

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

2018–19 BUDGET ESTIMATES



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
THURSDAY, 21 JUNE 2018**

**SESSION ONE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Members

**Hon Alanna Clohesy (Chair)
Hon Tjorn Sibma (Deputy Chair)
Hon Diane Evers
Hon Aaron Stonehouse
Hon Colin Tincknell**

Hearing commenced at 9.01 am

HON SUE ELLERY

Minister for Education and Training, examined:

Ms SHARYN O'NEILL

Director General, examined:

Ms JENNIFER McGRATH

Deputy Director General, Education Business Services, examined:

Mr STEPHEN BAXTER

Acting Deputy Director General, Public Schools, examined:

Mr LINDSAY HALE

Executive Director, Statewide Services, examined:

Mr DAMIEN STEWART

Executive Director, Workforce, examined:

Mr PETER TITMANIS

Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives and Performance, examined:

Mr JOHN FISCHER

Executive Director, Infrastructure, examined:

Mr JAY PECKITT

Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services, examined:

Ms JUANITA HEALY

Acting Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards, examined:

The CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. This is the 2018–19 budget estimates hearing with the Department of Education. On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearing. Can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIR: 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 a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. 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. Agencies have an important role and duty in assisting the committee to scrutinise the budget papers. The committee values your assistance with this.

Minister, have you a brief opening statement?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I do not.

The CHAIR: Okay. We will go straight to questions, starting with Hon Diane Evers.

Hon DIANE EVERS: My first question is on the spending changes on page 291. I refer to the line that is about the middle of the way down, “Growth Funding—Revisions to Student Enrolment and Cost Growth Forecasts”. These figures suggest that there is significant growth in the outlying areas, particularly out to 2021–22. I am interested to know where this growth is occurring. What was the reason for that change?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Maybe if I make some opening statements and then I will ask the director general to add some comments. You will know that we have a student-centred funding model, which is a demand model, which is how funding is allocated to schools. In addition, the department tracks projected enrolments based on a whole combination of things, which I will get the director general to outline to you. One of the factors that is continuing to play out is some pressure in the economy, which has seen, for a number of reasons, some transfer out of private schools into public schools as well. I am not aware of any indication that that is about to change any time soon, but I might get the director general to add some commentary to that as well.

Ms O’NEILL: Generally where we see the growth, which is probably no surprise, is in the northern and southern suburbs—the outermost suburbs—where the new developments are occurring. That is where, from an infrastructure perspective, that growth is most often seen. We have got infill more in the inner city areas. That is where the growth is most evident. Again, we have experienced market share, so a growth into the overall population of the WA public school system. That growth is around 1.7 per cent over the year, which we are funded for. Previously, over past years, we were seeing people coming in from overseas—migrants and a national movement of students in. That has slowed somewhat, but our student population is still on a growth trajectory. It continues to grow—not at the same rate as it was some years ago, but we are still in a growth situation in terms of student population.

Hon DIANE EVERS: The spending changes table shows that in the outlying year. This is new since last year. Are you saying that there has been more growth than you expected this time last year?

Ms O’NEILL: We had more growth this year than was projected. But in the spending changes table, it is still a growth scenario that we are in, so we are being funded for that.

Hon DIANE EVERS: The next question I have is on the asset investment program on page 303. If you look at the estimated total cost of the asset investment program for 2017–18, it shows it to be about \$410 million, whereas the previous budget had an expected amount of \$452 million. With that \$42 million decrease, are there any notable projects that were not undertaken or taken out of the forward works program?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might get Mr Fischer to walk you through it. It is essentially about cash flows and carryovers rather than decisions made about not progressing certain projects. I will ask Mr Fischer to explain that.

Mr FISCHER: Each year, as projects are carried forward, this reflects capital works and affects the cash flow. I guess the question is: are there any works that have been deleted from the program? The answer to that is no. The reduction in the budget reflects just a cash flow adjustment to reflect perhaps a delay in the timing of works, but those funds would have been added into the current years.

Hon DIANE EVERS: My final question is on page 300 and, again, the works in progress. Just recently, the Auditor General released a report into the public–private partnerships to build some of our schools. I note that Aveley Secondary College does not appear at all under completed works in the

investment program, whereas another school, the Harrisdale one, is in works in progress. Lakelands appears as completed, but only the sports facility side of it, so I was wondering where the school was, and then Hammond Park, the other secondary school, is not in there at all. How are those public–private partnership schools being documented in our works in progress?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Fischer.

Mr FISCHER: The accounting treatment for public–private partnerships is that it is shown as recurrent funding, so it is not shown as part of the asset investment program. In terms of specific queries, Harrisdale Senior High School stage 1 was built under a traditional delivery mechanism, so that is why it is shown in the completed works. At Lakelands, there was an additional allocation for the public open space in a shared-use arrangement with the Shire of Mandurah. There is \$2.5 million shown in the completed works that reflects the contribution towards that facility.

[9.10 am]

Hon DIANE EVERS: For these public–private partnership schools, if we continue with that, how will we know what schools are being undertaken through that process? If it is just shown as recurrent funding and there is no mention of the schools that are being done in the budget, how is that for accountability and so forth?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will make some comments initially and then I will ask the director general to make some further comments. There is no plan of this government to enter into new PPP arrangements for the building of schools. I have no intention of announcing any, so there is no plan to do that. The arrangements in place for the PPP schools that were announced by the previous government—so the 35-year contract. I might get director general to make some comments about some of the things that the Auditor General found, but you will not need to go looking for new PPP schools because we do not intend to go down that path.

Ms O'NEILL: With respect to the report from the Auditor General, the Auditor General's commentary about the schools that are in construction is that they are on time and to the requirements being set out for the department with PPPs. There was some commentary, and it was useful for us, about some of the early days planning and some of the contract management that we could have had in place a little earlier. That is in the report. It is new to us. Certainly, we got on to that need pretty quickly after it was recognised. It was always going to happen, but I think we could have been a bit more pre-prepared around some of that early contract management. There is some commentary in there about the people undertaking the work for us and some of their response times, but I am pleased to date that the work that has been done is to standard and what we are after, but we have had some learnings for our own general capital infrastructure program as well.

Hon DIANE EVERS: That is good. I appreciate that. Then the final question will just be back to the PPP agreement, which is shown as recurrent funding. Is there any way to recognise that portion of your funding or is it wrapped up in the expenses on the income statement?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Fischer to perhaps touch on some of the contractual arrangements but also how it is shown in our accounting procedures.

Mr FISCHER: Because the PPP funding arrangement, the accounting treatment of that is shown as recurrent, it is included as part of the overall budget allocation to education, so it is not separately identified at the moment. That is the way that the papers present it.

Hon DIANE EVERS: Once constructed, are the schools considered part of our assets? Are they put back into the fixed assets?

Mr FISCHER: The arrangements for the PPP schools—they are effectively leased—shows the finance lease for the period of the contract, which is that period of time, but, essentially, they are our assets

and they are handed over to the education department at the end of that contract period in an agreed state.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Minister, I refer you to page 291 of the budget and in particular the table on appropriations, expenses and cash assets. Even more specifically, I refer you to the line item concerning the “Total appropriations provided to deliver services” across the estimates. I note a difference from the forecast provided in the last budget when it was presented in September. It quite clearly appears that there is a decline or a cut of nearly \$280 million out of the education budget across the estimates and I just want to know where that \$280 million has gone and where that full amount might be reflected in the spending changes table underneath.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The total budget for the department as shown across the total cost of services has not reduced by \$281 million. Some revisions to the department’s total cost of services have been made since the last budget. They are explained by the changes to the wages policy and the VTSS savings. The total budget for the department increases each year across the forward estimates and provides full funding for projected student enrolment growth. I think across the forward estimates there is an increase in expenses of \$440 million and an additional \$1.2 billion in capital. There are a number of factors that impact the overall budget for the department that are not directly related to school funding—for example, central and regional offices and other support costs. All of the reductions impacting on the department’s total cost of services are listed in those spending changes that are on the page we are on now and the following page so 291 and 292.

It might be useful for the committee as well just to bear in mind that our agency is somewhat different to other agencies in that we operate in calendar years; whereas other agencies might push the button, if you like, for operational changes out of a budget from 1 July, that is not what happens in the Department of Education. It is based on the school year. Sometimes it is hard to marry up, if you like, what appears in a document like the budget, prepared for financial year purposes, as opposed to operational budgets of the department. Ninety-six per cent of what the department does is related to schools, which is done on a calendar year. While that does not impact the information I have just given the honourable member, I think it is useful to bear that in mind. If you recall the changes that I announced back in December and then amended back in January of this year, were to take effect calendar year 2019. I just say that by way of background for the committee, because sometimes it is hard to marry up the two.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Sure. Notwithstanding the capital contribution to the total appropriation, nevertheless, I am just trying to get an understanding of the actual service delivery line and how that difference in funding, that \$283 million, I think it is, is actually constituted. You mentioned, for example, it was composed of a range of factors including VTSS; that might be a place to start. Are there future VTSS separations scheduled in the budget out years that contribute to that saving?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There may be some. I know that the committee was provided some information by, I think, Treasury about separations to date but in addition to that, I think that Treasury advised you that the global target across government was some 3 000. We are at 2 000 and something—I cannot remember.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The update was 2 081.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you. There are about 900-odd still to be achieved over the course of the forward estimates. Part of the reason I made the point about some of those changes that I announced in December last year and January this year, some of those changes were to take effect in school year 2019. So, there are some people who are working now but are part of those changes that we made who have expressed an interest in a VTSS but we want to hold them while we continue to provide that service for the rest of 2018. So, there will be some that arise as a consequence of

that. Then across government we are still working across the forward estimates on another 900-odd, so there may be more that come out of education as a consequence of that. There is no kind of plan beyond those things that have already been announced.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I just wanted to clarify exactly the Department of Education's, for example, contribution to achieving that whole-of-government target. The document tabled by the Minister for Environment representing the Treasurer the other evening, which I then tabled back to him yesterday and he has nicked —

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have a copy here.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is all right. I have another electronic version of that. It had 269 separations from the Department of Education. Bearing in mind that there is a continuation of the program and the policy intent seems to be to do what you can to reach that target of 3 000, can you advise of those 269 positions that have been released where they came from in the department? Can you give an indication of how many positions you might be talking about are still to separate, and from which service areas of the department they might come from as well?

[9.20 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might be able to give you part of the second part—those that are related to the announcements that have already been made—but beyond that, I cannot, as in, we are not working to a particular target, if that is what you are asking.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Without interrupting, and I do not mean to be difficult with that “not working to a target” line but I have heard from another minister two different stories about the VTSS target. The first one is, “Yes, we have a 3 000-position global thing” but if I actually try to dive into which departments or which targets you are working to, that suddenly becomes cabinet in confidence. Then I am also told there is no individual target to work to. You can understand that the two propositions do not hold together. Was the Department of Education given, or were you given as a minister, a targeted allocation to strive for?

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is not going to satisfy you, but there was a global target set for government. We are a big agency, so you would expect and the expectation was that we would make a reasonable contribution. However, because of the nature of the operations of the department—I can give you an example; if every single schoolteacher put up their hand tomorrow and said, “I’m interested in a VTSS”, I could not let them go because I need teachers to be in classrooms. We were not in a position where we could take perhaps the same approach that maybe some other agencies had. In terms of the first part of your question, we can give you some information about where those I think 269 positions are. I think the director general is in a position to do that.

Ms O’NEILL: If we just wind back a moment, out of the machinery-of-government changes, we had the Department of Education, SCSA and Department of Education Services come in, so through the MOG process we did a recalibration of organisational structure to be able to deliver that new Department of Education. Out of that restructure, 199 VT separations were taken. They came from all areas of the department, excluding schools; we are not talking about schools at the moment. This was the central and regional office. They were various levels and various job areas, so no particular areas were focused on. It was across the board to be able to deliver that service. In addition to that, we looked at employees requiring placement who had been long-term supernumerary, and offers for voluntary severance were made to them. So it really fell into two camps. I think the minister also made reference to some areas outstanding that we will be making offers to. It was exclusively the central and regional office in the combined agency sense and only to schools where there were employees requiring placement.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I am looking at page 292 and the fifth bullet point down where you stress that the “safety of students and staff in public schools remains a focus”. I note that John Butler primary school adopted a no-suspension policy and, minister, you were writing to that school to ask them to drop that policy, which I applaud you for. I think it is a great effort. I am just wondering what can be done on the other end of the spectrum with students who have received multiple suspensions? Rather than bouncing physically aggressive students between schools, has the department looked at setting up perhaps a specialist unit for physically aggressive students so they are no longer disrupting other people in the class? If you have looked at that, has any work been done around the costing of such a unit?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you for that. This is a live issue. I answered a question from Hon Donna Faragher, I think, about this last week. I will make a couple of points and then I will ask the director general to talk specifically about some programs. The first point I want to make is that our local schools reflect what is going on in their local communities. So where we have violence, one-punches, unregulated behaviour, increased use of drugs and alcohol, particularly meth, increasing family dysfunction, family and domestic violence and mental health issues in the community, you are going to see those issues reflected in our schools. Where you have students who are growing up in those families where there is a degree of dysfunction and where conflict is resolved by violence, you are going to see that reflected in our schools. What is, I think, difficult is the notion that some people have that schools can fix all of that and think the fact that students are at school between 8.30 and 2.20 in the afternoon means you have those hours to sort all of those issues out and you should not see anything that is going on outside those hours reflected in our schools. I think that is unrealistic.

What I have asked the department to do is review all of its existing policies and its levers—that includes policies around suspensions and exclusions, across the board—and look at what existing powers the director general and the department have. Do any of them need to be updated, tweaked or amended? I have started an extensive process of consultation with all the stakeholders, and that is still ongoing, asking for their feedback and for their suggestions as well. There are a range of things that we are looking at, and I have asked stakeholders to give us feedback on those things. It includes things like looking at the policy around suspensions and exclusions. For some of the cohort of those students, suspension might be seen as, “Excellent; I don’t have to go to school.” For other circumstances where we can see solutions that have been put in place with the best intentions to move students from school to school to school, sometimes that is effective and a positive thing to do because it gives the student a fresh start. They are out of their peer group that might have been causing the problem. They have new relationships with new teachers. That is sometimes a good thing but sometimes it is a difficult thing for the school that they get shifted to. We are looking at all of those policies.

I think it is important to note as well that there is a difference, and I have asked the department to treat them differently, between assaults that happen from time to time with students who might have an intellectual disability as opposed to those students who act with intent, if I can describe it that way. That second group—the students who are doing it with intent who do not have an intellectual disability that means they cannot regulate their behaviour—is treated separately. I will get the director general to talk a little bit more about that. Some of it is about being consistent in our language. Some of it is about making sure there is consistency in policies. It is not the department’s policy that there be no suspensions and we need to make sure that that message is heard consistently and then applied consistently. I might ask the director general to add some commentary about the specific programs.

[9.30 am]

Ms O'NEILL: It is an area, obviously, of interest and including the OAG in 2014 did a report to give some additional guidance to our work in this area. A couple of years ago, starting in January 2016, a new model of behaviour management support was put in place—the School of Special Educational Needs: Behaviour and Engagement. We spend about \$26 million a year just on that as a total figure of service. You asked about programs or specialist intervention. As part of that, we have the Midland Learning Academy. It is a highly specialised education alternative for the most severely at-risk, disengaged students.

Because it is highly specialised, we started a trial for 20 students. It requires very high levels of intervention and personalised support. We started in 2016 with 17 severely disengaged students and we had 20 enrolled by the end of 2017, and I think we have got 17 or 18 enrolled there at the moment. As a service, it is pretty close to one-on-one sort of intervention with those young people. They have multi-level issues—mental health, as well as their learning as well as engagement. As well as that, we have engagement centres. There was a new model of engagement centres, and we established new ones in the Kimberley, the wheatbelt and the south west so that they could have some intensive capacity on site, but also outreach. We have 13 centres. We used to have the old behaviour centres—seven of those—and now we have 13 engagement centres. Obviously, not everyone can have children come into those centres, depending on where you are living, so we have an outreach service as well. Obviously, we do a lot of specialised work with other departments—Banksia Hill, child and adolescent mental health. We have got the whole psych service as well. So it is multi-levelled. Schools have their own programs in place, but to just finish my comment where it started, all schools are governed under the same act and policies, and we expect all schools to have a policy in place that allows for reward and consequence, and maintains good order of the school and high expectations of behaviour.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I do not see it in this budget anywhere, but I note it was reported in June by *The West Australian*. There were some figures around suspension rates and specifically physical aggression suspension rates, and it notes in that article that the department changed the way it defined physical aggression to include only situations in which physical contact was made, not actions considered to be intimidating in nature. Can you tell me when that change of definition was made?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can; it was 2016. I might add that if the honourable member is looking for where that kind of information is reported to the Parliament, it is reported in the annual report, so you will be able to get more information there.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Just moving on from that, I refer to page 293 and the third bullet point down the page. It talks about the independent evaluation of the student-centred funding model currently underway. Can you tell me who is undertaking that review?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get the director general to give you the details of that. This was a process that was commenced by the previous government after the model was introduced in 2015, and if there is a final report, I have not seen it yet.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Sorry, minister; it says that the evaluation started at the beginning of 2018.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, but the student-centred funding model started in 2015.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Right; okay. But is this evaluation an initiative commissioned by the current government?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, but when the previous government announced that they were going to introduce the student-centred funding model, subsequent to that they announced that they would do an evaluation of it.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: A review in 2018. Okay; fair enough.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might ask the director general to add some comment to that.

Ms O'NEILL: Yes, the minister is right. When the introduction of what we call the SCFM was made, at the same time a commitment was given, because it was a significant change to the way in which we fund schools, to evaluate the implementation of that model. An independent contractor was engaged. It has been undertaken by the University of Victoria in partnership with the Nous Group, a consultancy group, and that work, as the minister said, is being undertaken as we speak.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: My questions to start off with are more about how the budget affects students and also some of the teachers at risk, so I just want to get into that. You have touched a bit on that and I really appreciate that detail you gave Hon Aaron Stonehouse before. If you look at page 291, there have been many savings made through the public sector wages policy and there have been increases to the government rental housing rents, which amount to about \$131 million in savings over the next four years. Can the minister advise how the department will provide support and encouragement to a workforce that is being financially penalised to a degree? It is a bit stretched now by the ever-increasing workload as the curriculum expands and the increase in society's expectations. Education staff are primarily sourced for identifying and dealing with children at risk. You previously just talked about that, so can you see where I am coming from? What I am trying to find out is: how do we support those teachers better?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Absolutely. If I start by making some comments about the government wages policy, that was agreed to by the teaching workforce in their enterprise bargaining agreement. That was completed two weeks ago with a very high level of support, which I appreciate. There are a range of issues that are ongoing between the union and myself. One of the things that we put in place as an election commitment was that we would establish a forum of all the relevant stakeholders to look at how we might attract but, more importantly, retain school leaders and teachers, particularly in rural and remote schools, and in some of those metropolitan schools that are—the language used to be “hard to staff”, meaning that they served a challenging cohort. That forum has been convened. It has met twice and is looking at how we might assist. One of the really frustrating things for communities, but also for teaching staff and school leaders, is that where you have schools that have a constant churn of school leaders in particular, you cannot establish the culture of the school and you cannot have consistent approaches in policy and build strength of the school that way. There were some schools where there was a turnover in school leaders every term. How are you going to be able to establish a strong culture when you are constantly turning over the leadership? So, we are looking at ways that we can address that.

In respect of GROH, it reflects a couple of things. One is that where the market has softened in those towns, the rents change appropriately. If I can tell you in respect of the most recent changes to GROH rents for our workforce, 75 per cent of teachers got a reduction in their rent as a result of the local market dropping, 20 per cent remained the same and five per cent had an increase. So, while I am sure that those five per cent wished that they had not got an increase, overall that was absolutely the minority and it reflects the local market wherever they are. The forward estimates provide increases to GROH of between 2.3 per cent and 4.8 per cent. As I said, for those five per cent who got an increase in their rent, if the market there changes, they would be part of that 75 that actually got a reduction, so there is that.

I think you were generally asking about how we might provide better support. I think that forum is one way. Everything we are trying to do is about making it easier and more attractive for people to stay in those schools where we know that what they need is stability, so we are working hard on that, but there are some challenging communities.

[9.40 am]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Another significant issue raised on page 292 is supporting the behaviour and mental welfare of students through the introduction of a new initiative and better cross-agency collaboration. Can the minister please advise whether this translates to additional resources for schools?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It does. It was an election commitment to provide into 300 schools additional FTE. If you understand the structure of the teachers' pay scale, there are level 3 teachers who are recognised as teachers with an extra level of skill, so they are experts in classroom teaching. There was an election commitment to provide into 300 schools an additional resource to release teachers out of the classroom to be the contact point in that school—the coordinator in that school—of whatever evidence-based mental health program is applicable. That has started to roll out. I have attended two of the training sessions for some of the first cohorts who are participating in that. I stayed for the bit when people describe why they volunteered, or were tapped on the shoulder, to be that person in their school and all of them talked about how in order for them to be able to get on and teach, the school needs more resources to help manage those kids who are turning up with in some cases low-to-medium level anxiety and in other cases it is more serious than that.

We are not asking classroom teachers to become mental health professionals; there are already mental health professionals employed by the department. We have school psychs already and there are a range of referral pathways available as well. It is providing more resources in the schools so that teachers can get on with teaching. In terms of the allocations attached to that, for the mental health program—across-the-board estimates \$13.2 million.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: You have touched on the next question I had, so I will go to my last two. Will this program be expanded for all students with learning difficulties, including those who are currently undiagnosed or unable to be diagnosed, as under the current funding model it is one of those responsibilities?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I guess I would point to a difference between providing assistance to help teachers diagnose and know when to refer a mental health issue and something that is an ongoing disability. There is a separate process for that and a separate allocation of funding for students based on their categorisation of having a disability. However, there is this group that you referred to who do not have a diagnosis and it is really, really hard. It is hard for their parents, it is hard for those students and it is hard for a system like our system to actually properly fund them when we do not have a name for what it is. Some of them will have a combination of presentations of issues as well. However, all schools through the student-centred funding model get additional funding—and I will ask the director general to walk you through that now—that recognises that all schools, diagnosis or not, will have the capacity to provide additional support for those students who need it. Primarily, the way that support is provided is through an education assistant. I will ask the director general to walk you through how that works.

Ms O'NEILL: As the minister has outlined, in the student-centred funding model, as you said, if you have a diagnosed disability, there are eight recognised categories for that. If you have a diagnosed disability in one of those categories, then there are several levels of funding depending on your, I guess, degree of adjustment that is needed. As you say, there are some students who have learning difficulties that do not fall into those disability categories and so under the student-centred funding model, we have something called an education adjustment allocation, and that is to recognise that there are a range of factors and learning difficulties that are not picked up under the other eight.

In 2018, at the moment, 28 200 students receive support through that mechanism at a cost of nearly \$29 million. The point that you are making is well understood. There are students who do not have

that medical diagnosis who still need support. On top of that, of course, there are the various schools of engagement that we have for students with disability. It is in Padbury, but the outreach services are provided into schools. Schools also use their own funding for this purpose as well.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: My first question perhaps could be dealt with on page 291 under appropriations or on page 292 relating to the second dot point on budget repair measures. Minister, in your press statement of 13 December you stated that the department would continue to review programs and that some grants previously provided to external organisations would either be reduced or cease. Can you tell me whether outside of those that formed the \$64 million budget reduction announced on 13 December there are any other grants to external organisations that are set to be reduced or ceased that have not previously been announced?

Hon SUE ELLERY: They have all been put out.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: They have all been announced?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Just so that I am clear, the press statement you put out would have quite clearly given the indication that there would be further cuts. You are telling me that no further cuts will be made. I am specifically referring to external organisations here.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What I said is: there are no changes to funding to external organisations that have not already been announced. I can say this: budget repair has not stopped. There is no plan. There is no list. There is no prospect that I see immediately or medium term. I am not looking at how we fund external organisations with a view to making further budget repair or further savings; however, it would be inaccurate, honourable member, to say that budget repair has stopped. That would be misleading for me to say that. However, is there a plan? Is there a list? Do I have particular organisations in mind? The answer to that is no.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: To use your words, if budget repair continues, if you are not at this stage identifying external organisations, what areas within the department are you looking at to improve to reduce expenditure, if we are to use your language?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I would not rule anything in or anything out. The director general has just reminded me that with respect to external organisations, there are probably some—I do not have a list in front of me—that are funded for a specific period of time and that contract might come to an end, but that is not a budget thing; that was a contract entered into for a finite period of time, but I do not consider that to be a savings measure.

Your broader question is: what are we looking at? I can say everything and nothing, in the sense that we have to look at how we spend every single dollar, and that is what we are doing. I made an announcement in December and a further announcement in January; is there another list? The answer to that is no.

[9.50 am]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: With respect to the comments that have just been passed through to you that there are some organisations that are receiving funds but their contracts might end, could I have a list—perhaps this can be taken on notice—of those where contracts are ending up until 30 June 2019?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will take some of it on notice, but maybe we will define it a bit better, because you can appreciate that an agency as big as the Department of Education has contracts with hundreds of external organisations for all sorts of things.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Maybe the ones you will not fund again, perhaps, minister.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If we can be specific, would it be helpful to say grants to non-government organisations? Is that what you are looking for?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That would be perfect.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Madam Chair, we can take on notice that we will provide a list of the grants to non-government organisations that are due to expire —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Anywhere between now and 30 June 2019.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Okay.

[Supplementary Information No A1.]

Hon SUE ELLERY: The fact that they are due to expire—you should not take that as meaning that they will not be renewed.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I am not suggesting that. That might be further questions later on, though.

If I can turn to page 296, “Public Primary Education”, I have some questions in and around kindergartens. My first question is: what is the current per child cost of the provision of kindergarten services for students who attend a public primary school—the cost per student at a public primary school?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is significantly less than those who attend a community kindergarten, if that is the line of questioning we are going down. I will see if I can find out.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: We are going to have a few questions around it.

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is not going to include all of the costs so I am not sure how helpful it is, but under the student-centred funding model—this is in school as opposed to community kindy—in 2018 per student is \$4 745. That is based on 0.5 of an FTE.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: In a letter that was sent to community kindergartens—we will go on to the community kindys now—it was stated that the current per child cost of provision at a community kindergarten with only 10 enrollees is more than double the cost of the provision at public schools. You may need to take this on notice, but could you please provide me with the evidence to substantiate that argument?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will need to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A2.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: With respect to the funding for administration support to community kindergartens, as I understand it, that is provided as administrative support to the linked school. What is the allocated FTE amount? In an answer that was given to me last week, admin support is around \$16 780. I am presuming that relates to administration time FTE equivalent. Am I heading down the right track there? Perhaps I could get some clarification.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We do not have it here so I will take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A3.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can you answer the question for me then: what actual administration support is provided by the linked school and how does that get to a figure of \$16 780 per year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general to make some comments on that.

Ms O’NEILL: The linked school provides support to the community kindergarten—the overall infrastructure of the community kindergarten, the administration in terms of looking after the property, maintenance, the employment arrangement—the administration generally of the community kindergarten. They have their own board, obviously, but they are linked to the school in professional development and employment of the people. There is a general administration support

that is given to the linked community kindergarten. I do not have the answer to the question you specifically asked about the breakdown of the administration costs here with us today.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: There seems to be a bit of a difference of opinion with respect to the amount of work that the parent committee does and the work of the linked school. I am not making any judgement with respect to the linked school but as I understand it, issues surrounding leasing and all those sorts of things are generally dealt with by the parent committee.

With respect to the teachers and EAs, can I presume that should a kindy not get their required enrolment to gain funding and start that those teachers will have an opportunity to be based at another school? Will they go onto a redeployee list? What will be the process for those? I suppose what I am trying to determine here is that in the information has been provided to me through questions already in this place there is reference to—take Albany Community Kindergarten—100-odd thousand dollars for a teacher and an EA. If, for example, a kindy is no longer operating, I am presuming that that funding will still be being paid for by the department because that teacher and the EA will go to another school. Is that correct?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general to make some comment about that.

Ms O'NEILL: To your first question about the input of the parent committee. There is no suggestion—I absolutely agree they play an important role and do a lot of work. There is no intimation differently to that. If there are staff at the community kindergarten, let us say they are fixed term and the community kindergarten came to conclusion, the staff's fixed-term contract would come to conclusion. But if they are seeking employment with us, we certainly would be wanting to help them with that. If they are permanent staff members, we would be looking to place them like we would any other staff member, so there is no disadvantage to those people. They would become an employee requiring placement. They are usually highly skilled operators and well-sought after. They would have the departmental and industrial entitlements like any other staff member. We would be seeking to place them in a suitable location whether they are an ed assistant or a teacher.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Are you able to provide me a breakdown based on the fact that there are, I think, 17 community kindergartens? Without individualising each community kindergarten, am I able to, on notice, get a number of how many teachers and EAs are employed to provide services to community kindergartens and of those a breakdown as to how many are permanent employees of the department?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can take that on notice. I might add a comment if I may, though. Just to be clear, savings are made in the event that there are permanent staff that need to be placed somewhere else. Effectively, what that means is that—this is not a very elegant expression—it kind of washes out through the system in that if we have an obligation to place that employee somewhere else, that means one less new employee coming in. That is how the savings are realised. I understand the point you are trying to make is that it may well end up that the department ends up having to pay a salary cost in any event, but it washes through the system so that eventually a saving is made because you are not having to employ an additional —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Someone new—additional.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. But I will take the previous part that you referred to on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A4.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I appreciate the reasons for why you have to have enrolment cut-offs after a period of time to determine staffing and all of those sorts of things. However, there is, I think, a

valid argument with respect to the cut-offs for the enrolment for kindergarten with respect to community kindergartens versus a public school.

I understand both their enrolment cut-offs are 20 July. That does not take into account late enrolments or overflow from linked schools for the community kindergartens. Whilst appreciating that at some point you need a cut-off, and I do understand that, surely there is a mechanism to have a slightly later enrolment cut-off for community kindergartens to take into account overflow, which does happen as we know, and late enrolments. I think that that is a fair position that could be taken. I know that there is an opportunity for kindergartens where, I understand, if they are close to—albeit no-one can quite tell you what “close to” means—the 16, they may get an extension for six weeks. But has there been any consideration to giving a later cut-off for the community kindergartens to deal with the very matters I have just outlined?

[10.00 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general to make a comment in a minute, but I guess I reiterate the point that you make yourself: you have to have a line in the sand somewhere at which point you take a snapshot. But equally I think it is important to note that that is why there is not a standard “if you are not at X by that number, you will close”, because it does allow for the opportunity to look at the particular circumstances whatever they might be. I will ask the director general to make some additional comments.

Ms O’NEILL: The point you make is absolutely right. It is a very difficult exercise to ensure places for everyone. It is hard on one hand for it to be black and white, and we get criticised, I guess, and then if it is not black and white and we do not give it a hard deadline, people struggle with that as well. The first thing I would say is that these things are imperfect sciences—as in, people move into a local area and try to find a place. I am agreeing with the point that you are making: it is difficult to manage and as a system we have to manage it. Community kindergartens have until 10 August to confirm enrolments for 2019 and I think we have said in answer to some questions from you and others that we do consider things on a case-by-case basis. We have to have a line in the sand. The counter to the argument is that there are staff who need to know whether they have a job. We are trying to balance the parents and their needs to get their children into a program, and we have to balance the entitlements of staff to have some certainty over a job. We could make the deadline 20 November, I guess, but then we would have staff that would miss out on a job. It is a fine balancing act. For many years we have tried to manage that fine balancing act as we have always done. That is why we say “a case-by-case basis”, but we simply cannot go on weeks and weeks and give no certainty. The later a decision is made to close a program by the parent committee, the less chance that they have to get into another program. We are not going to disadvantage students themselves, the families, or the teachers. The process we have in place we think is fair. I think it is also fair that we try to determine those things on a case-by-case basis. I think we have a good history of showing that we are open to try to work with the community kindergartens, to help them make their program work, but at the end of the day we need to have a decision point.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I appreciate that staff need to know what they are doing for the following year and also for parents as well to know where they are going to be sending their children. But I suppose an example might be that if a kindy, at 20 July or 10 August, are at 10 enrolments, but they think there may well be some overflow or they are not sure, I am presuming under those circumstances, they would be eligible for a case-by-case—if we are going to use that language—and they could get an extension for six weeks?

Ms O’NEILL: In these circumstances, most people foresee this influx of students. Aspirationally, they would like to see it happen and from time to time it happens, but often it does not happen. We would want to see in any case-by-case discussion some reasonable, convincing evidence of where

the kids are coming from. They often have their names down in other places as well. As I said, we have to manage the system. We cannot just say, “Yes, it is okay; you think you have five other people coming.” We would want to see something concrete, I guess I am saying. But I think we have said on a number of occasions that we are open on a case-by-case basis. They provide a great service to the people who want to use it. We want to be behind that, but as well as that, we need to manage the situation for everyone involved.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If I could just ask one more question in relation to this matter, only because I have your undivided attention. Minister, you would know I gave a speech in Parliament on Thursday night in relation to Byford Community Kindergarten and what I see are special circumstances that they have found themselves in. I am just wondering, minister, if you have had the opportunity to speak to the department and whether they are willing to look at an exemption for next year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It would be awful to put the director general on the spot right now because I have not discussed it with her.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Oh, goody; we are now!

Hon SUE ELLERY: However, I have discussed it with my chief of staff so I have acted on it; I just have not had the opportunity to talk to the director general about it. But the comment that I made—I think I sent you a text —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes, you did.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The comment that I made at the time was that it seemed a reasonable thing that I could examine, so I will do that.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Minister, thank you for that. I suppose all I would indicate on that is that if I could get an answer fairly soon, because as you will appreciate it is 21 June, they have got limited time; the deadline is fast approaching for them. I think if they had an understanding of the position of you and the department with regard to an exemption being provided to them just for next year, I think that would allay some concerns that they have.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have just been advised by the director general, and it is pleasing to me to know that my office is working well, that the chief of staff has raised it with her, so she is looking at it. But we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, picking up on the line of questioning of Hon Donna Faragher, I might just ask a quick question in relation to community kindergartens. With the new thresholds that are now in place, is it anticipated that this is now going to be a permanent measure going into the forward estimates or is this something that is likely to be revisited at some point, if favourably?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The intention is that it will continue going forward.

Hon ALISON XAMON: The second part of that is: is it anticipated that there will be community kindergartens that are going to close in 2019 as a result of the new thresholds; and, if so, are you aware of which ones?

Hon SUE ELLERY: They have closed generally over the years; there has been a kind of pattern. Most people, for a whole range of reasons, choose to send their children to kindy in a school setting—for a range of reasons, that it is continuity and all the rest of it. They have closed generally over time. I am not anticipating closing any because the policy, as has been said publicly, is that there are time lines in place to report on projected enrolments, and then we will make a case-by-case assessment of the particular circumstances of that particular community kindy. I am told that in 2001, for example, there were 42 community kindies in place. In 2018, there are 17.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I will move on to my favourite subject, which is that of students at educational risk in all their forms. I refer to page 292 of the *Budget Statements*, the fourth dot point from the bottom. I have been concerned about the reports regarding the inappropriate restraint of students, particularly those with autism, and I was wanting to know whether there is any work being done specifically with teachers to build knowledge and skills in this area in order to avoid the issue of restraint?

[10.10 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get the director general, or perhaps one of the other officers, to comment in a minute, but I will say that the Minister for Disability Services and I were part of a discussion with disability advocates around the issue of restraint—I am just trying to cast my mind back to when that was; I would say it was earlier this year—and there were some undertakings given about some follow-up that would happen out of that. I think I have been advised that that follow-up has happened. I might ask the director general to make some broader comments.

Ms O'NEILL: If I could just clarify, did you say restraint in terms of a particular group of students?

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am particularly concerned about students with autism.

Ms O'NEILL: By way of background, we have had—I think we have talked a little bit about this on previous occasions—a focus on the use of Team Teach de-escalation and positive handling in schools as a particular program that provides staff with practical information and guidance and strategies on how to diffuse situations so that we can minimise risk and reduce restraint. We have had quite a focus on that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Has there been an increased level of attention paid in 2018 to the delivery of that program?

Ms O'NEILL: I understand—I am just having a look—that a number of staff were trained in 2016–17, so in that financial period—more than 1 800. We have increasing numbers of people attending these courses.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, would I be able to ask on notice, unless the answer can be provided now, the exact figures of the teachers who were trained in 2016–17 and 2017–18?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can give that to you now, but perhaps I might invite you to let the director general finish what she was trying to say because there is other information that might be of some assistance to you as well.

Ms O'NEILL: The number of staff trained in that 2016–17 period of 1 874—this is teachers—is spread across the various regions. We have been getting involved in trying to get more accredited tutors, so not only people being involved in their own professional learning, but accredited tutors that can provide that service as well. We have 231 spread across the various regions. We have a contract with Team-Teach Australia. That has been in place since April 2014 and we have had some contract extensions there. The specific purpose is to train in prevention, de-escalation, positive handling and, as a last resort, appropriate physical restraint, because there is a whole lot of de-escalation, as you would be aware, that we want to put in place before that. That has been a particular focus over the last while.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is any new money being made available for students with FASD or suspected FASD?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not new money in a sense but I think the committee is aware that there are a number of cabinet subcommittees that exist, and one of those is around social policy. I initiated some work that all the ministers on that committee are doing, which is to map exactly what each agency is doing and spending on dealing with FASD because there is a lot of people doing good stuff

and there is a lot of stuff that is not being done. That mapping exercise is underway now; it might have even been completed, I think. From there, that cabinet subcommittee is going to look at what gaps, if any, have been identified, who is doing what well and what needs to be followed up so that we can approach this in a methodical way across government. I am told that there is \$28 million in education adjustment that is used for FASD. I will get the director general to explain that to you in a moment. If you can imagine in probably four particular agencies—no, it would be more; I should not put a number on it. Corrective Services participated in a really good piece of work with Telethon Kids. Child Protection has been dealing with the consequences of FASD for a long time, as has Education, and some work was done early on a few years ago by teachers in identifying the best ways to teach. Some of the consequences for children with FASD are not dissimilar to other multi-developmental delay disabilities that other students present with, but trying to put together techniques to best teach and ensure that FASD students achieve the very best that they can, bearing in mind, of course, that it is a spectrum, so you have got people with higher and lower degrees of function and capacity within that spectrum. There is good work being done around the place, but we need to map it properly to understand who is doing what where and respond accordingly. I will get the director general to make some comments about how that \$28 million that I just referred to is spent.

Ms O'NEILL: As per previous discussions that we have had on this topic, some of the students with FASD in classes have reasonable adjustments that the teachers can make within their current arrangements. The \$28 million, which is what I referred to earlier, is a category under the student-centred funding model that is there for those students who require teaching and learning adjustments that do not fall into the eight medical diagnosis groups, so it is as we have discussed before. Under the model, schools have available to them funding that they can use for students with FASD or with other learning difficulties or problems that are not covered by those eight diagnosis categories, which is the model at the moment.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am interested also in the level of funding to support students with disability more broadly. Could you please advise what increases, if any, there are for the next financial year and also over the forward estimates to funding allocated to individual students and also to schools to support students with disability?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general.

Ms O'NEILL: I do not recall an increase in the funding for the various levels, although someone might assist me with that. We have levels one to seven, which are the continuum of levels, and we are going to be spending through those individual disability allocations. In 2018, the allocation is over \$300 million and the allocation in 2017 was around \$296 million, nearly \$297 million, so we have an increase there for students with IDA. The educational adjustment I have already spoken about. We are putting more emphasis on autism. We are opening some new autism centres, so funding is being spent there as well, but the overall increase in the IDA, the individual disability allocation, is as I have described.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I clarify: it sounds as though the amount being allocated is simply increasing with CPI in the forward estimates. Is that correct? There is no additional allocation being put aside for a potential increase in the number of students identifying as having disability.

Ms O'NEILL: It would be an expression also of the increase in the population, as we have described before.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Okay. These autism centres that you have just referred to, minister, are they over and above the \$300 million that has been allocated? That is additional money?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am told the IDA contributes to it, but there is, over and above, additional funding as well.

Hon ALISON XAMON: How much is that, minister?

[10.20 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: In addition, I am told the funding for 2018 for the specialist program for students with autism spectrum disorder is \$5.7 million.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I just confirm: is that anticipated to be continued in the forward estimates?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon ALISON XAMON: At a similar level?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It goes up to \$6.9 million in 2019. It will continue.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is the federal government currently providing any specific money towards students with disability?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. It is part of the current funding arrangement. It is part of what we are negotiating. I am literally getting on a plane this afternoon to visit Adelaide, once again, to have a conversation with my colleagues and the federal government about how we might move forward, at glacial pace, on getting a new funding agreement in place.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I confirm with the minister how much money the federal government has invested in this space for the 2017–18 year? Can I clarify: are you saying that in terms of their contribution in the forward estimates, it is unknown at this point?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is certainly unknown. To cut a long story short, you will recall that the feds proposed a new funding regime. It was legislated. There are a range of conditions, some of which are unattractive to the states, in that legislation. We all signed up to a rollover agreement for this year. We are now working towards what we can achieve going forward.

The CHAIR: We will move on to the —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Madam Chair, I was just going to get an answer to that question.

Hon SUE ELLERY: On the contribution for 2017–18?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not have that number here, but I could take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 299 and the asset investment program. How much of the \$468.7 million of the asset investment program is for regional WA? Can you give a breakdown of the investment in those assets that is funded by royalties for regions and the percentage that is funded by consolidated revenue?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can start while they see if there is other information. Drawdowns from royalties for regions is set out towards the bottom of page 303 of budget paper No 2. I can also provide you with the following information: out of the regional infrastructure and headworks fund, for 2018–19 there is a total of \$96.9 million for regional infrastructure.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I will just move to page 301 of budget paper No 2 and the section under “Miscellaneous”, specifically the reference to playground equipment and shade structures. What is the requirement to access funding for those miscellaneous items like playground equipment and shade structures? How do schools go about doing that? Can all schools—primary, secondary, district high schools, independent schools and K–12 colleges—apply for miscellaneous funds? Is it spread

right across the spectrum? The minister might need to take this on notice, but in 2017–18, how much funding was provided to kindergarten to year 12 colleges for miscellaneous items?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can make some general comments and I will then refer to Mr Fischer. With respect to playground equipment and shade structures, I think I just announced a new round or something. Maybe I had best hand over to Mr Fischer to start off with the playground equipment and shade structures.

Mr FISCHER: The allocation for playground equipment and shade structures applies to public schools only and to primary students. It means that primary schools and also district highs may apply for those funds. Generally, it is allocated on a needs basis, where a grant of up to \$25 000 is provided to schools that are demonstrating some progress towards raising funds for their own equipment. This is a contribution that adds to that. The process for inviting schools occurs each year, so early in term 3 there will be an invitation to schools to register their interest in applying for those grants.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Minister, I will also ask you about the regional community services fund on page 307. I refer specifically to the line item “Regional Community Services Fund” in the table titled “Statement of Cashflows”. What does that line item actually refer to, and what projects do you think are in that fund?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Good question. It is specifically funded items, so it includes the regional workers incentive allowance, Clontarf colleges, some election commitments, attraction and retention, the Pilbara education partnership and Foodbank.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I have one last question about camp schools. Could the minister clarify whether there will be any provisions built into the sale or tender contracts regarding the delivery of curriculum and any pricing around access?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The two criteria that I requested be built into the expression of interest process was that public schools get priority of booking and that prices remain affordable for public schools. Those are the two things I asked to be built in. Although each camp school has a slightly different history, curriculum now is delivered by the teachers who attend from the schools that the kids come from. I do not see any changes in that.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: I only have one question, minister, and it really follows on from the questions you have already taken about the safety of students and staff. With reference to the sixth dot point on page 292, which is the one about resilience, emotional regulation and behaviour of children and young people, I wanted to ask: what measures is the department taking to support schools to deal with these disturbances, which are attributable to mental health or mental illness rather than to other disciplinary problems?

[10.30 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I guess a couple of points—one, I made the point earlier that the work that I have asked the department to do in terms of the existing policies and procedures is around students who act with intent as opposed to students who have an intellectual disability. The question of mental health is going to be an interesting one to tackle because it is not an intellectual disability. It may well be short or periodic. A range of measures are already in place. For example, the director general has the power to exclude a student and place them in an external engagement program, and that is quite a useful thing to do from time to time when you are talking about a student who has a particular periodic issue. The meth action plan as well will have some elements within that, as will Target 120. Target 120 involves a whole range of agencies, including Education, looking at those young people in particular who have not gone into Corrective Services yet, but they are at high risk of doing so. Many of them come from families that have intergenerational mental health issues or addiction and other issues, and those families are well known to agencies.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: They are on the radar, in that sense.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. There is a range of policies that are being put in place. I think Hon Aaron Stonehouse asked the question around what we are doing about violence in schools and I think I made the point to him that part of what we are doing is having conversations about the levers that we can pull, and they include things like suspensions and exclusions. Now, if I wanted to take a really hardline law-and-order approach, I may well say, "Well, that is it, there is zero tolerance and it is automatic exclusion." All that would do is put those kids on the street. There would be an increased amount of antisocial behaviour and they would become the problem of the police and then the problem of Corrective Services. That by itself is not going to be an adequate solution. We need to make sure that we have in place other arrangements. Now, there are some already. The department already contracts with a whole range of NGOs to provide external programs for those kids who need to be out of the mainstream school environment, but we still want them engaged. We might look at expanding that. I have already had some conversations with CARE schools, which provide fantastic services to a cohort of students, not all of whom by any stretch cannot attend mainstream school because of violence; there is a whole range of other reasons why students may be better served through a CARE school. I think there is a range of policies and procedures that exist already that perhaps we need to review and revise and make some alterations to. We need to have conversations with other agencies. We need to have a conversation with the broader community about this expectation that schools can fix everything because by themselves they cannot.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: In this concept of a full-service school, do other agencies have a presence in the school?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. We are going to trial one very soon. I do not think I am able to say it yet, but very, very soon, we are going to trial one of those. This is an election commitment. It was based on the work that Tony Buti did. It looked at the work in the UK around full-service schools. I describe it to people as you take the child and parent centres and you kind of ramp it up a bit. Child and parent centres do a lot of work around prevention; full-service schools will be doing more about dealing with the antisocial stuff after it has happened. The idea is that you would have a whole range of agencies working out of a school site to provide assistance for those families. I am told that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service are on site at Midland Academy as well.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: They already have a presence in some schools.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, but I might ask the director general to add a bit to that.

Ms O'NEILL: I spoke before about engagement centres and Midland Learning Academy and taking on some students who have mental health issues, so I will not talk about that again. We work closely with other agencies and services. We have an MOU with CAMHS and WA Country Health, so we are trying to work closely with those groups. We are funded by the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention. We have a partnership with the Mental Health Commission and we are working quite closely with it around mental health and around suicide prevention and the gatekeeper program. We are running the teen mental health first-aid program. Our School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health provides an outreach service. Last year, just over 1 600 students received the benefit of that service on top of what they would get at the local level as well.

Trauma-informed practice is something that we have tried to become more skilled and more informed about, and other evidence-based programs. We are helping schools select programs that are evidence based and that will be underpinned by that trauma-informed practice and also helping our teachers who either themselves may be trauma-affected or skilling them to work with young people who are suffering trauma or who have in the past, leading to some of their mental health issues. Teachers are having to become more adept at creating curriculum and learning experiences

that can take account of some of the pretty dire mental health issues that some of our children are coming to school with. We try to support them. It is so important we work with those other agencies. The psychs are involved. Chaplains in different ways are involved. As the minister said, we do not pretend to be the silver bullet here, although we are a big part of it. We are trying to learn also, as we go. There is so much new information and we are working closely with the agencies that can assist us—and the parents, obviously.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: A lot of the areas I was going to raise have been already covered, but I want to come back to one area that I have an interest in. I refer you to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 292, the fourth dot point, which has been referred to before. While you are looking for that, just by way of comment, I come from the retail industry and a lot of jobs are disappearing in retail with self-serve checkouts and online retail and so on. Can the minister explain how the government's commitments made in this statement, particularly around STEM, prepare WA students for those jobs that will be available in the future?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thanks for the question. I might have to confess that my use of online shopping might mean that I am a contributor to the loss of jobs and I apologise for that. I appear to be addicted.

The issue of STEM is an important one, though. We made some election commitments around that, including, basically, trying to encourage more primary school students to take up science in secondary school by providing them with authentic learning environments around science labs in primary schools. The first round of those has been announced. The second round will be invited soon. In addition to that, there was an announcement that the Minister for Science and I made a few weeks ago in May around professional development for STEM teachers. Unfortunately, we made it over the weekend of a certain big wedding and so it did not get as much attention as it might have otherwise.

That was about funding from the science portfolio to provide professional development for around 1 200 teachers in the STEM subjects. One of the issues many secondary schools have struggled with over the years is making sure that we have specialist teachers available. This will be a significant contribution to lifting our capacity to teach those STEM subjects. I was really pleased to be part of that announcement as well. In addition, there is \$2 million to support coding in the curriculum so teachers can code. Professional learning is being delivered to 100 lead teacher. There are seven digi-tech schools that have demonstrated expertise in digital technology. They also provide support to other schools. There is an Innovation Partnership Schools program that includes four schools with a focus on STEM that brings together clusters of schools to assist each other with professional practice and how to engage more students. There are a range of things that are happening in my other portfolio as well around STEM in the training and workforce development program. What we know we need to do is encourage students to take up and then stick with STEM subjects. If you visit any primary school, the most engaged classroom you will find is the one where the kindy and pre-primary kids are playing with the Bee-Bots. We have to sustain that over and into secondary school, and then into university, but make sure there are then people with STEM qualifications who want to teach. That is important as well. One of the programs that has worked really well in that sense is the Teach For Australia program, which takes professionals who have qualifications and expertise in a range of areas, including a lot in STEM, and places them in schools with challenging cohorts. That program is working really well encouraging those students to stick with STEM.

[10.40 am]

Hon DIANE EVERS: My question is on the statement of financial position on page 306. I note that under non-current liabilities, the borrowings for the Department of Education are increasing from \$388 million to \$716 million over the next five years. What is the rationale for when it is decided

whether the Department of Education will take out borrowings and when they just receive a capital appropriation, noting that the finance costs are increasing from \$28 million last year to \$47 million? I am sure that would be impacting on your budget.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might make some comments and then I might ask Mr Peckitt to explain this as well. Non-current borrowings consist of finance leases that have a lease term longer than 12 months and the balance reduces as existing finance leases are paid off gradually. It includes the liability relating to those schools that are being delivered through the public–private partnership. In 2018–19, \$63.7 million of school buildings will be delivered through that PPP program; \$88.9 million in 2019–20; \$19.6 million in 2020–21; and \$18.3 million in 2021–22. I might ask Mr Peckitt to explain that.

Mr PECKITT: As the minister said, the main reason for that increase is the PPPs and just due to the accounting treatment of those arrangements that causes the amount of borrowings to increase over those years. The rest relate to finance leases that have been in place for some time. There is little change to those.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: With respect to the second dot point on page 292, significant issues impacting the agency—ones concerning budget reductions—can I just understand what the net saving is likely to be of those announcements which were carried through after your December announcement? It is in the vicinity of \$41 million; is that correct?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Could I get a sense then, minister, of what proportion or what the net saving is to the department will be for not funding the Landsdale Farm School?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. Over the forward estimates, it is \$1.8 million.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Is that net?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That infers, then, that salaries will no longer be paid to staff. How many staff are likely to lose their jobs?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It depends on their current employment arrangements—if they are fixed term, or if they are permanent; it depends what their particular arrangement is. There is not necessarily a job loss in the sense that if they are permanent, then they require placement by the department. What we have done is ask Treasury to agree, and they have, to give us some flexibility because we want to carry through the services until the end of this year to make sure if those staff are interested—I do not know if they are or not—in a VTSS, to make sure that is available to them. Otherwise, they require replacement. The comment that I made earlier about how the savings wash through the system is because we will place them, then that means we do not have to employ someone new to wherever it is that we place them.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: In taking the decision to cease funding to this farm school and a range of other measures, what was the process arrived at to determine that they were targets for defunding? Specifically in relation to the Landsdale Farm School, did the department undertake an assessment of the utilisation of the facility, its replaceability or duplication informing that decision, or was it effectively a line item that you could divest yourselves of?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Member, it was a combination of things. It was asking: is this a core service that is used primarily by the department? Is it a core service that the department should be using? A range of factors were taken into account and I have said this before, but I am happy to say it again: it is a highly valued community service. Some 58 000 people, I think, use the service. They are primarily adults and on the weekends. That was —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: On that, do you realise they are adults on the weekend because children cannot drive themselves to the facility and normally they attend with their parents? Can I understand how, because that is a claim you have made on a number of occasions —

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is a fact.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: — where do you draw your attendance data from?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Our business—the business of the Department of Education—is to run schools. That is our business. It is not to provide a really great, family-friendly service on the weekends to families. That is not the business —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: There is an educational resource centre there —

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, I was answering the question —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: So, do schoolchildren attend that facility?

The CHAIR: Order! Thank you. We will not have badgering. I am not sure whether there are any at the farm school.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: It is a question.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The point I was making was that it is a highly valued community service and I appreciate that. The question that I had to satisfy myself was: in the worst set of books since the Second World War that we inherited, in that economic environment, was that a service that should continue to be funded out of the Department of Education?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You may draw that conclusion. That is not a conclusion that I drew.

[10.50 am]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I just have a couple of royalties for regions questions. I refer to the asset investment program on page 303 of budget paper No 2. Which projects are funded from the royalties for regions administered item?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Under recurrent out of royalties for regions are the regional workers incentive allowances payments, boarding away from home, regional school breakfast, Clontarf, Aboriginal and Islander education officers, improving teacher quality, independent learning coordinators, mental health support, Pilbara Partnerships for Student Success, regional learning specialists, the Kimberley schools project, and attraction and retention for Pilbara education. In capital works they are Albany Secondary Education Support Centre; Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School; regional residential college upgrade, Broome; regional residential college upgrade, Narrogin; Carnarvon Community College stages 2 and 3; Cape Naturaliste College; Bunbury Senior High School; Collie Senior High School; Eaton Community College; Eaton Primary School; preventative maintenance program; preprimary centre at Flinders Park; Glen Huon Primary School; joint youth facilities at Lakeland Senior High School in Mandurah; Newton Moore Senior High School; Mount Lockyer Primary School; South Bunbury Primary School; Geraldton Senior High School; John Willcock College; and Margaret River Senior High School.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I refer to the income statement on page 305. What is funded by royalties for regions in the regional reform fund? Was that part of the answer you just gave me?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I do not know that it was, but I will find out for you.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: The department will receive \$26 million from royalties for regions regional reform fund in 2017–18 and 2020–21.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is the Kimberley schools project. I have visited a number of schools that are part of that project and it is a project doing fantastic work around literacy in particular in the Kimberley schools. It is a sensational project.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: This is my last question. The department does not separately identify accommodation. I refer to the income statement and statement of cashflows on pages 305 and 307. Where are the accommodation costs incorporated in these statements?

Hon SUE ELLERY: As in office accommodation?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I think that is what we are talking about, yes.

The CHAIR: Yes, other agencies have line items for accommodation costs, which is usually office accommodation or that sort of thing.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Office accommodation, yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: On page 305, the line item “Supplies and services” includes operating lease and accommodation expenses.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Under what item?

Hon SUE ELLERY: At the top of page 305 of the budget papers it has got “Supplies and services”. If I unpack that a bit, that is where our accommodation expenses appear.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Could I go back to page 292 and the second dot point referring to budget repair measures? I have a couple of quick questions regarding the agricultural education farm provisions trust. Can I get some clarity? Obviously, there is going to be the 20 per cent reduction, or take, from the trust into consolidated revenue. Is that intended to extend beyond the forward estimates? Is that going to be a continual reduction?

Hon SUE ELLERY: What I have said to the trust is that my view is that that exists for the period of budget repair. I have said that to the Treasurer as well that my view is that exists for the period of budget repair. I cannot put an end date on it, but that is my position.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is an interesting position, minister; you are not giving any detail at all. Anyhow, I just want some clarity one particular aspect, particularly with reference to situations—perhaps, and this is a hypothetical, but it happens—in which if an essential piece of farm equipment requires replacement and it is beyond the scope of the trust for that particular year, what are the options, or the process, by which a school can request additional funds in order to get a replacement, whether it is for a vehicle or whatever it might be? Is there a process through which the schools can apply for additional funds? Secondly, if yes, will they get those funds?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is the same process that has always existed and exists now; that is, they can ask the department to assist and the department will make a judgement about that. The department has made judgements about that and has assisted ag colleges because there have been particular circumstances or a particular piece of equipment that was required and beyond the reach of the trust. I do not envisage anything changing in that sense.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If there was some equipment that needed replacement, can you assure the agricultural colleges that they will receive the necessary funds to replace the equipment?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, that is a different question than the process.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Okay, that is my next question then.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The process is that they can apply. Nothing has changed in that process; they can apply and their application will be considered, as it is now.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: How do they apply?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The same way they have always done.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: There is a lack of clarity around that, minister, with some, so that is why I am asking a question.

Hon SUE ELLERY: They are not shy about doing it. They have never been shy about doing it before. Nothing has changed. They probably need to pick up the phone.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Okay, I will let them know. My final question relates to the fourth dot point about STEM. Again, I heard your comments about STEM and professional development of staff. Given that a key part of the science aspect of STEM is environment and sustainability, I refer to the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. Given the fact that over 6 000 school students visit that centre and it also provides professional development to numerous staff at schools, why is it not core business of the department to support the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre to continue to provide support directly to schools and teachers?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are a range of services in areas where schools can get assistance with professional development on those matters and they will continue to be in place.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can you provide me with a list? I am happy to take it on notice.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I did not hear what you said.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If there are various options for them, could you provide me with a list and I am happy to take it on notice.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, we can.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

[11.00 am]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I do not think I got an answer to my substantive question as to why funding cannot be provided and it is not the core business of the department to support Herdsman Lake.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not dissimilar to what I have said previously and to what I said to Hon Tjorn Sibma, we had to make a judgement that took into account a range of things: are there alternative places and is it the core business of the Department of Education to provide that service through that particular organisation? Balancing all those things up, and that we had to make savings to fix the mess that we were left with, that is why we made that judgement.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So, over 6 000 students attending in one year does not indicate the importance of that centre to the Department of Education and the school students in this state.

Hon SUE ELLERY: When faced with a choice of having to make savings, I could have chosen what previous governments have done, including those of your persuasion, to close schools. I chose not to do that. I chose —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: You are closing Moora.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is not a school. That school will continue. Indeed, more than that school will continue. For the first time in many, many years, the department now has been given an instruction from this minister to try to find ways to boost Central Midlands Senior High School, so that it has stable leadership and is able to offer education to the people who live in Moora, so that the people who live in Moora will want to send their kids to that school because it will have more than 170 students, which is what it had been allowed to dwindle down to over the last eight and a half years. Indeed, I had a choice of closing a school or trying to save money by not continuing to fund an external organisation, valuable though it is, like the Gould society. That was a difficult decision I did not want to make, but left with the finances that you left me, I had limited options.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member. That concludes our hearing with Department of Education.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, within seven days of the hearing. If members have any unasked questions, I ask you to submit these via the electronic lodgement system on the POWAnet site by 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 27 June. Responses to these question and any questions taken on notice are due by 12 noon Friday, 13 July. 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. Once again, I thank you all for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 11.02 am
