information—for example new to us, like this—we will always go back and check our program and consider what else might need to be done, as I think you have expressed.

**Mr Fischer:** Already, given the advice that was presented on the weekend, we are initially just examining every project that we have underway at the moment to see whether there is any impact on those current projects.

**The CHAIR:** So we do not currently have a list of schools that fall within that map on the weekend?

---

**Mr Fischer:** We have not done that, no.

**The CHAIR:** I could probably run off a fair quick list myself, I think.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Are the Ellenbrook schools considered to be in a fire-prone area?

**Mr Fischer:** I do not think it is, no. I would have to look at the list.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Are not the criteria on the map if you are within one kilometre —

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Correct.

**The CHAIR:** Within 100 metres.

**Mr Fischer:** Yes, 100 metres.

**The CHAIR:** Although there are some bizarre things. Dumas House seems to have been cut out for some reason, even though —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is not worth saving!

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes, we want it to burn down!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Or its contents are not worth saving!

**Ms O'Neill:** We have quite a comprehensive fire response process and arrangement, and new information like this, as I said, would require us to reconsider those policies, those positions, those processes.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** So is it possible to get a list of schools that are considered to be in fire-prone areas?

**Ms O'Neill:** In our current arrangement, we can provide that, yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A8.*]

**The CHAIR:** Are there any other questions on that issue?

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** No. I am right, thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Noting the time, this might be a good time to take a short break.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 10.57 to 11.09 am**

**The CHAIR:** Director general, was there some further information you wanted to provide the committee before I invite members to ask questions?

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes, just to clarify, in the discussion we were having around Switch, we gave the number of 610 currently in schools. If I could just correct and clarify that, 610 is the number of people who will have completed training and be available day one, so if I just backtrack for the purposes of the record, currently we have 414 Switch teachers in employment in the department —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** So I was right!

**Ms O'Neill:** — for day one —

**The CHAIR:** There is a first time for everything!

**Ms O'Neill:** If the minutes could acknowledge that the minister is right!

We will have another 196 on top of the 414 for day one, and another 118 that will complete their training at the end of semester 1 and be available for semester 2. That is just for clarity for *Hansard*.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can I talk to you about some planning issues and population growth? On page 36 of the annual report, one of the things it says at the top of the third column of text is about preliminary plans that you reviewed with the respective local government authorities of Cannington, Bayswater and some parts of Joondalup. I asked in one of the questions that were

lodged prior to the hearing what sort of progress had been made on those issues. One of the documents that you provided me with was a letter from the director general to Garry Hunt, CEO of the City of Joondalup. In that letter the director general said that the department had analysed the impact of the level of increased development, so we are talking about an additional 10 000 residential lots, increasing to 29 000 residential lots. The paragraph goes on —

The Department has analysed the impact of this level of increased development on its existing schools and advises that at the maximum take up of development, the anticipated increase in student yield would place significant accommodation pressure on some schools. Initial calculations indicate some school populations could increase to be in excess of 750 students.

This level of infill may lead to insufficient accommodation being available at these schools without the availability of excess land to add additional facilities.

That letter was back in November 2014, so I am sure discussions and negotiations have moved on since then. I want to ask you about what is happening in that particular bit of the northern corridor, because that is just going to continue to be subject to infill. What in particular has moved on since that letter of November 2014?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I will ask Mr Fischer to respond.

**Mr Fischer:** I am not sure I have the detail to answer that specifically in terms of that planning thing; I might need to respond to you separately on that.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Okay, but it is not a secret that the northern suburbs are under increasing pressure, so you must have some sense of what you are doing in that general area.

**Mr Fischer:** In the northern suburbs the planning system ensures that we are setting aside school sites for future development. Typically, we follow the guidelines of design criteria 2.4 —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sorry to interrupt you, but this is infill, so you do not have new land here.

**The CHAIR:** This is Joondalup; it has very little greenfield development going on.

**Mr Fischer:** We have been working with the Department of Planning on their urban consolidation plan. What we have engaged in with them is looking at their proposed densities and overlaying that across our existing schools, so that work is underway at the moment; we have been doing that for a while. I cannot comment on this particular area in terms of what the outcomes are, but we are initially focused on the inner-city developments and then we are working our way through looking at those other areas of urban infill.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Are you able to provide me any assistance? Back in November last year, you said to the City of Joondalup that at the rate of infill you are proposing, our schools are going to be at 750 and we do not have other land around. I appreciate you might not be across every single detail in the last letter that was sent et cetera, but there must have been significant progress since November last year.

**Mr Fischer:** There could be, but I just do not have those details with me.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Okay. Perhaps you could take that on notice.

*[Supplementary Information No A9.]*

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Perhaps you could also talk to me about the particular patch that I look after in the south east of the metropolitan area, the City of Canning and the City of Gosnells. I would welcome the same kind of advice in respect of that area. The City of Gosnells in particular, the southern bit of the City of Gosnells, is rapidly—the maps cannot even keep up with the new developments there. In one suburb, the suburb of Canning Vale, there are five primary schools. Everywhere you go there are women pushing prams, so there is going to be an increasing need for schools there as well, so I would welcome what information you can provide me about your

negotiations with the local government authorities, the City of Canning and the City of Gosnells. The reason I ask about the City of Canning is that it is more about infill than new developments, and there was one that was quite controversial around Portcullis Drive, an infill project around there that the local community was quite disturbed about because of the impact it would have on Rostrata Primary School and Willetton Senior High School in particular. Bear in mind that in that area, because the schools are so good, we have rental fraud with people trying to find addresses so that they can enrol their kids. Those schools are at capacity and they are not going to be able to take more kids, but the development that is on, I think, Portcullis Drive is units, but they will be three-bedroom units, so they will be able to have families, and families will want to live there because of the schools. But the school communities, the chairs of the respective boards, have spoken to me about their concerns that they are not going to be able to take kids in that area. I would welcome any advice you could give me about that as well.

**Mr Fischer:** We will take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** We will make that all part of A9, and I might talk about the inner suburbs if you are finished. The other area that I am particularly interested in is the inner suburban areas immediately in and around the Perth CBD and those inner suburbs. The minister answered a question in Parliament on the projections for the Highgate, Mt Hawthorn and North Perth primary schools. I believe West Leederville has the same problems. What work are we doing on identifying sites for—and that is going to grow. Each of those schools is already well below the four hectare preferred size and they are now getting crammed out with classrooms. I know we are going up on some of them, but it is still a massive issue. What work are we doing to identify sites in the inner part of Perth for, firstly, a primary school, and then we can talk about high schools after that?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Certainly, as you alluded to, and that is quite correct, we are actually going up in a number of those schools now, and —

**The CHAIR:** But you are also reaching a point, even going up, of 1 000 students, and I would have thought from a pastoral care point of view —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is not ideal.

**The CHAIR:** — that is starting to get well beyond what you would want a primary school to be.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We talk about the population pressures in the northern, southern and eastern suburbs, but one of the biggest pressure points is in the inner city, in terms of the surrounding CBD, and Highgate —

**The CHAIR:** Within five kilometres of the CBD, basically.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes. In that area you have not only infill but also the growth of luxury and semi-luxury apartments as well, and that has brought with it enormous population pressure, so yes, we announced with Highgate this year another \$5.4 million for a build at Highgate, and the same at West Leederville; we opened a new development in West Leederville and in Wembley, which is a bit further out. We doubled up, but you are quite correct in terms of the space because it is not ideal to have so many kids on a tiny recreational area. Re specific strategies or identifying areas, perhaps Mr Fischer can comment on that.

[11.20 am]

**Mr Fischer:** There are two strategies. The first one, which is what is happening at the moment, is that we are optimising all our existing sites. We are seeing what additional capacity we can get on existing sites.

**The CHAIR:** I understand that. I am asking about future sites. I understand that you are optimising the current sites. They will reach a point of capacity. Will we need further demand beyond that? Are you confident you can fit all the growth into the current sites with optimising capacity or do we need additional sites?

---



**Mr Fischer:** Our analysis says that we need at least two new primary school sites in that northern metropolitan area that we just talked about and we would probably need two new sites in the CBD to service the CBD area.

**The CHAIR:** What are we doing to identify those sites?

**Mr Fischer:** We have been working with the planning agencies, including the City of Perth, to identify future sites and looking at land that the government already owns to see what can be utilised.

**The CHAIR:** Have we identified any sites within that yet?

**Mr Fischer:** Not that we can share in today's environment.

**The CHAIR:** One of the sites that readily springs to mind from my way of thinking is the former girls' school in Plain Street and Wellington Street. Have you had any discussions with the Department of Lands about that site being provided to you?

**Mr Fischer:** Yes, we have. We have certainly looked at that site. We looked at a number of sites. In terms of that particular site, we have looked at its existing condition and the maintenance reports and the assessment of that site.

**The CHAIR:** Have you ruled that out as a potential site then?

**Mr Fischer:** That is one we are not pursuing at this stage.

**The CHAIR:** Where else do we have land in the CBD? My sense is that it is a lot easier to get a government transfer of a block of land across to you than to try to get Treasury to give you money to buy land in the CBD. If you have ruled that out, what other sites are we currently looking at?

**Mr Fischer:** The government owns other land that would be suitable. We have talked to some of the landowners about those sites.

**The CHAIR:** What size are we looking at for those landholdings? Are we talking about a minimum of two hectares or larger?

**Mr Fischer:** It depends on what other facilities are available close by. If you can get something close to a sports area, you do not necessarily need to look at two hectares for a primary school.

**The CHAIR:** Four hectares is needed for an oval. I would have thought that you would need at least two.

**Mr Fischer:** I think people accept that in the CBD or in those close city areas you are going to look for a different style of school than a school that is spread out in a single-storey site in an outer suburban area.

**The CHAIR:** And co-located with public —

**Mr Fischer:** Open space or oval or accessible to those types of things.

**The CHAIR:** There are issues in managing that. Highgate is looking to use the area across the road but there are issues about moving kids across the road during breaks. There are public toilets over there but there is risk around using them.

**Ms O'Neill:** We already have shared-site arrangements and the risk —

**The CHAIR:** But they tend not to have a major road running between them. Are you looking at sites where there is no road—it is contiguous to the school site—or are they going to have to cross busy roads? What are you going to do about toilet blocks and the like rather than sharing public toilets, which I know is an issue at Highgate?

**Mr Fischer:** That is all the assessment in finding sites, identifying how they can be best utilised. We are a long way from deciding whether we need toilets on an existing site. We are still looking at

sites and working with the City of Perth to see what they might do in terms of their planning as well.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Just to be clear, the issue with the toilets across the road from Highgate was not that a school needs access to toilets on an oval; it is just that because it is a public oval and it is a public set of toilets, a whole bunch of risks go with that.

**Mr Fischer:** The issue is that we are not at that level of detail. That was my response, not that it is not a risk or anything like that.

**The CHAIR:** You said you identified the need for these schools. When do you identify that you will need to be in a place to start construction of them?

**Mr Fischer:** It is probably within the 10-year time frame that we are looking at planning at the moment—towards the end of that 10-year time frame.

**The CHAIR:** At the moment we are expecting to have the existing schools crack the 1 000 mark and do nothing about it. So we are going to wait until there are over 1 000 each in at least two of those schools, probably Highgate and Mt Hawthorn.

**Mr Fischer:** We are saying that we believe that we have existing capacity available in those schools. It would be towards the end of that 10-year period before we need an inner-city primary school.

**The CHAIR:** But that means, based on your projections, you will have around 1 000 students in each of those primary schools.

**Mr Fischer:** It could be.

**The CHAIR:** What about the Princess Margaret hospital site? Is that one that you have looked at?

**Mr Fischer:** Yes, it is.

**The CHAIR:** Has that been ruled out or is that still under consideration?

**Mr Fischer:** My understanding is that there are other plans proposed for that site. We have expressed our interest in that site but I believe the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority is looking at other development for that site.

**The CHAIR:** They are all the big landholdings that I am aware of. Where are the other landholdings that the state government has? If you think about the western suburbs, I think the minister has admitted that it has been incredibly difficult trying to find a potential site in the western suburbs for another high school. Good luck in getting approval to knock over parts of Bold Park, minister.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It would eliminate the fire risk.

**The CHAIR:** Well, no; it would still be within 100 metres of the fire risk.

**Mr Fischer:** Without going into all the details, an example of a site is the existing DOE building. That is a significant site that could accommodate 2 000 students.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That would freak all the public servants out.

**The CHAIR:** Are you talking about a co-location? So this is how you get Silver City back into the classroom!

**Mr Fischer:** It is an example of an area that the government owns. The government owns significant landholdings in that area, and so does the City of Perth. There is opportunity to turn that into a precinct area. I am just saying that that is one of the areas that we are looking at. These things have not been presented to government. I am just keeping you advised that there is land owned by us that is underutilised—for example, parking areas; that is already underutilised. There is land in

---

the CBD area that is available for consideration for the type of schools that we are talking about, whether it is high rise and located in an area that suits that projected growth.

**The CHAIR:** You are talking about four sites—two in the inner northern and two in the CBD itself, and that is for primary schools.

**Mr Fischer:** That is two primary and two high schools.

**The CHAIR:** It would strike me though that vacant possession land is a lot easier to get hold of. Unless there are massive areas of Silver City that sit vacant, you are going to have to then relocate those staff somewhere else, are you not? You then have the cost of relocating them as well as retrofitting that building, which I imagine would be fairly expensive, to turn it into a school site compared with getting access to a site that is currently vacant from which the police have moved out completely or the old girls' school or the Princess Margaret site from where the hospital will be moving and it will be vacant land.

**Mr Fischer:** There are issues with every site, whether it is Princess Margaret or the City of Perth or the Perth girls' school or our existing site. None of those come without some covenants or without some challenges. That is the issue with retrofitting a planning system over an existing city—the opportunities are really constraints.

[11.30 am]

**Ms O'Neill:** None of them would be straightforward. You mentioned the cost of Silver City and people moving or upgrading or whatever; the same would be said for some of those vacant properties, like the old Perth Girls' School. That is, by a long stretch, not immediately ready. It has had all internal changes. It has its own significant maintenance issues, as I understand. So, any of the options we are talking about are not straightforward or cost free. I guess the point that John is making is that it is not premature in that we understand that the need is going to be there, but we are canvassing all those options and seeing what else is available apart from the ones that are obvious. We are in the middle of that process.

**The CHAIR:** When do we expect that process to be completed?

**Ms O'Neill:** When we find somewhere.

**Mr Fischer:** It is an iterative-type process. Once we have identified something, we will go to government and present those recommendations to government. I do not think we could say today that you will know next year or the year after. We will keep government informed about our planning findings.

**Ms O'Neill:** It is also important to note, because you made a comment before that we are going to sit and wait for the schools to max out in terms of their enrolment, that we are not going to do that. We work with those schools all the time. We are encouraging some schools that are under enrolment pressure to consider and to limit their out-of-boundary enrolments that they only take when they have free accommodation. We have some schools that have been able to, because it is cyclic, take more kids out of boundary. Now we are saying they will need to service the students in their boundary, so there is a range of ways that we can do it.

**The CHAIR:** Do any of those inner-city schools take out-of-boundary kids today?

**Ms O'Neill:** Some of them do and sometimes that occurs because we have additional programs that have been historically placed in a school, where the students come from around the city. One of the things that we might do is give consideration to whether those programs can be housed in the future at that location to give alleviation.

**The CHAIR:** I know there are some programs at Highgate that fit into that category, but it is also because it is an appropriate school to have them at.

---

**Ms O'Neill:** Just to go back to that point, I do not think it is reasonable to make an assumption that we are going to sit around and wait for them to get to 1 000; we are not. We are using other levers as best we can to ensure the best accommodation usage.

**The CHAIR:** I will finish off on this one, and then I will go back to Hon Sue Ellery. Is there any consideration to moving SIDE out of the old Leederville Primary School and reopening that as a primary school or a campus?

**Ms O'Neill:** It is an option that we have considered over many years because it is not the sort of the facility that has to be located in Leederville, given it is online. That is something we will give thought to.

**The CHAIR:** It is more work for you to fix up from the mistakes of the past, minister.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am used to it; I am a veteran at that!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I have two follow-ups on that issue. You said that the old girls' school site on the corner of Plain and Wellington Streets was ruled out. What was the reason that it was ruled out of consideration?

**Mr Fischer:** The main criteria are that it is a small site; it is also a split site. The building is heritage-listed; it has significant maintenance issues with the building, being concrete cancer et cetera. It is a building that was established 100-plus whatever years ago and requires significant cost in retrofitting to meet universal access requirements today. There are issues with some of the playing space and useability. So it is not ideal in those terms. I understand the point that the Chair has made in terms of it is a government-occupied building, but it is a very expensive building.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The other one to follow up is the SIDE site in Leederville. What are the obstacles to using that?

**Mr Fischer:** The obvious issue is where we would relocate SIDE. In choosing a new site you are trying to do two things: one is that it has to be a site that has its own catchment area, so that sits very close to —

**The CHAIR:** It sits between Leederville and Mount Hawthorn.

**Mr Fischer:** Mount Hawthorn is the one. One of the questions we would consider, if we did use that building, is how we might use it—whether it is used as a school or early childhood precinct or something like that. It obviously has some significant traffic issues around it, and it is whether that could be mitigated, in terms of its location, with the oval next door. Also, it is almost adjacent to an early childhood precinct we have in Margaret Street. We are looking at that and we have not ruled it out in that sense. No site is, as we mentioned, perfect, and there is current retrofitting of the planning.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I want to talk about NAPLAN online. I will not give a page number as there are several references to NAPLAN and ICT. I know you are going to a meeting on Friday. Can you talk to me about WA's position as to when you think we will be in a position to go statewide, and then talk to me about the trial and how that has gone to date?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The intent is to go online in 2017. We are doing a trial with 113 schools next year. Our intent is for 2017. Ultimately, it will be good; it will be positive. We just have to make sure that schools are ready and that they are well prepared, teachers are prepared and the network is prepared. Peter Titmanis has been intimately involved in this right from its genesis, so I will ask Mr Titmanis to comment.

**Mr Titmanis:** Peter Titmanis, executive director, performance innovation and research. As the minister has already indicated, we have a trial that has now been running since the middle of the year in 113 schools. We have selected schools right across the spectrum of school types and also those that have readiness in terms of IT. We have metro, country, large schools, small schools,

secondary and primary, and we have also deliberately organised the group so that it includes schools that have identified themselves as being quite advanced, in their minds, with IT use in classrooms, right through to the other end of the spectrum where they have said and acknowledged themselves that they would be sort of in the Luddite group and that they really have very little experience in using IT in classrooms. We have been providing that group with opportunities to, firstly, purchase some additional tablets or laptop computers, and support them in installing them; and, secondly, we have been providing opportunities such as small tailored tests for them to experience classroom management of a test environment where the kids have to log on and go online. We are building up over the period, since the middle of the year right through until we go live in 2017, those opportunities, so they will be longer, larger and be able to replicate the sort of IT demands as well as the classroom management demands that schools would anticipate in 2017 for those that do go online. Feedback from the principals to date has been remarkably positive, given the variability we talked about earlier on with things like broadband and SOE. Despite some of those challenges, principals have been really optimistic about the opportunities that this approach will provide their schools not only because of NAPLAN, but also because they can see that once their teachers become more comfortable using devices in classrooms they can benefit from that for the whole year rather than just one or two weeks of NAPLAN testing. In terms of NAPLAN online, we have a cross-sectorial group that meets from time to time. The final decision about how big a number we take into 2017 and what that progressively looks like in 2018–19 is yet to be determined.

[11.40 am]

Those discussions are still to be had with the minister. But in general terms it is anticipated that we will have a small number in 2017, growing in 2018, and then the anticipation through the education council is that by 2019 all states and all schools would be online. One of the beauties about what our IT department has been able to organise is that they have recognised that there are some challenges in remote schools getting broadband because they rely on satellite or Telstra just does not provide the facility. What we have been working on is a number of different solutions where they will be able to put what they call a virtual server inside the school, so for all intents and purposes the teachers and the students would have the same experience; it is just that schools will download the information earlier in the piece and upload it over the weekend and whenever there is less traffic for the broadband.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can I take you up on the less traffic issue? One of the things that many schools tell me is that they need to shut down everything else in the school in order to do a particular IT task. So, administration will have to shut down their systems so that there is room for whatever the special task is that needs kids online for whatever that purpose is. How are we going to get around that and what sort of cost are we talking about? The most recent example I can think of is Albany, where a number of schools there were saying to me, “It’s a joke for us to try to participate in PD online. It’s constantly buffering or it’s constantly dropping out.” You will have to do something, it seems to me, significant for areas like that.

**Mr Titmanis:** The Albany one is one that has been reported to me as well quite a number of times. What the minister and the department have actually moved to do is actually negotiate with Telstra for a better arrangement for broadband across all schools, not just for the Albany area. Those discussions are currently in progress, so there could well be some positive resolution for Albany —

**Ms O’Neill:** It is an issue outside of, but will eventually include, NAPLAN. You would have heard the same through some of our secondaries in relation to online. Broadband bandwidth is, as I visit schools and as the minister does and others, a challenge for schools given that so much of the system in terms of the system software and testing and the like is going that way. Certainly, the minister is interested in support for IT.

---

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Is there overlap with the rollout of NBN that can be leveraged? I live in an area with NBN and my electorate office is in an area most definitely without NBN.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Join the club!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It does my head in! The NBN, when you have it and it is working well, is fantastic.

**Ms McGrath:** We are doing a number of things around broadband. Bandwidth itself has tripled in the last 12 months, and even in the last two months demand has gone up by 20 per cent. So it is across the board; it does not matter what school it is. We are doing a few things. We are putting extra infrastructure into schools, which actually gets some of the schools to help get better optimisation—so, basically, better using what they have. So we should see some improvement there. As Peter mentioned, we are also working with our service provider, Telstra, to basically try to get a better deal, and also in conjunction with the Government Chief Information Officer, Giles Nunis, from a whole-of-government perspective. We are very hopeful that we can get some better deals from that. What that will mean is that we can get better optimisation from the current money we are spending on bandwidth, but also leave some capacity to be able to upgrade some schools. We already know right now that there are about 218 schools—most of those are the bigger high schools—that will need and are hitting their limit every day constantly. So we will be working with them to be able to provide that. Basically, we will be able to get better value for money without spending any more money.

**Ms O'Neill:** We did provide some advice to schools recently about how they can better manage their own bandwidth allocation, because our specialist IT people have been into some schools and have seen some of the practices—for example, teachers using something on YouTube in English and all the kids are downloading at the same time. There is some education of our staff here about how to maximise the bandwidth that is available. It does not solve the issue, but it certainly can alleviate some of the challenges that schools are facing if they can manage what they have as well.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** And I will be making some comments in the not-too-distant future which will further assist the process.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Have you done modelling on what you think you need cost-wise to start the rollout in 2017?

**Ms O'Neill:** Of NAPLAN?

**Mr Titmanis:** Yes; the Department of Education schools and our component of it, we are going to be asking for volunteers. It will be schools that are already in a position to utilise NAPLAN online. We are not expecting schools to have to make an investment to be involved in 2017. That does not include what the cost might be for the School Curriculum and Standards Authority to act as a test administration authority. Those are the discussions that are still to be had with the minister.

**Ms O'Neill:** The states are at the moment going through a process to try to identify costs. I think that is being discussed at either this ministerial council or perhaps the one next year.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is this Friday.

**Ms O'Neill:** The research is underway. Partly why we wanted to get involved in a trial here in WA—some other states have now followed that—is to get a better sense of the cost. To go back to our previous conversation about SOE by June, some of the work that we are doing was after a decision was taken to bring that forward last year and then through this year so that we are better prepared, and those base costs are already covered. But for the general costs that involve us and SCASA, as I said, each state is having to do that now and some of that has slowed down because they are trying to do it with some comparability.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** There are a couple of issues that I wanted to cover. First of all, page 50 talks about the first set of public–private partnerships for schools. We recently had the

Harper review come out which looked at competition policy in Australia. One of the issues that it highlighted in delivering benefits was in these sorts of arrangements in delivering services that governments have often provided. What are the anticipated gains from entering this PPP that we would not have had if we had just stuck to the old traditional government builds the schools from the budget and off we go?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Do you mean the financial gains or across the board?

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Both.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Certainly as far as the PPPs are concerned, the whole point of the exercise here is to ensure that principals, administration staff, teachers et cetera are released from that burden of having to deal with issues on maintenance et cetera on a day-to-day basis, where that is taken care of for them. That is the express intent there from that perspective. It is a true and tried formula that has been used in other jurisdictions and very, very successfully, particularly from the perspective that administrators actually appreciate the fact that they do not have to now be bogged down with dealing with issues such as light bulbs et cetera. There are also financial advantages. The contracts that have been signed are on the basis that there will be some significant financial benefit for the government. John, would you want to comment on that?

**Mr Fischer:** Yes. The advantage of the PPP is that there has been, one, a standard set for the management and maintenance of those buildings, so those buildings will remain refreshed, replenished and recycled—whatever it is—for their life or for the life of the contract, which is 31 years for primary schools. As the minister mentioned, there is a financial saving. I think over the life of the contract it represents about a \$100 million saving compared with if the state was managing those facilities. Because we have packaged the work, those savings included some construction efficiencies in those schools. They would be the key areas.

[11.50 am]

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Is it envisaged that PPP will be the model for delivering all new schools into the future?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Not all; certainly there will be a further extension of the policy, and we will look at that with the advent of the new schools that will come onstream in the not-too-distant future, but it will continue to be a mix.

**Ms O'Neill:** Already some of the learning that we can have through the process, whether some of the other projects are PPP or not there is some learning that we will be able to apply to understanding cost structures and things of the other projects, too.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Have we looked at international comparisons? I know, for instance, that Canada has been doing this with schools since about 1999, and the Blair government in the United Kingdom also went down this path. Have we looked at the international learnings around that?

**Mr Fischer:** We certainly looked at what was happening in the UK. They had a program to use PPPs to refurbish all their schools. They did not maintain that program, but they did do a number of schools under that program. The PPP arrangement is really modelled on what has been done in the eastern states, particularly in Queensland and Victoria. So the learnings that we have gained from the experience in those have been applied to our contract.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Moving on to a slightly different area, I noticed recently that one of the inner-city schools—I think it is West Leederville—has moved to a boys-only class. Is that something that the department supports or encourages? Is there a set of guidelines or rules available at a department level on how schools can transition into gender-specific classes?

**Mr Axworthy:** That was a decision made by the school principal because of an imbalance of boys and girls in kindergarten, and by splitting them up in that particular way she thought it was a good

opportunity to also do a little bit of research, if you like, by having a slightly smaller all-boys group going through kindergarten. She is going to have four classes. The other three are the standard mixed 50–50 kind of arrangement. Rather than having four classes that were all 60–40, she has done it that way to enable her to see whether for some boys—especially young boys, who have a tendency to prefer more active play and more outside play—that will enhance their learning. It is a little bit of a research program in place. Do we have guidelines? Not as such, because this is the first time that we have embarked on one of these. Some years ago we had a major project looking at boys-only classes and girls-only classes, but those were slightly older—middle primary and upper primary—classes. This is the first time that we have done something at kindergarten.

**Ms O'Neill:** The research that was commissioned at the time and the pilots we undertook, like all other pieces of research around this area—or most others—is reasonably inconclusive: that is to say that not all girls learn the same way and not all boys learn the same way. What is good for some girls is not great for other girls, and vice versa. In terms of general research in this area and the reason we have not pursued a policy position systemically is that the jury is a bit out about whom it is good for. That is not to say that the schools that are set up and designed this way are not based on their own evidence, but there is no compelling evidence that you would approach this systemically. That being said, at the school there is a local decision being made and we support it because it is responding to a certain set of circumstances.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** And the parent cohort seems to be very comfortable with and supportive of it, so that is a good thing.

**Mr Axworthy:** Yes.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Director general, your comments move me on to my next and possibly obvious question. This question is not based on any educational outcome question; it is more about that desire and choice in parent cohorts. Is there any view from the department about moving more systemically either towards gender-specific classes or, more particularly, gender-specific schools, as happens in other states?

**Ms O'Neill:** We do not have a policy position or a plan that rules things in or rules things out in that way, except to go back to my previous comment: at this point there is no compelling evidence to suggest that we would as a system go down that as a particular policy pathway.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Would an independent public school, for instance, be able to make a selection or a choice that they would go down the path of becoming gender specific?

**Ms O'Neill:** Not as a school. The determination of what is delivered at each school is by the department; however, a school might pursue, as Mr Axworthy was mentioning, a classroom or program inside the school. But an independent public school does not have the authority under the act to decide that one day it is co-ed and the next day it is single sex.

**Mr Axworthy:** The critical thing there for IPS or non-IPS is that if it is a government school it must take the children from its local intake, unless the whole local intake were of one particular gender, then it would be —

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Sure; I understand that. There are suburbs in some parts of Australia that are moving down that pathway. I do not think that gender selection is legal in Australia, but I think it happens almost by osmosis.

I want to pick up on a comment that the Leader of the Opposition made about what I think she called rental fraud; I think it is address fraud more than anything else. That is driven by, again, parental choice more than anything else and is often based more on sentiment or feeling than reality; we understand all that. But is there any desire or move towards providing more selective-entry schools outside of the central school—Perth Modern School that is based centrally—to perhaps take pressure off some of these high-desire, high-enrolment schools that drive all sorts of other things including housing affordability and other issues?

---



**Ms O'Neill:** We do not have any plans afoot for other selective-entry schools, if you are talking about a la Perth Mod. Are you talking about that model?

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** In a sort of Perth Mod model, I guess. You could probably rejig that model if you started it from scratch to start with.

**Ms O'Neill:** There is a difference between a selective-entry school, and then we have, through our gifted and talented provisions, selective-entry programs—of which Rossmoyne and Willetton are the ones we were talking about before—feature. We are always reviewing our programs, such as gifted and talented or where we provide anything special. The review of those programs will be ongoing. But we do not have current plans to open another selective-entry school. That is not to say that we would not perhaps in the future, but we do not have a plan to do that at this point.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** So you are still continuing to pursue the gifted and talented pathways, but not in stand-alone schools?

**Ms O'Neill:** We do not have a plan for a stand-alone school on foot.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I want to follow up on some discussion from before. Do we know how many AIEOs there will be next year?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** How many will be allocated?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Yes.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We will probably be able to tell you that, but it depends on whether or not, number one, schools take up the opportunity, and, number two, if we can find AIEOs. It has always been very, very difficult to fill those positions.

**Ms O'Neill:** We cannot predict what schools will necessarily do with their funding, so they will choose to put them on or not. What we can say is that the ones who are permanently with us will continue to have employment. But I cannot predict whether 800 schools—not all of them have AIEOs—will seek to put more on or not out of their budget at this point.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** When are you likely to know?

**Ms O'Neill:** When they employ them. So on any given day —

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It will change.

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes. On day one we will know —

[12 noon]

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** So, it is not sort of like a census date for school attendance?

**Ms O'Neill:** Of staff?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Yes.

**Ms O'Neill:** We will know on day one who is employed for day one, and we will know at each pay period who has been paid, so we can say at each pay period how many AIEOs have been paid at that pay period.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** What were the FTE equivalents of AIEOs this year, 2014 and 2013?

**Ms O'Neill:** I will ask my colleagues to check I have the right figures. The headcount as at November 2015, as I am reading, is 502; the headcount at the same time last year was 541.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** And 2013?

**Ms O'Neill:** In 2013 there were 596.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** For 2015 and 2014, the schools at which they were employed; is that available to you?

---

**Ms O'Neill:** I do not know. There could be about 600 of them, and it depends who has the funding and they might use their own funding. I do not have a list of which schools have them.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** You do not know which schools have AIEOs?

**Ms O'Neill:** I do not have them here. We can —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We will provide it.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Can you take that on notice then?

**Ms O'Neill:** Sure. We would tell you at a certain pay period which schools employed an AIEO at that particular date; we can do that.

*[Supplementary Information No A10.]*

**The CHAIR:** Does it vary much between paying period?

**Ms O'Neill:** Holidays may make a difference or fixed-term contracts. With the permanent staff there would not be great variability.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** The Auditor General's twenty-fourth report identified 67 agencies that did not meet the deadline of 25 July to provide their financials. Were you one of those agencies?

**Ms O'Neill:** Not that I am aware of.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** That is good news.

How much of your excess cash did you actually transfer back to the Treasury?

**Ms O'Neill:** None.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We did not have any!

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** There was \$71 million, I believe, in excess cash. Was any of that transferred back to Treasury?

**The CHAIR:** It looks like the education department has never come across the concept of handing money back to Treasury.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** I take that silence as a no!

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Was any money returned?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** There would be directors general turning in their graves at the thought!

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** You never know. It is a good question always worth asking!

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** What are the expected ongoing savings from the targeted voluntary separation scheme?

**Ms O'Neill:** I do not think we have here the cash value of the ongoing savings. We have the numbers of staff, but we would need to provide you the cash value of that.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Can we take that on notice?

*[Supplementary Information No A11.]*

**Ms O'Neill:** It would be in the vicinity of around \$20 million, but to get a precise figure we would need to take that on notice.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** You have the number of people, so a headcount?

**Ms O'Neill:** Yes. It harks back to the date of 30 April, which I think was the date on which 265 employees accepted.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Just on that number, did Treasury have a different number to that?

---

**Ms O'Neill:** I would not have thought so, because their number would come from our number. We put out offers, 265 accepted, and they are the recipients of the voluntary severance. Their numbers would have been our numbers.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That includes all employees; education assistants et cetera.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I might just go online and double-check this, but the *Annual Report on State Finances* indicated that Education had reduced staff by 271.

**Ms O'Neill:** I would have to clarify that. I am not sure whether they have included some other figure, but the figures we have available to us were that 265 accepted at 30 April.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** There might be a time difference.

**Ms O'Neill:** If there is a time difference —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Those figures are as at 30 April.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Maybe if you could just do a comparison with the *Annual Report on State Finances*, which came after.

**Ms O'Neill:** Sure; yes.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It might be that you have been more successful than you anticipated.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** Did you exceed your agency salary cap in 2014–15; and, if you did, did you inform the minister?

**Ms O'Neill:** Can you refer us to that in the annual report?

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** I think it is actually in the budget papers.

**The CHAIR:** While they are looking for that: did you exceed your approved expenditure limit at all, or did you have to seek supplementary funding to stay under the approved expenditure limit?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, we did not; not that I am aware of.

**Ms O'Neill:** No, we did not exceed it.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Good! I would have liked to! No, I would not actually! It is very irresponsible of me! I am a team player!

**The CHAIR:** But you would have liked to have had an increase in the approved expenditure limit, minister —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I would; very much so.

**The CHAIR:** — is what I think you are trying to say!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, absolutely!

**Ms O'Neill:** We did not exceed our expenditure.

**The CHAIR:** That was the one that was given to you at the start of the year or —

**Ms O'Neill:** This is the revised.

**The CHAIR:** When was it revised?

**Ms McGrath:** I will just clarify what I think you may have been referring to before as money taken away from us. There were some budget adjustments made between the original budget and the budget estimates of \$72 million in 2014–15, and they related to leave liability savings of \$55 million, reduced Students First commonwealth funding of \$14 million, and then there was the adjustment for fewer enrolments than were forecast, which was about \$11 million.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We had less kids.

**Ms McGrath:** That might have been what you were referring to there.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Actually, what the honourable member and I are talking about is the workforce renewal policy; the state government's policy.

**Ms McGrath:** And that is the one for which the adjustment moving forward is around about \$20 million, but we have to track down those figures.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We will get that exact figure for you.

**The CHAIR:** Before I go back to Hon Sue Ellery, I have a couple of questions myself. In the questions on notice I asked for a copy of the Department of Education's strategic asset plan; you said that it could not be provided because it was cabinet-in-confidence. Has it been attached as part of a cabinet submission?

**Mr Fischer:** I am just trying to assess whether it has.

**The CHAIR:** Or is it simply used to inform cabinet deliberations?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, we make the consideration; I make the final determination that has to be approved by cabinet on an annual basis, and that is what I take to EERC.

**The CHAIR:** You take a cabinet submission that may be informed by the strategic asset plan, but the strategic asset plan is an internal document of the department that is used to identify over a 10-year cycle your demands and asset requirements in accordance with Treasury instructions, is it not?

**Mr Fischer:** It is also used to provide the framework for budget discussions, and Treasury use that as part of their assessment as well.

[12.10 pm]

**The CHAIR:** As are lots of documents that you would be in possession of, but they are not cabinet-in-confidence. Under the FOI act it is very clear that it needs to have been formally treated as a cabinet-in-confidence document and been attached as part of a submission. It may be that as a result of these questions we start seeing trollies wheeled through the cabinet room with all the strategic asset plans included in them, *Utopia* style. But has it been provided as part of a submission to cabinet or was it simply used to inform cabinet deliberations?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We will just have to confirm that. I have a feeling I might have, but I will have to confirm that with you, Chair, because that would have been about two years ago.

**Ms McGrath:** The 2013 report.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can I make a suggestion? This is what I suspect might have happened, but you will no doubt be able to confirm it. You as the minister rely on the totality of the plan to assist you to put which bits of it you want to put before cabinet.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is right.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If that is the case, the totality of that plan did not go to cabinet. You took the bits out of it that worked for you, and that is what you took to cabinet.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I believe that that is what I said. But I am not confident at this stage that I did not take the whole plan. If not, we will check and let you know.

**The CHAIR:** If that is the cabinet submission, do you have internally any other documents that you use to develop your asset management? I would imagine that you would have a whole range of elements that are brought into the strategic asset plan in terms of future projections and growth—demands for the new schools, demands for maintenance, refurbishment of head office. The new head office when the schoolkids come to replace you, unless you are going into a tent city! I do not know whether the tents would be considered assets or not. It depends on what they are like.

**Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS:** Under a PPP!

---

**The CHAIR:** What documents would you have underneath that that provide us as a parliamentary committee with the ability to understand what the long-term capital plans are? I am sure the minister, as a former student of the Westminster system, would understand the links between the executive and the importance of parliamentary accountability if we are not able to see what the long-term demands on your agency are with respect to new capital works and maintenance of existing capital works. I would have thought they are in the strategic asset plan. What can you provide us to inform us as the Parliament to ensure that we can carry out our oversight of the executive?

**Mr Fischer:** There are numerous sources of information that are used to compile the strategic asset plan that include a system of policy implications on future infrastructure. There are demographic projections that we get from various sources, both internal and external.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Can I just interrupt here? I am mindful that Hon Sue Ellery has a couple of questions. We do not want to be obstructionist here. First of all, I want to check on first things: whether the asset plan has gone to cabinet. I am not convinced in my own mind whether it has or has not, so I need to confirm that. The second thing is that we will look at what we have done, as per your question, and see what we can provide as much as we possibly can in the element of transparency for the committee. Then if the committee still has concerns in terms of the fact that you are still not satisfied with what you have been provided with, we will need to perhaps reconvene with the committee after that result. If you are happy with that, we will provide you with whatever we possibly can.

[*Supplementary Information No A13.*]

**The CHAIR:** You can go away and do all those things and come back to us and say whether, firstly, you can provide it to us. If there are sections you want us to keep private, you can request that. You know that we do not release it without having a thorough conversation with you, minister. We are very reasonable on those matters. Secondly, if you feel that you cannot provide it, provide the information that informs it.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Because we have 15 minutes left, I will ask for some further information on the basis of the answers you provided to the questions prior to the hearing. These do not have numbers, but this a question about the shared-use facilities guide. I asked a question before the hearing that reads —

11) The 2013 Annual Report referred to the finalisation of the shared-use facilities guide for stakeholders in the land development industry, and I ask —

a) Has that been completed?

Answer: No. The Department of Education, working in collaboration with the Department of Sport and Recreation, is currently preparing a final version of the guide.

Can you tell me where we are up to with that and when it is anticipated that that will be completed?

**Mr Fischer:** We anticipate that it will be completed early next year; at the end of first quarter next year.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you. I asked a question about the \$30 million allocated to establish the Fremantle college. I got part of the answer back. I asked how much had been spent and what it had been spent on. I got back that \$1.211 million has been spent to date. Are you are able to tell me what it was spent on?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Probably consultants.

**Mr Fischer:** That would have been planning and architects' fees. We have not done any work on the ground yet, but it was spent on the planning and design specification preparation. I thought we had included that.

---

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** You told me the number, but I have not seen it if there was anything attached. I asked about the opening of four new schools at the start of 2015 and what the opening enrolment for each of those schools was. They were Broome North Primary School, Golden Bay Primary School, Joseph Banks Secondary College and Tuart Rise Primary School. Can you give me the projected enrolments for the start of 2016? I cannot imagine you would have them off the top of your head, but you might take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** You would know Joseph Banks though, would you not, minister?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I do. I know all of them. I opened all of them, I think.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not know whether you need to —

**Mr Axworthy:** We will take them on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A14.*]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Joseph Banks has a remarkable fan.

**The CHAIR:** It is helicopter-style, is it not? And it is within 100 metres of a hectare of bush, too, I suspect!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** And I cannot say what it is because it would be unparliamentary.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Page 37 of the annual report refers to the Bigger Picture education campaign, and tells us that it ran from July 2014 and that that was the first year of the three-year campaign. If the first year spend was \$1.86 million, how much is being spent for the remainder of that three-year period?

**Ms O'Neill:** Are you asking what we spent in 2014–15?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No. I think you told me on page 36 that you spent \$1.211 million. That was in the first of a three-year campaign. What do you intend to spend for the remainder of that three years—the next two years?

**Ms O'Neill:** The total of the whole thing is \$1.8 million.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The total is \$1.8 million, so you have about \$600 000, or a bit less, left. What do you intend to spend that \$600 000 on? Please tell me it is no more backs of buses because they nearly cause me to have car accidents when I see them.

**The CHAIR:** Imagine the programs for Aboriginal kids you could run, minister.

**Ms O'Neill:** We have not finalised the last expenditure. We are in the planning right now.

[12.20 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can you tell me perhaps when you anticipate finalising what you will spend your \$600 000 on?

**Ms O'Neill:** The beginning of February.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you very much.

**Ms O'Neill:** It has got to go through the minister.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure. Then page 48 of the annual report refers to the school budget review committee. I know from questions on notice that 23 schools as at August had requested additional funding under the model and 18 were successful. For the five that were not successful, can you tell me—you might not know this off the top of your head either—which those five schools were and why they were unsuccessful?

**Ms O'Neill:** I think we have the chair of that committee right here.

**Mr Axworthy:** I certainly have the information here. The five schools that made an application but were not approved were Esperance Primary School, Hilton Primary School, Marri Grove Primary School, Picton Primary School and West Beechboro Primary School. If you said five, I have six, because Westfield Park Primary School was also not approved. In all cases those schools had asked for additional funding because of enrolment growth and the committee, when they looked at it, determined that the enrolment growth could be accommodated from the budget that they already had and therefore did not meet the threshold for additional funding.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you. Can I ask about the model generally? The feedback that I get is that for small and medium-sized schools, they are the ones that are feeling, I guess, the most pressure under the new model, because they do not necessarily have the kind of economies of scale that the bigger schools have. I am interested whether you have a point of view about that. It seems to me that if anything was to be tweaked in the model, it might be around the base funding to those small to medium schools.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I have heard similar comments from smaller schools, but again it is on a case-by-case basis. We will always continue to monitor the model overall. If there would be any tweaking at all, it would be at the base level, so that would be potentially one that we would look at, but the director general might like to comment.

**Ms O'Neill:** It is not a consistent pattern, so the same cannot be said for all small schools of the kind that you are referring to. Because it is a per student arrangement, it just depends on the nature of the students that are there, but we will consistently monitor schools. We will have a point—in 2017, or post-2017; perhaps, I think, towards the end—when we have all of the schools in the model. We will then have an opportunity to re-look at where some of those tolerances might need to be reviewed. We do talk to schools. I have heard the same as the minister has heard, but, interestingly, it is not a sustained pattern across all of the similar schools that you are making reference to.

**The CHAIR:** I just have one question and then I will go to Hon Alanna Clohesy. I note that your provision, both current and non-current, for annual leave and long service leave—sorry, your current has decreased but your annual leave has increased and your provision for non-current has increased. Is that just a dollar figure that has increased, or have the hours increased? Are you able to tell us, in hour terms rather than dollar terms, what the figure was at the start of the 2014–15 financial year, and what it was at the end of the 2014–15 financial year for both annual leave and long service leave?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Leave liability overall?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Your dollar figures have gone up, but one of the things I am interested in is: have you actually reduced the hours; and, if so, by how much in both areas?

**Ms McGrath:** We do have that information, but we just do not have it here. We could easily take that one.

*[Supplementary Information No A15.]*

**The CHAIR:** We will see if you have got it. The second part is: what strategies do you have in place to continue to drive it down? I assume you still have not met your targets for Treasury. What impact is that having on the operational efficiency of the agency?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I think Treasury have been quite happy with us, actually. We have a number of comprehensive strategies that the director general has identified with regard to actually insisting that teachers do take particularly their long service leave. Some have been accruing years in long service leave. It is not the intent of the exercise. The intent of the exercise is to literally refresh and perhaps upskill, or whatever it might be, not to accumulate years of service. The director general might just briefly comment on the actual strategies that she has introduced.

---

**Ms O'Neill:** The award requires, for the majority of employees, for their long service to be taken within two years of the entitlement accruing. I think we had said previously—it might have been at estimates or at this time last year; I cannot recall—that really that had not been implemented in a really direct way. We are hot to trot on that and so it is anticipated that the large majority of long service leave accrued before 30 January 2014 will have been exhausted by the end of 2016. There are a few exceptional cases—medical issues. Just the data that we analysed in October of this year showed us that in 2014–15, the year to date to October 2014, just over 101 000 days of long service leave had been taken, and then by the end of October 2015, over 109 000 days had been taken, and that represents—it says in my notes—an increase of seven per cent of long service leave being excised. My understanding is, compared with other agencies, we have made quite significant inroads into this, and we had some to do. The practice goes back to that which is required of employees, and we are being quite concerted in that. It is fair to say the impact has been a bit variable depending on the situation of each school. I have had a couple of schools—I do not recall them off the top of my head—through time say that they had to have people off on long service leave at the same time to meet that time requirement, but they were able to manage it. It is a strange thing to have people complain to you about being on long service leave, but it was that catch-up in terms of the time. So, we have managed it. There have been a couple of individuals who would have liked to have stored it up for eternity; nonetheless, they have complied, so we think that we have made good progress in this area.

**The CHAIR:** If you can give us those detailed figures as A15, that would be good, and I will go to Hon Alanna Clohesy.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Minister, last time this committee met with you the department undertook to provide us with some particular information about protective isolation rooms.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Do you remember we had a discussion about what was public and what was private?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is right.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** I was wondering when the committee might expect to get that information.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Has it not been provided? I am pretty sure we provided everything. It is not that there is a communication problem.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** We agreed certain things should be made public. We will double-check that.

**The CHAIR:** Maybe if we can get someone, we can find out who sent it and then liaise with the committee staff to work out —

**Ms O'Neill:** It would have been done through a supplementary question, would it not?

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** It was done through the evidence in that supplementary hearing.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, but it would have been a supplementary question. So you did not get the supplementary question?

**The CHAIR:** No, I do not know that we ever sent a supplementary question.

**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** No, it was done through the *Hansard*.

**The CHAIR:** It was done by agreement at the meeting that you would send that to us. Maybe if we could chase up what has happened to it, that would be good.

**Ms O'Neill:** We will follow up our end to ensure we have sent it. If we have not, we will get on to it straightaway.

---



**Hon ALANNA CLOHESY:** Maybe we could just have it in the same bundle with the rest.

**The CHAIR:** To avoid any doubt, I will make that supplementary A16, but if we can get that a bit earlier than the date for the rest of them, it would be useful.

*[Supplementary Information No A16.]*

**The CHAIR:** If there are no other questions from anybody, I will close the hearing. The committee will email the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, to you in the next couple of days. The corrected transcript will be requested to be returned within five working days of receipt. That is something new in terms of just the transcript; we are trying to get those finalised on the internet quicker. The answers to questions taken on notice will be requested by 11 January, which is more than the usual 10 days due to the Christmas break. Any additional questions that the committee has for you will be forwarded by the minister next week and will also be requested by 11 January. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. In the event that you are unable to meet the due date, the committee would request that you provide as many answers to the questions as possible by the due date. If members have any unasked questions, I ask them to email them to the committee staff by midday on Monday, 14 December. On behalf of the committee, I thank you all very much for your attendance.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 12.30 pm**

---