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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Friday, 2 June 2000

Legislative Assembly

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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr Bloffwitch): For the information of members, this Estimates Committee will be reported by Hansard and a proof document will be made available to the committee clerk progressively throughout the day. The daily *Hansard* will be available the following morning. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office; only supplementary information which the minister agrees to provide will be sought within one week.

It will also greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program and amount in preface to their question.

As has been the practice of previous Estimates Committees members should not raise questions about matters of general concern which do not have an item of expenditure in the consolidated fund. The Estimates Committee's consideration of the consolidated fund's estimates of expenditure will be restricted to discussions of those items for which a vote of money is proposed. We are dealing with estimates of expenditure and that should be the prime focus of this committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, they need to be clearly related to matters of expenditure. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators which are included in the *Budget Statements* while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates.

It would assist in the committee's examination if questions and answers can be kept brief, without unnecessarily omitting material information. It is my intention to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, would the minister clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide? Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers, and accordingly I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

Division 26: Education, \$1 469 078 000 -

Mr Bloffwitch, Chairman.

Mr Barnett, Minister for Education.

Mr P. Browne, Acting Director General.

Mr R.V. Mance, Acting Deputy Director General.

Mrs R. Moroz, Relieving Executive Director, Policy and Planning.

Mr S. Home, Executive Director, Human Resources.

Mr P. McCaffrey, Director Finance.

Ms V.J. Burns, Director, Early Childhood Education.

Mr P. de Garis, Assistant Executive Director (Schools).

Mr P.B. Hamilton, Director, Standards and Effectiveness.

Mr S. Harvey, Director, Facilities and Services.

Ms E. Lucas, Director, Student Services.

Mr B. McMahon, Manager, Vocational Education and Training.

Mr G. Martin, Chief Information Officer, Information Technology.

Mr N. Milligan, Acting Director, Learning and Teaching.

Mr J. Ryan, Director, Staffing.

Mr K.G. Wyatt, Director, Aboriginal Education.

Mr CARPENTER: With regard to the global budget figures, the budget for Education indicates a 5.8 per cent increase, which means, using the underlying inflation rate of 3 per cent, that we are looking at 2.8 per cent in real terms. I want to look at the budgets for the previous two years for which actual figures are available rather than estimates. In 1998-99, the last time for which the actual figures are available, the estimated projection for recurrent expenditure was \$1.142b, but when the 1999-2000 budget was brought down, that estimate was revised upwards by \$50m, so it went up to \$1.192b. As events turned out, the actual figure was \$1.201b so, by the time the estimated actual became the actual, the cost had gone up by

another \$9m. That escalating pattern is repeated in 1999-2000, for which the estimate of \$1.275b had to be revised upwards to an estimated actual of \$1.302b, which meant a \$27m increase over the original estimate when the budget for this year was introduced. The minister is using the \$1.302b figure on which to base his calculation of a 5.8 per cent increase in spending. What guarantee can he give us, given the Premier's position about the need to rein in spending and to come in on budget, that this estimated actual figure will be the actual figure?

Mr BARNETT: By way of background, there has been no doubt that the State Government has had an enormous increase in education spending over the past few years. In fact, since 1995-96 the average annual increase in spending in Education has been 8.1 per cent. That has been due to computer programs, early childhood programs, the new curriculum, school construction and the like. I would argue that Education has received stronger support in new expenditure in the past five years than it has for decades.

For the coming financial year 2000-01, the recurrent budget is \$1 378.1m and capital expenditure is \$91m, making a total of \$1 469.1m. The total expenditure, including both recurrent and capital, shows a 3.8 per cent increase this year. Part of the explanation of why that is a little lower than in previous years is that we have recently undertaken an enormous capital works program, which is coming off the peak. If one looks at day-to-day operating factors, which are largely driven by the number of students and teachers, the recurrent or operating budget is going up by 5.8 per cent, which is still comfortably ahead of the inflation rate. So we are still having a real increase in education spending but not the growth that we have had in previous years. For the current financial year of 1999-2000, it has been necessary for Treasury to provide an additional allocation of \$26.4m to the Education Department.

Therefore, there has been a trend in the past two or three years of the Education budget running ahead by the order of \$20m to \$30m. That is largely a function of many of the new initiatives that were brought in, particularly the early childhood program, which was a fundamental change in preprimary and kindergarten. I expect that we will keep within budget this year. There was a flow-on effect from some of the changes in teacher classification that allowed promotion through various grades, which was an overhang from the industrial issues of 1995. They have worked themselves out now. We expect to be within budget this year, but we recognise that in the past few years we have gone over budget by \$20m to \$30m in the context broadly of \$1.5b.

Mr CARPENTER: It may well be that I have been unable to analyse the budget figures, but can the minister provide me with the calculations upon which he is making the assertion that the Education budget since 1995-96 has increased annually by an average of 8 per cent?

Mr BARNETT: I can tell the member now. In 1995-96 the increase was 9.1 per cent; in 1996-97 it was 9.7 per cent; in 1997-98 it was 6.7 per cent; in 1998-99 it was 10.8 per cent; in 1999-2000 it is 8.3 per cent; and in 2000-01 it will be 3.8 per cent.

Mr CARPENTER: By way of supplementary information, will the minister provide me with the analysis which gave him those figures and percentage increases in recurrent and capital expenditure?

Mr BARNETT: I will give the member a summary of how those figures are calculated.

[9.10 am]

Mr CARPENTER: The minister said that additional funds of \$26.4m were received from Treasury. Is that in any sense carried over as a deficit into the coming financial year?

Mr MANCE: Ten million dollars of that shortfall will be met by our cash balances - we have money in the bank - and through revenue. However, that \$10m is reinstated in the 2000-01 budget, so we get that back. It is factored in. We do not go into the year with a deficit.

Mr CARPENTER: That is the \$10m. What about the other \$17m?

Mr MANCE: That will be supplemented by Treasury.

Mr CARPENTER: Obviously, the point that I am trying to clarify is whether any of the figures that are allocated for the coming financial year are in any sense already expended because of the Treasury allocation the department received for the current financial year.

Mr MANCE: No. In those figures, the department assesses asset sales, and that money comes back to the department through the Department of Land Administration and through Treasury as an appropriation. Asset sales for this year have been greater in revenue, so part of that money that will come from Treasury is money due to the department from sales. Therefore, \$7.5m of that money coming from Treasury is an appropriation, but, as it appears, there is a change in the appropriation that comes to us. However, an amount of \$7.5m is from sales.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister has spoken about this point in general terms. The 5.8 per cent increase that is predicted for the next financial year -

Mr BARNETT: That is just recurrent; that is not overall. The overall figure is 3.8 per cent; the recurrent budget is a 5.8 per cent increase.

Mr CARPENTER: Yes, the \$1.378b recurrent budget. Obviously, that is predicated upon coming in exactly on budget for this financial year at \$1.302b, I think the figure is. The point I am making is that in the previous years leading up to

this one, the department has not been able to do that. I am wondering whether that 5.8 per cent increase is an inflated figure. If one takes into account the previous years' patterns of having to expend more than was predicted in the estimated actuals, the real increase is likely to be somewhat less than 5.8 per cent - more like 5 per cent. If another \$9m or \$10m is to be expended before the end of the financial year so that the estimated actuals are short by about \$10m of the actual figures, that 5.8 per cent increase is more likely to be around 5 per cent. That is the point I am trying to make. We are only a few weeks away from the end of the financial year. Since these budget papers were constructed the department must have gained some sense of how close to that estimate it is.

Mr MANCE: I will go back to the minister's comment to answer the member's question. The final position that we estimate as at 30 June, allowing for salary payments to be made in that time, is \$26.3m, which is the amount the minister mentioned earlier. I mentioned the asset sales, and the minister mentioned some of the previous industrial issues concerning career barriers that had been changed. Some money is also included for increased enrolments. Treasury funds us on estimates from the start and the enrolment movements during the year. The figure the minister gave is correct, so the adjustment is \$26.3m.

Mr CARPENTER: I am not questioning that. The department's projected recurrent budget for the next financial year is \$1.378b. The estimated actual recurrent budget for this financial year is \$1.302b. If one looks at the pattern for each year leading up to this year, the estimated actual recurrent budget fell short of the actual budget - in the last year, for example by \$10m. Since the department applied the figures for the construction of this budget, which I imagine was some time ago, does it have a more realistic or more up-to-date estimate of what the actual budget return for the current financial year will be? If that is the case, is it likely to be over and above \$1.302b?

Mr MANCE: On page 390 of the *Budget Statements*, the figure referred to is \$1 302 156 000. The only variation to that figure in these budget papers is the \$7.5m asset sales. In terms of the outturn, it is the \$1.3b plus the \$7.5m.

Mr CARPENTER: Are we not talking about the recurrent budget? Why is Mr Mance talking about asset sales?

Mr McCAFFREY: Mr Mance mentioned that our assets are disposed of by DOLA. Because of the nature of the accounting, they must be taken back as revenue through the Treasury revenue accounts. Those funds are reappropriated to us in the form of a recurrent grant that goes into a trust account on which we draw. That is why it appears in the recurrent budget.

Mr BARNETT: Generally in the last few years there have been additional funds from Treasury for the Education Department - I think \$22m one year, \$30m-something another year, and \$26m in the year just completed. The fact that that supplementation was required is of no surprise to the Education Department. We would argue that some of the wage agreements and the removal of the promotion barrier for two or three-year trained teachers would always add to the day-to-day operating costs in terms of teachers' salaries. Most of the budget of the Education Department is driven by numbers of teachers and students. Therefore, there is no surprise in that. Also, in 1996 there was a productivity dividend which Treasury had applied across the board, yet it was clear that that could not be applied across Education, because the only way we could achieve increased productivity in that sense was to reduce the numbers of teachers or to increase class sizes, and that was contrary to government policy. They were always predictable areas of supplementation. For the coming year, I hope that we now have all those things essentially flushed out through the system and that we will stick to the budget. There has not been a blow-out in the budget - I know the member has not used that term. We have always known that we would run in excess by about \$20m because of those factors.

Mr CARPENTER: In the last several years' budgets, in the actual returns the figure was always something above the estimated actual in that budget year. I was trying to find out whether the department had a later, more accurate estimate of what the actual budget figure for recurrent spending was, or would be, than what is provided in the budget papers. This is not a criticism, but what I suspect we will find in next year's budget papers is that that estimated actual figure of \$1.302b will not be the final figure, and that in fact it will probably be more like \$1.310b or \$1.312b. Therefore, that has an impact on what the real increase in spending is. That is the point I am making.

Mr BROWNE: If the question is, as I understand it, whether our outturn will be as accurate as we are predicting it to be, the answer is yes. Every calculation we have done to take us through until the end of this financial year clearly indicates to us that the position will be exactly as we have described it. Therefore, the predication of the subsequent budget is accurate. In fact, it will be slightly improved, if anything.

Mr NICHOLLS: My question relates to page 403, output 5, distance education. I have looked at the numbers here and have tried to ascertain the number of students in Western Australia who are currently being serviced by, or engaged in, isolated and distance education services. On page 404, the number of student full-time equivalents is 1 050, but I am not sure whether that is the total number of students or whether that is the equivalent of students and the support staff. I am not sure to what that figure relates. The second point is that I would like to know what provisions are currently being put in place to allow those students to have access to technology education. Is it based on the same process that we are pursuing in schools; that is, are we seeking that students who are not attending schools should have access to computers or computer training? What trends are there for people utilising the service? This comes under the output of quality education for all Western Australians who choose government schooling, on pages 403 and 404 of the *Budget Statements*.

[9.20 am]

Mr BARNETT: The figure quoted for the current financial year of 1 050 full-time equivalent students is a reliable measure.

It reflects that not all students are full-time. Some students use distance education on a part-time basis. That figure is the best way of measuring it.

Mrs MOROZ: The provision for isolated education is managed through the School of Isolated and Distance Education. I do not have details of the number of students who have access to every piece of technology. However, these students generally have access to computers and personalised tutoring through the School of Isolated and Distance Education.

Mr NICHOLLS: What is the trend? Have more students utilised the service over the past five years? Is it a growing trend or has there been a reduction in the number of students using the service?

Mr BROWNE: The indication is that the number of full-time equivalent students is increasing. Most students are in areas that are, by definition, isolated. They utilise the technology when it is possible for them to do so because of sufficient bandwidth. Computers are provided in some districts on a loan basis. The School of Isolated and Distance Education in West Leederville is doing extensive work in the development of both online and CD-ROM lessons. That area is developing at an extraordinary rate.

Mr NICHOLLS: Has there been any evaluation of students studying through that educational facility and a comparison with those in mainstream education? Are students hindered by isolation or remoteness disadvantaged by the education system or is distance education helping those students reach their potential?

Mr BARNETT: There has been a significant investment in distance education through the School of Isolated and Distance Education in West Leederville. New Schools of the Air have been established in Meekatharra, Port Hedland, and a new one is about to be built in Derby. The consoles have all been upgraded and there has been a significant improvement in facilities. I think the educational outcomes are pretty good.

Mr BROWNE: They are extremely good. The exhibition prize for French was won last year by a distance education student. The parents involved in teaching the students in partnership with the schools do an outstanding job. My understanding is that distance education students do equally as well as those in mainstream education.

Mr CARPENTER: That student did not really fit into the category of a remote student.

Mr BROWNE: I take your point, but it was a delight to see a student studying through the distance education centre win an exhibition prize. Every indication is that those students are doing extremely well. They operate in a positive environment and the technology is supplementing their courses.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do remote students in the lower primary years also undergo testing on fundamental mathematics and literacy?

Mr HAMILTON: They participate in the testing. Provision is made for those students.

Mr RIEBELING: Output 4 on page 402 of the *Budget Statements* shows that the residential agricultural colleges have a student to full-time equivalent teacher ratio of two to one. The cost of a student FTE is \$36 656, compared with the \$17 638 for a student FTE in isolated education. How is the student to teacher ratio in that learning institution justified?

Mr BARNETT: The residential agricultural schools are excellent, but they are very expensive. They are intensive in staffing, equipment, machinery, the operation of the farms and the residential component. The agricultural colleges comprise the highest cost component of the education sector, apart from students with disabilities. I think the agricultural colleges are a valuable component. New facilities have just been completed at Denmark and significant upgrades are about to take place at Harvey. It is an area with strong demand and a high level of excellence.

Mr BROWNE: The colleges are expensive, but the students spend half the week in practical courses. Tractor driving tuition, for example, must be on a one-to-one basis for safety reasons. Many of the workshops demand a small student to teacher ratio. The employment rate of students from agricultural colleges is 99 per cent. The average youth employment rate is far below that. While it initially costs more to educate agricultural students on a per capita basis, it is justified in the long term.

Mr RIEBELING: Is the FTE ratio of two to one correct?

Mr BARNETT: The figure does not comprise only teachers; it also involves supervisory staff and people working on the farms.

Mr BROWNE: The colleges are residential and operate 24 hours a day. The figure also includes residential staff, ancillary staff and farm staff who are not directly involved in the tuition of students.

Mr OSBORNE: Page 391 of the *Budget Statements* outlines significant issues and trends in education and mentions the need for additional school facilities in developing areas. I take this opportunity to give the Minister for Education the chance to again put to rest a hoary annual in Bunbury. The Bunbury district has been undergoing the local area education planning process. I think it was James Callaghan who said that a lie could get halfway around the world before truth has time to put its boots on. One of the lies continually spreading throughout Bunbury is that this Government intends to close the Bunbury Senior High School and sell the land and, for good measure, sell the Bunbury Primary School site at the same time. Can the minister reconfirm to the public and the people of Bunbury that the Government has no intention of closing the Bunbury Senior High School or the Bunbury Primary School?

[9.30 am]

Mr BARNETT: Yes, I can certainly confirm that. There is no intention at all to close Bunbury Senior High School. The local education area planning process is now virtually complete, and I expect a report to come to the department in the next few weeks. It will then be referred to me. I think it is fair to say that local area education planning has been somewhat awkward within Bunbury compared to a lot of other areas, and that is for a variety of reasons. I will be interested to see the report. We have recognised, as stated in that part of the budget papers, that new school facilities will need to be established, but Australind, Bunbury and Newton Moore have three good senior high schools that all have strong support. It is an area of growing population so we will certainly not be looking at closing schools in the Bunbury area. We will need to add to education facilities at a secondary level. Exactly what form that takes is yet to be decided.

The CHAIRMAN: While the question was certainly relevant to the member, I must remind members that we are discussing budget items.

Mr OSBORNE: I was referring to a budget item on page 391, dot point seven, where reference is made to a continued growth in demand for additional school facilities. The papers mention the local area education planning in the Bunbury-Australind area. For the minister's information, I was referring to an article in the *South Western Times* of Thursday 1 June, and I will expect the minister will see it soon enough. A lecturer, one of the habitual scaremongers in the district, said that the high school could close and that the Government has a hidden agenda to sell the site.

Mr BARNETT: I can guarantee that the high school will not close.

Mr CARPENTER: I refer to the issue the minister mentioned with regard to asset sales. The minister may have created an element of confusion. Is the minister saying that some of the proceeds of asset sales go back into the recurrent budget for Education?

Mr BARNETT: The asset sales are handled through the Department of Land Administration and LandCorp, the funds then come back into a Treasury trust account, and they are forwarded through to the Education Department of WA and used for education purposes. The question was also whether it is allocated for recurrent purposes or entirely for capital.

Mr McCaffrey: When it is transferred from Treasury to us, we hold it in a trust account which is established as a school development and improvement fund. That is used to supplement the capital works program. The majority of it is used for capital works but other items can be associated with those sales; that is, where extra facilities provided at schools, or where there is an amalgamation or children transfer to other schools and there are additional facilities which would be technically termed a recurrent expense. The funds are used in a school sense.

Mr BARNETT: Lest the member might jump to a conclusion that asset sales have been used to fund teachers and classes, I reassure him that the asset base of the Education Department of WA is increasing and not decreasing. Every year we own more land and more buildings. The asset base is going up, not down.

Mr CARPENTER: I do not take issue with that - I think it is beside the point.

Mr BARNETT: I do not want the member to jump to the incorrect conclusion.

Mr CARPENTER: I never jump to conclusions. I am suggesting that if any money from asset sales, regardless of the increased value of capital assets, which happens anyway, is being used to partly fund a recurrent expenditure, that goes against the entire ethos and stated policy position of the Government that it should never occur because it is unsustainable.

Mr BARNETT: I accept the principle. Asset sales are all ploughed back into education and go towards the capital works.

Mr CARPENTER: All of it?

Mr BARNETT: We spend more on capital works each year. We cannot tag a dollar. It all goes into the capital works budget. They cannot stick labels on each dollar that comes through the system. We can detail the asset sales of \$17m.

Mr MANCE: The asset sales are identified as \$17.1m on page 417. The money will go to Swanbourne Senior High School, Shenton Senior College, Ballajura Community College, the Albany Primary School and early childhood facilities. The vast majority goes to capital works, but on occasions there might be changes, through the LAEP process, to the location of schools or the way schools are to operate. We get applications from schools requesting an additional staff member for a year, which is to be funded out of the rationalisation, to put in a transition program. It is not a lot, but we allow that out of the sale that led into that project. It is a project base.

Mr CARPENTER: It goes back into a trust fund. Can I be provided by way of supplementary information with details of how the money from that trust fund is expended?

Mr BARNETT: Yes, we can do that.

Mr CARPENTER: I gave some notice of questions we would like to ask on specific costings and so on. In relation to capital works, I refer to page 390 of the *Budget Statements* which show forward estimates of the capital works program: \$75m in 2001-02, \$70.2m in 2002-03 and \$82m in 2003-04. Can we be provided with a list of projects included in the estimates and the associated funding for those projects?

Mr BROWNE: Including the commonwealth appropriations, although the figure is shown as \$75m for 2001-02, it is actually \$97.879m. In the subsequent year it is \$93.15m. In 2003-04 it is \$105m. The member asked the minister to

provide a list of projects included in these estimates. Generally speaking, they are not identified at the moment. In the papers only one is identified as an indicative example of population growth. With the maintenance component of capital works, money would go on administration upgrades, the early childhood program, the early education support centre, the library resource centres, toilet replacements, automatic reticulation, and so on.

Mr CARPENTER: I can see future allocations for capital works. We are interested in knowing what the Government intends to spend it on. In broad terms, that information cannot be provided at the moment.

Mr BARNETT: New schools are generally identified for the forthcoming year because those decisions have been made and they are made progressively throughout the year. A new primary school takes about eight to nine months to build. A high school has an 18-month to two-year time frame. The department will come to me continuously throughout the year on recommendations for new schools. Beyond the next 12 to 18 months, it is just a global amount. There is provision for new primary schools and new secondary schools. They are not allocated specifically to any school. There is a plan in each education district as to what is needed.

Mr CARPENTER: That is basically what I wanted to know. The construction of future high schools is planned and detailed in the budget, but new primary schools are not. There is just a general allocation for new primary schools. Is that correct? It is an interesting point. Bunbury was mentioned earlier. Various members of Parliament are now asserting that there is specific allocation for their favourite school project in the budget, when there is not. Are there other documents, to which we do not have access, that show a specific allocation for a specific project three or four years hence? The minister has said there are not.

Mr BROWNE: Our demographic studies continue all the time, and we use all the data available to determine the growth patterns. We have to do that for more years out than the out-years detailed in the budget papers. We purchase land in advance, and acquire land through development companies in advance. The details of all those listed are on pages 413, 414 and 415. There is no other document.

[9.40 am]

Mr CARPENTER: It is wish fulfilment thereafter.

Mr BARNETT: With respect to some of the speculation about new secondary schools for which the lead time is greater, the section in the budget referred to by the member for Bunbury indicates that a new school will be built in Eaton to be opened in either 2003 or 2004, depending on enrolment trends and the school's proposed configuration. Those decisions have not yet been made.

The member for Yokine referred to Mt Lawley Senior High School about which there has been some speculation. I have asked the department to review the situation with secondary schools built in the 1960s-70s that are becoming too old. They probably need a refurbishment and their configuration is not suitable for the way the curriculum is delivered today. The department is in the process of preparing a priority list of schools that arguably need major refurbishment. That is not in the budget, but it is something we are working towards.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister referred to the commonwealth component of that capital funding. The next question of which I provided some notice was about the amount of commonwealth funding to education in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 and the purpose for which those funds are provided. We want to know how much money is received from the Commonwealth and where it goes.

Mr BROWNE: I have the figures here which I am happy to hand over because it will take some time to read them out now. However, they refer to numeracy, language, special learning needs, special projects, Aboriginal education and money for the Indian Ocean and Territories and general capital grants. The figures will not specify the nature of any capital grant until we are further progressed.

Mr CARPENTER: Will the minister provide that as supplementary information?

Mr BROWNE: The figures are published and available.

Mr BARNETT: In broad terms, the Commonwealth provides 10 or 11 per cent of funding for government schools and 37 per cent for non-government schools. The commonwealth funding is relatively less important.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister indicated that capital works were tapering off. There is a 20 or 25 per cent decline, which is significant, but which bottoms out. To what is that attributable?

Mr BARNETT: The major explanation of that apparent decline is the peak of new construction that has occurred since the local area education planning announcements in, I think, June of 1998. The member for Willagee will recall that at that stage decisions were made to construct the new Shenton college, the new Seven Oaks college in Cannington, the Halls Head middle school, the senior college in Mandurah and a couple of other projects, such as the change of Maddington high school into Yule Brook high school and the upgrade of Belmont to the Belmont city college. Out of that announcement nearly two years ago there was a major boost in capital works in secondary education.

Expenditure on primary schools is more consistent. Typically, a primary school costs around \$4m, and five or six of these are built each year. However, a major new high school typically costs \$20m-odd. We made a big commitment to secondary education. However, we need to do some more in secondary education with some of the older schools.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister made the point that it is not as though there is a tapering off in demand; there is a long list of projects that people would like to see progressed. So it is not a matter of decline in demand but of availability and priority of funding.

Mr BARNETT: Any Education minister could always spend more money. I am not complaining because the increase in funding for Education has been exceptional. Total capital works figures for a few previous years are: 1993-94, \$69m; 1994-95, \$60.6m; 1995-96, \$86.5m; 1996-97, \$91.4m; 1997-98, \$103m; 1998-99, \$107.6m; and 1999-2000, \$169m - an enormous boost - and for 2000-01, \$130.7m. Over the past three years funding has increased from \$107m to \$169m and then down to \$130m. It should not be seen as a reduction, but rather that a lump of expenditure occurred in 1999-2000 which was an exceptionally high amount because of the commitments to secondary education.

Mr CARPENTER: If we compare the next couple of years with the previous years, in that one year a reduction is occurring. The figures fall back a lot.

Mr BARNETT: We would be wrong to place too much emphasis on forward estimates beyond the current financial year. Forward estimates are a base projection forward. They do not include policy decisions. Generally, Parliament places too much emphasis on forward estimates. We should look at the next year and perhaps have a glance at the year following that.

Mr CARPENTER: It is all we have to look at.

Mr BARNETT: I know, but no-one drafts a budget seriously on forward estimates. Cabinet decides on the next year's budget and Treasury extrapolates the numbers, and that is called a forward estimate.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to output 2 at page 398 concerning students with disabilities. I have not been able to identify in the budget papers funding earmarked for students with disabilities. How many students are accessing special education facilities in the Peel district? Is the number increasing? Are students with disabilities unable to access special education services in that district? What changes are being pursued, if any, within educational services to increase the educational outcomes for students using these facilities?

Mr BARNETT: Page 404 contains a description. The number of children with disabilities in our schools is increasing due to identification of medical-related factors as much as anything else. The department has done an excellent job in providing a range of education through the spectrum from special education schools, to units and to the full inclusion program that is being developed. Special education is expensive. The cost of education for one child could be in the order of \$70 000 or \$80 000 a year. That is a substantial cost to society which it willingly bears, but there is a growing demand.

Mr BROWNE: The number of students currently with disabilities attending government schools in Western Australia is 6 573. There is some difficulty ascertaining a per capita cost because, as the member will be aware, the Disability Services Commission and the Health Department are involved in employment of staff such as therapists.

Ms LUCAS: As the minister said, students with disabilities are provided for with a range of facilities through education support schools, education support centres, which are on the same campuses as regular schools, and education support units within regular schools. In country areas, where there is no capacity for the child to access an education support facility, the child is included in the regular school and provided with those supports and services that allow the child to access the curriculum. This may include provision of teacher aide time. It also includes visiting teacher service from the Centre for Inclusive Schooling. The visiting teachers go to those schools to help the teacher modify the curriculum, develop an individual education plan for the child and problem solve whatever query may arise in the education of children with disabilities in country areas.

[9.50 am]

Mr NICHOLLS: My question focuses on the educational outcomes of students. The term "students with disabilities" has a broad definition, and these students have different levels of need. I am interested in whether, as an education outcome, Western Australia is seeking to assist those students to achieve the best potential outcome for them, or are we setting a level of care to allow those students to participate?

Ms LUCAS: That is most definitely not the case. All students with disabilities would be working on an individual education plan that is totally in line with the curriculum framework and a learning area set out within the curriculum framework. Education support teachers structure the environment so that children with significant disabilities can achieve outcomes. That is a matter of using their staff and modifying the way in which the children access the curriculum, which may be through switching or computerised technology. An outcomes framework in the curriculum is called foundation outcomes statements, so that each child with a disability is working as are other children within the system on outcomes that are set for them by their teachers through an individual education plan.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is there a policy for government schools that pertains to students who are required to use wheelchairs? I refer specifically to students who for one reason or another, whether it be an injury or short-term need, are required to utilise a wheelchair but who would normally participate in studies in the general stream. Does the Education Department recognise the needs of those students to be assisted with toileting or other personal needs, and provide support for teachers where necessary to be able to accommodate the students? I ask that question because there appears to be differing attitudes between some schools and some teachers in circumstances in which students are unexpectedly in wheelchairs through accidents that have immobilised them?

Ms LUCAS: Support for children such as the member described is available through the Centre of Inclusive Schooling and

the visiting teacher service. The department's equipment committee can provide a loan of a wheelchair, and often a hospital will loan a wheelchair if a child needs that equipment. Schools have access to student services teams within their district education office if they need to modify the curriculum or the way the child accesses it while the child is incapacitated. Assistance is available through not only the district student services team but also the teams at Hale House, the Centre for Inclusive Schooling.

The CHAIRMAN: The Bluff Point Primary School takes children with disabilities. I have received complaints from the teachers there that they do not get enough help and resources. In the end, they turn to the mothers for assistance. What approach can I make to ensure that the teachers get sufficient help to cater for these children? The other children in the school are supportive of these children. However, if teachers have insufficient resources, an awful lot of strain is put on the rest of the class.

Mr BROWNE: Every effort is made to ensure adequate resourcing. The minister made reference to the fact that when a student with a disability enters one of our schools, we make every effort to mainstream these students. The cost may be \$70 000 or \$80 000. It costs \$30 000 for \$40 000 if special-built toilet facilities are required. We do everything we can, not only to assist the teacher so that the other students in the classroom can continue with normal studies but also the child with disabilities.

Ms LUCAS: I urge the school to seek support through its district services team, which will provide access to the Centre for Inclusive Schooling.

Mr CARPENTER: The general figure that was given for the number of children with disabilities in the education system was 6 000. I know there are great variations in the amounts of money that are expended on individual cases; but is there a global figure in the Education budget which is allocated for children with disabilities, so that we can get some sense of the amount of money across the board per student?

Mr BARNETT: The average figure is around \$26 000.

Mr CARPENTER: Is the cost of staff part of that figure or is it only a provision for their physical requirements?

Ms LUCAS: It is.

Mr CARPENTER: I know that the Education Department has its own staff, and Therapy Focus and the Disability Services Commission provides some staff. How many staff are employed either directly by the Education Department or are contracted by the Education Department to provide for the needs of children with disabilities over and above the standard teacher application?

Mr BROWNE: I will seek information from Mr Mance or Mr McCaffrey; the issue is difficult to answer. As the member alluded, the therapists are employed by the Disability Services Commission and the Health Department and I do not know whether we can provide the exact number of our teachers who assist students with disabilities per se. I will check.

Mr CARPENTER: Could you clarify whether the assistance provided by the Health Department or Therapy Focus is not an allocation in the Education budget but is an allocation in Health or the Disability Services Commission?

Mr BROWNE: Yes; and those arrangements are being renegotiated now.

Mr CARPENTER: They are not paid for through the Education budget?

Mr BROWNE: No.

Mr CARPENTER: Could you provide supplementary information on the number of people directly employed by the Education Department or whose services are paid for by the department to provide that service?

Mr BROWNE: We have that information for the member now.

Ms LUCAS: The information I have has been gathered by the Centre for Inclusive Schooling. I hope it is completely accurate. My information is that there are 697.14 FTE education support teachers and 915.36 education support assistants specifically for students with disabilities.

Mr CARPENTER: How many children with disabilities fall into the category the Chairman mentioned; that is, how many children with disabilities has the department been unable to assist? What is the level of unmet demand for children with disabilities in the education system?

[10.00 am]

Ms LUCAS: The only way I can answer that is by saying that every time a request for support is made from a school either to a district office, the Centre for Inclusive Schooling or the central office, that request is attended to. It may not always be the provision of extra staff, but it might be support in a different way - perhaps a visiting teacher working with the teacher to provide on-site support.

Mr CARPENTER: Has a calculation been made of the level of funding or servicing required to meet the unmet demand?

Mr BARNETT: There is a statutory responsibility on state government schools to assist all children, including all children with disabilities.

Mr CARPENTER: It is a level of assistance.

Mr BARNETT: Yes, that is the point. Everyone would acknowledge that in some cases the facilities are overstretched and perhaps inadequate. Recently, a decision was made to redo the facility at North Albany Senior High School. I visited that school a couple of years ago. Clearly, the facilities were inadequate for the number of students at that school. Many of the students were in years 11 and 12, and were big kids, and it was just crowded. We recognised that and that is why there needs to be further investment in those facilities. Every child is assisted. One might argue that the facilities need to be better or that the level of staffing could be higher, and we acknowledge that is an issue.

Mr CARPENTER: I appreciate that. That is exactly the point I was making. When the department looks at the projects it will be working on and developing in the future, does it have a projection to meet the requirements of the identified areas of need, in the same way that the requirements of the North Albany Senior High School were met? Was there a projection for how much it would cost to meet the requirements at North Albany Senior High School? There must be a figure indicating what was expended at North Albany Senior High School. Are there figures somewhere in the planning or budgeting process of the Education Department to demonstrate what would need to be spent in other locations to bring schools up to at least the physical requirements that the minister is talking about?

Mr BROWNE: We will have some difficulty answering that question, because, as has been alluded to, it relates to the degree of disability. Another issue is that every student with a disability could do with more assistance. Therefore, as resourcing became available, we would extend the facilities. I would not want it to be thought that any students in our system who have a disability are not offered some assistance. I cannot give the member an answer on the rate at which we plan to expand it because it lines up with all the other demands.

Mr OSBORNE: Dot point nine of the significant issues and trends on page 391 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the continued growth in demand for additional facilities in developing areas. I will use as my reference another school in my electorate, the Newton Moore Senior High School, to raise a general issue which I looked for in significant issues and trends. Far be it from me to comment, but I think the condition of schools of this era is a significant issue across the State. The Newton Moore Senior High School was built in the 1960s, and today its student services are significantly out of date. It has a school-based police officer and chaplaincy services, and the administration area needs upgrading. I do not doubt that many other schools across the State are in a similar, if not worse, condition. I am aware of the figures that were cited earlier about the amount of money that is being put into capital works and how that has increased. However, it seems to me that a group of schools across the system are still in need of particular attention in this respect. Is there a strategy whereby this issue will be addressed?

Mr BARNETT: I agree with the member for Bunbury. A number of schools were built in the 1960s and 1970s during the baby boom immigration period into Australia as those children reached high school age. As I said before, I have asked the department to assess schools of that vintage. Many of them were designed and built to last about 30 years, and that 30 or 40 years is now up and they are showing signs of it. For example, the decision to demolish Swanbourne and Hollywood senior high schools, which were of that vintage, and replace them with a new school is the sort of thing I would love to happen in other parts of the State. To some extent that will be possible. The department has informed me that spending \$1m on some schools would make an enormous difference.

One example is Maddington Senior High School - now Yule Brook College - where about \$1m was spent. Although it was transformed into a middle school, the whole environment of the school was changed by simply knocking out some walls, putting in some curved walls, re-equipping it with computers and landscaping. It was a dramatic change for only \$1m. Some schools might require \$3m or \$4m, and for others it might be better to demolish and rebuild the school. The department is currently assessing and ranking the priority of a group of schools - a dozen or 15 schools might fall into that category - and is giving me some indication of the budget that would be required. I hope that in future we will be able to do something about that, but it is not addressed specifically in this budget. However, I recognise the need.

Mr OSBORNE: The Newton Moore Senior High School would fall into the former category; that is, \$1m would make an enormous difference with an administration upgrade. That school has been involved in and understands the local planning process. It understands that priorities have been set, and it has been involved in that, but it just keeps missing out. It was narrowly pipped this year by the Allanson Primary School, so congratulations to the member for Collie. Naturally the school is disappointed; it would like to be enhanced in that way.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: All these Liberal seats fighting over the spoils. We would like some in our areas.

Mr OSBORNE: It is all done properly by the planning process.

Mr BARNETT: Bearing in mind that the Chairman is the member for Geraldton, he may know that when the two high schools in Geraldton were merged, which was good educationally because it increased the range of choices for students, we did not substantially refurbish the school. That lesson was learnt, because the subsequent decisions under local area planning have all been accompanied by significant capital works. Mr Harvey will comment on the issue of the older schools.

Mr HARVEY: While we have been discussing general upgrades, the member has made reference to administrations. In the subprogram items of the capital works program, there is an ongoing capital works program for administration upgrades of \$2m a year. Typically we anticipate that between eight and 10 schools will receive administration upgrades under that item.

Mr OSBORNE: Where is that?

Mr HARVEY: It is under "Other School Facilities" in the new works of capital works on page 416. The budget for administration upgrades is listed as \$2m. If there are concerns about the state of administrations in particular schools, we run a process which looks at priorities on a statewide basis. We make that assessment centrally across all districts and make a decision based on that.

Mr OSBORNE: I and the school accept that that is done properly. I was asking whether it was recognised that this is a system-wide issue. Is there any possibility that the upgrade program could be accelerated in some way to take account of this issue?

Mr HARVEY: We need to make the point that there is a separate subprogram for issues associated with disabilities. That is also dealt with in the same sort of way. A committee deals with upgrades to support centres and units at schools in a similar fashion.

Mr BARNETT: Another example of a school we recently committed to was the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School, which is having a major \$12m upgrade - it is almost rebuilding the school. I stress the point that there are a number of these schools. Although it might be tempting to rush in and make all sorts of commitments, it is proper that an objective list be prepared and assessed. That is what Mr Harvey's area is doing at the moment - ranking the priorities of those schools and estimating what sort of expenditure would be required to make a significant difference. In some cases, rather than do bits and pieces - such as build a new administration area - it might be worth upgrading fewer schools by putting \$2m or \$3m into them and bringing them up to modern standards.

[10.10 am]

Mr OSBORNE: I am happy that the issue is recognised and a process is in place to address it.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Is the area of special education now referred to as educational services for students who require a non-integrated support program? Does that cover special schools like Malibu and Kim Beazley including disabled people who attend normal high schools and primary schools?

I am concerned about the situation at Malibu. I am unable to detect in the minister's budget any allocation for capital works programs for the Malibus and Kim Beazleys, unless someone can point out that to me. I can see under the capital works program a list of works to be carried out this coming year and those that are under way but no mention of future expenditure on a special school. I have been the local member for some 14 years and I know the minister has visited there. However, the needs in Malibu School are simply inadequate for the student numbers and parent and teacher standards. An ad hoc approach has been taken to its recent development. The minister would be aware that the children who attend that school have severe disabilities. We need to give the school urgent and immediate attention. No other school that I am aware of caters for such children south of Kim Beazley School in Fremantle. I understand the numbers at Kim Beazley are decreasing while the numbers at Malibu are increasing. Can the minister shed some light on what is happening and where in the budget there may be light at the end of the tunnel for these families and children?

Ms LUCAS: We have developed a local area education plan in the metropolitan area for education support centres like Kim Beazley.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I am particularly concerned about Malibu.

Ms LUCAS: Yes, I am getting to that. We have included the Peel and Joondalup districts in the metropolitan area as children move across districts, and it is important to look at the outer metropolitan area as well. We are therefore developing a local area plan. We are aware of the pressure on Malibu. Through the local area planning process we are seeking to reduce the pressure on Malibu by the establishment in the Mandurah area of a school closely related to a regular primary school but which would take students with more severe disabilities. We are in the process of developing an architectural brief for such a facility.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: There is no intention then to spend any more money on upgrading Malibu? The officer is telling me a decision has been made to build a new facility in Mandurah?

Ms LUCAS: That is part of the process to relieve the pressure. There is also \$1m available across the State for upgrades to special education centres; that is the committee referred to by Mr Harvey. An upgrade for Malibu therefore would be considered by that committee.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That has highlighted my concerns. An amount of \$1m across the State for special education will not go too far. The minister said his budget will find the money; I do not know where and I do not know how long it will take before a new school in Mandurah will be built. Obviously it will not take place in the life of this budget; there is no allocation for it and it is not included in the future capital works program. However, a special school exists now which is overcrowded, has inappropriate facilities, much of them for children with severe disabilities, and has no airconditioning. Teachers must bring many of their programs run through the school into the corridors. Malibu must be urgently looked at. With the greatest of respect to the minister, it appears that the political standards that we must put up with in the Rockingham are once again being applied to this area of education; that is, if there is a problem in education in the Rockingham-Kwinana area, set it to one side and see if we can fix it up in Mandurah. Statistics published this week in *The West Australian* indicate Rockingham as the third-largest growth area in the State after the Wanneroo and Swan areas. In the Port Kennedy-Warnbro area, an average of seven houses a day are being built; that has been going on for the past eight

to nine years. I am often amazed by the statistics produced by the Education Department which never quite come to grips with the numbers in such areas. This is not new evidence; seven houses a day on average are built in that area. Regardless of what the department may do in Mandurah, there is a growing need for immediate attention. This budget continually tells me in a subheading on each page that the outcome is for quality education for all Western Australians who choose government schooling; that is, except if they are disabled, and particularly if they live south of the river.

Mr BARNETT: I do not accept that. I recognise there are pressures in the disability area. I also recognise it is a separate issue.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Does the minister also recognise, having been to Malibu School, that it is totally inadequate?

Mr BARNETT: I also visited the Rockingham area about a year to 18 months ago and changes have occurred in schools following that visit. However, I will ask Mr Harvey to comment on that.

Mr HARVEY: In respect of airconditioning and air-cooling of education support centres, I draw the member's attention to new works on page 416 of the capital works program under "new works". Under the subheading of "miscellaneous" there is air-cooling -

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Is air-cooling the same as airconditioning?

Mr HARVEY: Yes.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Or are they the water containers wheeled around the classroom?

Mr HARVEY: Air-cooling comes in different forms, either airconditioning or evaporative air-cooling.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That is not airconditioning.

Mr HARVEY: We have a rolling program of \$200 000 a year.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That amount would need to be spent on Malibu alone.

Mr HARVEY: We have undertaken to aircondition two classrooms in all education support centres. Malibu does have two air-cooled classrooms, as I understand it.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Two classrooms out of 14?

Mr HARVEY: I do not know how many classrooms Malibu has.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I do.

Mr HARVEY: The program rolls on and two classrooms in all of our education support centres will be air-cooled within the next few years.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I am bringing this to the minister's attention as I am not convinced that quality education, mentioned on every page of the budget for all Western Australians who choose government schooling, is being provided appropriately by way of facilities for children with special disabilities in the Western Australian state school program. The crucial aspect about that group of people is that I am unaware of a private school that has been set up specifically for children with disabilities.

Dr TURNBULL: Some private schools have those facilities.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I am not denying that. I am talking about a school specifically set up for children with disabilities. In other words, children with disabilities are captives of the state school system.

Mr BARNETT: It is true that if 70 per cent of students in the State attend government schools, a high proportion of students with a disability will be in the government school system. It is a reality, therefore, that the government school system carries a responsibility to a greater extent for these students. We all recognise that Malibu and some other schools are under pressure. I will undertake to ask the Director General of Education to review air-cooling in special education schools and centres. We all acknowledge that it is important as, obviously, many of the children use all kinds of equipment, braces and the like. I think we are agreed that we will review that application.

[10.20 am]

Ms LUCAS: As well as the school that I have described in the Mandurah area for children with more significant disabilities, whenever we build new primary schools in the Peel area, we establish education support facilities for those schools, which is all part of being able to relieve the pressure on Malibu by putting children into the newer schools as they are built. That also avoids the need for those children to travel from place to place.

Dr TURNBULL: Page 391 states that one of the significant issues and trends is the importance of quality teaching; however, the recruitment of graduates for statewide placement is becoming more difficult. That is mentioned in a number of other places in this division, particularly on page 411, which states there is a significant upward trend for teachers' leave liability due to the difficulty in funding leave replacements. What actions are being taken to try to enhance the entry of graduates into education and to retain quality teachers?

Mr BARNETT: Everyone is conscious that last year, the department faced a particularly difficult time in staffing some of

the rural and remote schools. A series of measures have been put in place to deal with that, and they include the remote teaching service incentives, both financial and career. Scholarships have been introduced to try to attract more young people in rural areas, particularly young Aboriginal people, into education, and to provide a career path for Aboriginal education workers so that they can gain qualifications. The department has done an outstanding job in managing it this year, and at any given time this year there have been only 10 or 12 vacancies out of some 20 000 full-time equivalent positions. However, there is no doubt that the average age of teacher graduates is increasing and they are less mobile than they have been historically. We have not assumed the problem has gone away, and it is being handled right now, but it requires some more fundamental approaches.

Mr BROWNE: We need to see Western Australia in the context of an international teacher shortage. However, notwithstanding that, Western Australia managed to get the year 2000 under way with almost zero vacancies. At any one time in Western Australia, because of some dislocation caused by ill health, family problems or the need to bring people back to Perth, there are always 10, or so, vacancies; and we started the year with that sort of figure, which was quite outstanding. The minister has alluded to the fact that we are vigorously approaching people to attract them into teaching. We now go to all the universities early in the year to attract students to teaching. There is certainly competition between the government and non-government sectors, and we are making offers earlier in the year. We have introduced a form of internship where teachers can complete the last semester of their final year while doing their practice in one of our schools. The remote teaching service and the difficult to staff school scheme has made a huge difference in the remote areas, and while previously we might have had a turnover of 85 per cent in the remote areas, we now have retentions of 85 per cent.

We now offer 30 scholarships, which are designed to attract the particularly highly academic students. Those scholarships are run by the Department of Education Services and are fully higher education contribution scheme-paid at up-front cost. The students are required to have a very high tertiary entrance examination score and are interviewed to determine whether they demonstrate an aptitude for teaching. There are also one-year postgraduate scholarships for people who have a general degree to do a Diploma of Education. We also have a series of retraining programs.

Teacher housing has been improved dramatically with an injection of some \$43m. The days when three teachers had to share a house are gone, and we are moving towards single unit dwellings. We offer new teachers a mentoring program and support, particularly during the first few years. We are using technology, wherever possible, to enhance professional development. The budget indicates that the first of 250 laptops have been provided to teachers in the rural and remote areas of Western Australia for lesson preparation, and also for professional development linked back to the metropolitan area. We are not resting on our laurels because we got 2000 under way very smoothly. We are making sure we continue to do that, and we now need to target areas such as languages other than English, and design and technology, where there is an ongoing international shortage.

Dr TURNBULL: Those issues are very important, and obviously the assistance with HECS through scholarships while students are doing their degrees is very important in helping to attract people into teaching for the future. However, one of the disincentives to teaching is definitely management of behaviour, particularly in the middle years of secondary schooling. What is the Government contributing towards programs to remove children who are very disruptive from the general classroom and to place them into programs which are more appropriate for them? I know there is some discretionary funding in each district, but that discretionary funding is quite small and is not necessarily ongoing. If we are to develop good, ongoing programs which will have educational benefits for very disruptive students, it needs to be on a long-term basis.

Mr BROWNE: Before we talk about taking students out of school, or withdrawal, we need to recognise that the years 8, 9 and 10 that the member has identified tend to be the years when students, particularly boys, become the more disaffected. The vast majority of suspensions are attributable to boys in years 8, 9 and 10. We are looking at the concept of middle schooling, to avoid getting into a situation of withdrawals. I am talking about not just the physical structure, but a teaching or pedagogical approach to recognise that there is a danger period for boys and, to a lesser degree, girls, when they lose focus about school. The approach is based on reducing the number of teachers to whom they are exposed, because that helps the transition from primary to upper class secondary. It is also based on having an advanced pastoral care program so that these students, who may well be distracted by other things in life, feel a greater sense of security by being in a more pastoral environment. We are also introducing a range of middle schools, which are both new physical entities, with the middle-schooling pedagogy, and also current buildings. The secondary schools are dividing themselves into a middle school, where they can go about their business in a middle-schooling way, and also an upper campus, which will provide the transition to university that is required. A range of other facilities are available when that approach has failed and students are withdrawn in the hope that they will be able to resume schooling. For example, the Gnowangerup Agricultural School, which has a high running cost, ultimately achieves 99 per cent employment with its young people.

[10.30 am]

Ms LUCAS: The funding to districts is under the student at educational risk program, especially concerning participation and retention. The allocation is \$1.8m a year. Behaviour management in schools funding to the districts is designed to help our schools provide a more positive learning environment for students. We ask schools to develop codes of conduct and behavioural management policies. I have a list of off-campus programs, including those at Broome Senior High School, Balga, the Challenge program in the Armadale district and the Yonga program in Fremantle. A significant number of programs are spread throughout our districts which can take students off-campus if necessary to help them.

Dr TURNBULL: I agree. That is why I asked the question. We are trying to develop that in Collie but cannot obtain

funding. I accept what the Acting Director General of Education said about developing pastoral care. We know that children in many classrooms do not respond to those programs, and it does not matter whether one has a middle school as teachers have been very concerned about pastoral care. They try very hard. A hard core of students are extremely disruptive and make the teachers' and other students' lives hell. The development of a program which is still within the school, although in a separate building or location on the grounds or next to the school, is the best approach. I have worked on this matter for about 15 years, and we have had three different attempts.

The CHAIRMAN: We need short, sharp questions.

Dr TURNBULL: The sharp question is: No funding appears to be available for those programs, particularly in smaller high schools where the FTE to student ratio is difficult to deal with.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there nothing in the budget papers?

Ms LUCAS: It is \$1.8m which goes to districts for retention and participation. The districts also have access to student at educational risk money.

Dr TURNBULL: How much is that?

Ms LUCAS: It is \$842 000, and \$390 000 goes to the districts for the behaviour management program in schools.

Sitting suspended from 10.34 am to 10.48 am.

Mr RIEBELING: I refer to the capital works program on page 413. The minister indicated that schools 30 years or more old will be specifically targeted in the next couple of budgets. Will those schools designed and built in the Pilbara which were expected to last 20 years and which are still operating long after that - for example, Tom Price Central Primary School - get special attention because of their condition? As the minister is aware, that school has some major structural problems that need to be addressed quickly. If there is an allocation in the budget, I would like to know where it is.

It is also stated that \$3.69m will be spent on covered assembly areas. Will any of that money be spent in the Pilbara? I congratulate the minister for having the Tom Price High School gymnasium listed, but disappointed that only \$100 000 of a \$3.2m project has been allocated. The Education Department has projected a cost of only \$2m. Will the minister comment?

I refer also to the canteen program. Only \$50 000 has been allocated. Is any of that destined for the Pilbara region?

Mr BARNETT: I will ask Mr Harvey to comment on the project and the timetable for the Tom Price High School. It is a \$2m project starting with a planning exercise. I am very keen to see that work done in major regional areas to ensure that they have facilities that match anything in Perth. The improvements made to the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School put it in that category. Karratha Senior High School is included in the examination of older schools.

Mr HARVEY: The member may be aware that Tom Price High School is one of only two schools in the State without sports facilities. We have allocated \$2m in this year's budget, with \$100 000 for planning and the start of construction. The majority of the construction will take place in 2001-02 and the facility will be ready for the 2002 academic year. The other school that does not have a sports facility is Margaret River High School, which is adjacent to public facilities that can be used.

The 2000-01 budget for covered assembly areas is \$3.69m, and that will allow the program to be completed. No new covered assembly areas are involved in this year's program. These funds have been allocated to complete the 17 covered assembly areas currently being constructed.

[10.50 am]

Mr RIEBELING: What is the full cost of the proposed Tom Price Senior High School gymnasium? I am told it is \$3.2m. I understand that the gymnasium will be built on the existing oval and that for that to happen, another oval must be built behind the basketball courts. The suggestion is that if sufficient funds have been allocated, the work on the oval could be completed before construction of the gymnasium is started. I wonder whether the department could look at that.

Mr HARVEY: I do not have the detail with me. My understanding is that \$2m will be sufficient to do the job. I will certainly take that on notice.

The member asked a question relating to canteens. The capital works program contains an allocation of \$50 000. If schools require a canteen, and there is a need, we normally build the canteen associated with the covered assembly under the covered assembly area program. The canteen is generally built for schools on a dollar-for-dollar subsidy basis. The decisions are made throughout the year on the basis of applications. If schools in the Pilbara wish to operate a canteen and they do not have one at the moment, they must make an application to the department to source that funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Mr OSBORNE: One of the significant issues and trends on page 391 is the advent of the information-based society and rapid developments in information and communications technologies and systems which are creating new opportunities and challenges for schools. I am thinking in particular of registrars in primary schools. I have been contacted in the past 12 months, and more often in the past two or three months, by staff and parents of children in schools in my district about the position of school registrars in primary schools and the fact that the job is changing and that they are responsible for

the PeopleSoft program, the goods and services tax and school-based budgeting, as well as the daily demands of telephone, typing and all that sort of thing. I understand that some people cannot cope with changes. Schools vary in size so it is not possible to make a rule that will fit them all. I know that the registrars recently went to the Industrial Relations Commission asking for a reclassification, which was refused. I was asked whether consideration had been given to moving registrars to a public service classification so that they can finish their day's work at 4.30 pm, and during the holidays they can attend to things like the PeopleSoft program to get it out of the way. What has been done to resolve the issue?

Mr BARNETT: Significant extra funds have been made available to schools to help support the work undertaken by registrars and others in administrative areas. It amounts to \$7.8m over a four-year period. I am conscious that there is significant work for registrars. Obviously the GST has an impact, as does greater decision-making, new computer systems and the like.

Mr HOME: We are mindful of the issues that the member has raised. We have had meetings in recent times with the associations that represent both the primary and secondary school registrars. That was in response to the sorts of concerns that the member raised. A number of issues have arisen. One is the general issue of workload, and drilling down into that are causes, which we are examining. Some registrars are concerned that there is not a proper allocation of duties in a school. We have been talking to the school administrators and registrars about how to ensure that there is an equitable and proper basis for the distribution of responsibilities in a school. The PeopleSoft program is one area in question, whereby registrars feel that they have been assigned all the responsibility when in fact principals and deputy principals should have some responsibility.

As the minister has indicated, increased resources have been provided to schools. We are talking to registrars about how best to allocate them. The resources have been distributed in the form of what are known as discretionary days, which is really relief or extra time that can be provided to the registrars. We have discussed with them ways of more equitably distributing that. We are confident that over the next couple of months we will be able to come up with a different basis for the distribution of it, bearing in mind that this year there will be an additional \$500 000-worth of discretionary days, which will increase in the following financial year. We are well aware of the issues and we are in close talks with the registrars associations to try to address them.

Mr CARPENTER: May I have some answers to questions I put forward about average staffing costs as follows -

- (1) What is the average staffing cost broken down by salary and other salary-related costs of -
 - (a) teachers;
 - (b) graduate teachers;
 - (c) teachers in country areas; and
 - (d) teachers in remote areas?

[11.00 am]

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Burrup also expects to be provided with supplementary information as a result of the last question he asked.

Mr BARNETT: Yes, we will supply that.

Mr BROWNE: I will answer the question about the average staffing costs broken down by salary, which was in parts (a), (b), (c) and (d). For teachers, the base is \$44 101, and with other costs the figure is \$46 943; for graduate teachers it is \$32 925 and \$36 312; for teachers in country areas it is \$42 498 and \$46 500; and for teachers in remote areas - this is where there is a very big discrepancy - the base is \$39 485, rising to \$55 390 because of the remote teaching service allowances.

Mr CARPENTER: I apologise for not giving prior notice of this. When the department is doing an estimation of the extra cost involved in employing an extra teacher on that average salary, say, in the metropolitan area and in a remote area, I know that there is the salary and other salary-related costs. However, what are the other on-costs? If we are looking at the average cost of employing an extra teacher in the metropolitan area, what are we looking at? Salary and other salary-related costs are about \$44 000, I think Mr Browne said. On top of that, would the administrative costs and so on be \$50 000 or \$60 000, or what would the figure be? If we were making a calculation, for example, how much would it cost to employ another 10 teachers in the metropolitan area on average salaries? Does the department have that sort of information readily to hand?

Mr McCaffrey: When we estimate, for example, in the metropolitan area, it is basically the salary for which we would contemplate the extra growth in funding, based upon the growth in enrolments in particular areas. Because of the size of our organisation, our economies of scale are very high. For example, with 10 teachers, the costs would be absorbed in our existing structures. In the country, if the appointments were in addition to the existing remote teaching service levels, we would make an extra allocation for the remote teaching service package in our budget estimates.

Mr CARPENTER: Dealing with the administrative costs, do you have a figure for the salary and salary-related costs of administrative staff, on average?

Mr BROWNE: I do indeed. The base is \$28 792, and with allowances it goes up to \$30 811. However, it must be borne in mind that that is an average.

Mr CARPENTER: Salary plus extras would take it up to -

Mr BROWNE: I was giving an average base, but with allowances the average moves up to \$30 811.

Mr CARPENTER: The next question I provided dealt specifically with level 3 teachers. What is the average staffing cost of level 3 teachers? How many are currently in the system? How many level 3 teachers are budgeted for in forward estimates from 2001 to 2004?

Mr BROWNE: The average staffing cost of a level 3 is \$54 152. I want to clarify that these figures do not include on-costs. We are talking about salary only and not the inevitable on-costs.

Mr CARPENTER: That is the point I made before. If the department makes a decision to employ an extra five teachers in Geraldton, for example, it will have the salary and salary-related costs, but obviously administrative costs and other costs go with that. I was hoping to get a rough estimate of what the cost per teacher would be. I appreciate that I did not ask that specifically, but I thought that would be standard knowledge in the system.

Mr McCAFFREY: If we were costing out a program, we would add on 18 per cent as an on-cost factor, depending on the type of program and the location of the teachers. In the country areas the ratio would be higher.

Mr CARPENTER: The department is working on, say, between 10 and 30 per cent on-costs.

Mr McCAFFREY: Yes. It must be borne in mind that many of the on-costs, such as superannuation, are not borne by us in our Education budget; they are covered through Treasury appropriations under special Acts.

Mr CARPENTER: I return to the question regarding level 3 teachers.

Mr BROWNE: As I said, the average starting cost is \$54 152. However, if a person is a level 3, they also get a 0.1 DOTT time. That salary, of course, does not include that, so another 0.1 of a salary would be the cost of a level 3, plus the on-costs about which we have just spoken.

Mr CARPENTER: At about the same time I submitted these questions, the issue of full-time equivalents came up because of the footnotes in the budget papers, and I asked to what can we contribute the significant decline in the number of FTEs across the range of outputs. Can the department provide a breakdown of the FTE positions which are diminishing and those which are increasing and so on, so that we have an analysis of what staff changes are occurring across the major outputs - preprimary, primary and secondary?

Mr BROWNE: I will answer the other question the member asked about the number of level 3 teachers now and in subsequent years. The point that should be made clear is that our outputs, by requirement, relate to the core activity, and all of our corporate services are spread over those outputs. Even if one goes back to the issue of agricultural education and looks at ratios, everybody associated with agricultural education, whether they be centrally based, district based or site based, would be spread out over that, so we get the FTEs. The next point is that the FTEs are made up of teaching staff and support staff, no matter what nature the support staff may be.

Mr CARPENTER: I understand that. It is regrettable that the breakdown is not provided in the budget papers. If it were, we would not have to go through this exercise.

Mr BROWNE: Indeed. However, that is the standard presentation. We will give the member the exact breakdown. I will not go into all the detail, but it is worth making some points. The number of teachers in our system is formula driven. If an individual school loses a staff member or part of a staff member, it will be because there is a reduction in the number of students; hence the ratio affects that. However, overall, in our system for the year 2000-01, there will not be a reduction of teaching staff. Therefore, the figure, as I recall it, of 197, which is the difference between the two years, relates entirely to the ancillary staff. By the way, most of that has transpired already.

Mr CARPENTER: When the Premier answered a question in Parliament about that, I took the point that it had happened already. Why is it budgeted for in the forthcoming budget year and not in this one?

Mr BROWNE: The 229 gardeners, for example - 50 from the district office and 10 from the service centre within central office - were in this year's budget, and therefore the difference between the number of FTEs in 1999-2000 and in 2000-01 is a total of 197. I can add up the 229, plus the 50, plus the 10, and it would take the difference between the two way past 300. That figure comes down again to what I think is 195 because of the number of teachers and, in some cases, assistants that we are employing. By the way, this is not formula driven. In that case, there would be a net increase in the number of teachers. Mr Home may wish to comment further before I deal with the other questions.

[11.10 am]

Mr BARNETT: It is worth quoting the figures again. For the coming financial year, it is estimated that the number of teaching positions will increase by 101; public servants will be down by 86; cleaners and gardeners will be down by 229 because of contracting out; and support staff will be up by 19. As the acting director general said, the effect is mainly in the cleaning and gardening area. There has been a significant increase in the number of teachers, as well as a modest increase in the number of support staff. That has been part of a trend to direct more education resources, both financial and people resources, into the teaching and school function.

Mr HOME: The figures are extrapolated because the Education Department staffs teachers on a calendar-year basis and

the figures in the *Budget Statements* are estimated across a financial year. Therefore, they contain a mixture of what we know about semester two and what we foresee for semester one of the following year. The figures the acting director general referred to are the full-year impacts of the changes that have taken place to date, including the ongoing cleaning contracts.

Dr TURNBULL: I applaud the way the funding for works is outlined in the *Budget Statements*. All the different programs for the works in progress and the completed works are listed on pages 413 and 414, which is a good way of presenting the funding in our schools. The department has budgeted \$1m for maintenance, which will be used for the refurbishment for schools. This comprises all the inside and outside maintenance work that is required, such as painting, new carpets and cleaning gutters. I refer to general maintenance, not the occasional urgent patching up of something. How many schools received maintenance in the last financial year - works completed - and will receive it this year?

Mr BARNETT: Maintenance is an area in which schools have fallen behind in previous years. In 1993-94, \$30.4m was spent on school maintenance; in 1994-95, \$46.5m; 1995-96, \$50.5m; 1997-98, \$51.8m; 1998-99, \$61.5m; and in 1999-2000, \$59.3m. In 2000-01, \$59.9m has been budgeted for maintenance work. There has been a significant increase in maintenance funding, and it is being maintained at a high level.

Mr CARPENTER: Is there a projection for 2001-02?

Mr HARVEY: The projection for the following financial year is in the order of \$60m. The Education Department always maintains a degree of outstanding maintenance, which is valued at \$35m. That represents 1.3 per cent of the department's \$2.7b asset base. It is an important figure because it sits well within world's best practice, which is between 1.6 and 2.2 per cent of the portfolio. Maintenance needs are decided at the district level and the budget is divided up on that basis. An assessment of the outstanding maintenance requirements of every school is undertaken each year. Funds are distributed to schools on a district basis. Although I cannot say how many schools will receive maintenance work, many of the schools are maintained to an adequate standard each year on a needs basis.

Dr TURNBULL: Do the figures the minister quoted come under miscellaneous expenditure? The *Budget Statements* show that \$500 000 has been budgeted for the contingencies, and maintenance is then listed as \$1m.

Mr HARVEY: No, that is not right. Those are capital items. Maintenance is divided into preventive or restorative maintenance and faults, such as breakdowns and the like. The figures the minister quoted were purely the maintenance costs.

Dr TURNBULL: Is that the restorative aspect?

Mr HARVEY: Yes, and it is dealt with in a different part of the *Budget Statements*, under recurrent funding.

Mr CARPENTER: I would like to ask a couple of questions about the cost of professional development. However, I am unsure whether my last two questions about level 3 teachers were answered.

Mr BROWNE: No, we did not get to those. The department currently has 195 level 3 teachers and 300 level 3 teachers are budgeted for each year from 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03.

Mr CARPENTER: Will there be an increase from 195 to 300 teachers within three or four years?

Mr BROWNE: My understanding is that the increase will occur within a year.

Mr CARPENTER: Is that this coming financial year?

Mr BROWNE: The department will have 300 level 3 teachers within the next financial year.

Mr CARPENTER: Professional development is an important issue for people in the system. Can you provide a global figure of the current funding for professional development for each full-time equivalent teacher and principal in the education system?

Mr BARNETT: Funding for professional development comes from a number of sources. The department provides funding for the teachers, as do direct allocations from the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and the Curriculum Council. There are a number of sources of funding across government for professional development. Schools also make decisions about funding through their discretionary budgets.

Mr CARPENTER: We are on the outside looking in, and trying to find out whether there is scope for improvement in the funding of professional development. Can you provide us with information that shows how much is going towards professional development now?

Mr BROWNE: The global figure the member asked for is \$9.5m. All schools have four development days a year. This figure does not include those, as there is no net increase in the cost of those days because they are taken when students are not in attendance. I concede that some of those days are taken up by preparation and planning, so they cannot really be described as straight professional development days. The member asked about the funding for each full-time equivalent.

Mr CARPENTER: I asked about full-time equivalent teachers.

Mr BROWNE: I must be careful because FTEs and teachers are different.

Mr CARPENTER: I know that, and I knew it all along. Obviously, I do not want you to include the gardeners in the figures. How much is spent on classroom staff?

Mr BROWNE: It is an average of \$541.

Mr CARPENTER: What professional development is provided for teachers to gain competency in information technology and computers? What is the cost of those programs? Access to professional development in this area is a significant issue. It is one thing to provide the computer facility, it is another to ensure people know how to use it.

Mrs MOROZ: Most of the funding for professional development is provided to schools through the school grants. The schools at a local level have responsibility for how the grant is used. The Education Department does not keep a breakdown of those figures or a central monitoring system. Schools have the discretion to use some of the money from the learning technologies program - \$80m over four years - for professional development for their teachers when they can demonstrate through their planning they can meet the department's ratios of 1:5 in secondary school and 1:10 in primary school. Anecdotally, and from what we know through the system, schools will take whole days of their professional development days to work entirely on professional development. If that cost were multiplied by the number of teacher relief days, it would be thousands of dollars for the school. It cannot be measured, but schools have given a significant amount of time and priority over the past two years to professional development in technology.

[11.20 pm]

Mr CARPENTER: It has obviously been a major and welcome initiative. However, there is an issue with the staff being able to use it in a meaningful way. If we were tracking professional development funding over the past 10 years, we would see a large swell in the funds available paralleling the introduction of IT into schools.

Mrs MOROZ: Absolutely, because when district directors consider the priority planning for individual schools, technology is of a high priority. Consequently, the resources allocated from the school's individual budget reflect this priority.

Mr CARPENTER: That is one issue, but I am referring to the global figure.

Mr BROWNE: Earlier today I alluded to the first of 250 laptop computers being sent to rural teachers. That is a large part of professional development in IT.

Mr OSBORNE: Page 394 refers to the regional professional development centre to be established at Narrogin. I hesitate to ask the reason it will be established at Narrogin, but I am curious to know the thinking behind why Narrogin was chosen. I understand the acting director general taught there. Is that the reason?

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I do not know how anyone representing Bunbury can ask that question. It is the pork barrel centre of the State!

Mr OSBORNE: I applaud the decision to build it at Narrogin; if it were offered to Bunbury I would recommend it go to Narrogin, but I wondered why it was chosen.

Mr BROWNE: As I understand it, the reason was largely due to the enthusiasm within Narrogin for that project being established. We were delighted to see it occur. We are trying to ensure professional development in the regions is similar to that which is already occurring.

Mr HOME: In response to an earlier question, the director general indicated some of the issues being undertaken on rural education. This is one of a number of initiatives. It must be stressed that this is a trial. We are doing a range of things, such as speaking to universities with the aim of having degree courses run in country areas rather than centred in Perth, on which we are making progress. There is the potential for some online delivery of post-secondary qualifications. This was an initiative based on some of the responses we received last year when we surveyed graduates and country teachers to get an idea of what affected people's decisions to go to the country and stay there. Professional isolation is a key issue. As the director general indicated, Narrogin was selected due to the enthusiasm from the people at Narrogin. It was seen to be something we could manage relatively easily. Depending on the outcome, it might form the basis of some more widespread decentralisation and professional development activity.

Mr OSBORNE: Narrogin is also central to both regions so from that point of view I guess it is suitable.

Mr BARNETT: We referred to technology a moment ago. When the Government allocated \$100m out of the pipeline sale, \$80m of which went to government schools, we set a target of one computer for every 10 primary school students and one for every five secondary school students. The department has recently completed an analysis of schools. By the end of the 1999 school year, which was the first full year of the operational program, the ratio achieved was one computer for every 12 primary students and one for every seven secondary high school students. That does not refer to all computers but to those of a required standard; the schools have more computers.

It is clear that target will be easily exceeded. As a result, some discussion is taking place about more flexibility so that some of that funding can be used in technical support or professional development. We will meet the target comfortably but we will spend the money in that IT area.

Mr CARPENTER: What will occur when that \$20m expires, because obviously ongoing costs must be met such as updating of equipment, and costs involved in lease arrangements. What is the anticipated ongoing funding beyond that four-year program?

Mr BARNETT: It is a four-year program. We are only midway through the second year. As we approach probably the third or fourth year, technology in schools will be reassessed. Obviously governments of the future will continue to spend in this area. However, it is appropriate after this \$80m in government schools is spent, that there be a formal reassessment of future requirements. Inevitably, it is a growing area within school systems.

Clearly by the end of this program, if not earlier, we will have high levels of equipment throughout the school systems plus the satellite dishes and whatever else is in rural schools. The objective of that money was to jump ahead and increase the number of computers. That is occurring very quickly. The decision on what will occur after that will be made in probably 18 months' time.

Mr CARPENTER: Beyond the \$20m, is any other funding provided for the provision of computers and their use in the public school system in the budget years we are examining? That was one of the questions I provided on notice.

Mr MANCE: The minister referred to the \$20m annual allocation. In 2000-01 in the technology area we will spend \$28.84m. There is a component in the school grant of \$3m and a per capita increase for computer maintenance involving repairs and replacement. We also have an earlier computers-in-school initiative of \$3.84m. With the \$20m those amounts add up to \$28.84, which will go into that area in the 2000-01 budget.

Mr BROWNE: The answer is that in 2001-02, including the \$20m, there is a total of \$25m. The member should keep in mind the minister's comment about reviewing the situation prior to 2002-03.

Mr CARPENTER: Is that the expiry date of the four-year program?

[11.30 am]

Mr BROWNE: It is \$5m dollars. As the minister said, the out years are nowhere near set in concrete. Mr Greg Martin may also make a brief comment. We are reassessing the way we go about the whole issue of information technology as an administrative tool and a learning tool. We have tended to look at the different components, such as the means of getting a decent bandwidth, contracts for computers, their number and maintenance and the cost of cabling. At the moment, on our behalf, Mr Greg Martin is exploring the end-to-end concept in which we may go to a major provider to see whether we can get a package. That will take the department out of handling the intermediary steps with which we are not necessarily gifted. We might get a better result at the end of the day.

Mr MARTIN: This is in the planning process, and should not be perceived to be any more than that. We are aware of the issues that the member raised. When considering the convergence of technology, particularly the international global move to online services, in which e-everything is becoming a trend, we need to look at package arrangements for telecommunications, hardware and a range of services. I use mobile telephones as a scenario. We are focusing on the end-user device, and what sits behind that is perhaps irrelevant to schools. We are investigating moving to a model of the total service rather than the boxes, the personal computer or individual components.

Mr CARPENTER: One of the major difficulties arising in remote areas is maintenance and backup services for information technology, and catering for those requirements at a local level has not proved satisfactory. They need some systemic backup to ensure places such as Kununurra and Wyndham or wherever, have access to the backup support they need. I do not think that is happening at the moment. Is part of what Mr Martin saying that, perhaps, a new model would make that support service more readily available to those rural and remote areas?

Mr MARTIN: With the Government's positive initiative to provide computers in school, we are now looking at issues that surround computers in schools to come up with a new solution.

Mr BROWNE: Recently I visited the central desert area. The difficulties out there are enormous. However, technology is a great boon to indigenous children who can self-pace and interact. They can get enormous reward from working with technology. We are looking at issues such as having a dedicated IT person just to service those lands. In other areas schools can use their technology money in a more flexible way but are still complying with the ratio to buy in the support. We have been well served by teachers who have those technological gifts.

Mr CARPENTER: I do not think the department has enough of them and it never will. It requires a special expertise.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: If they get too good, the private sector pinches them.

Mr NICHOLLS: A significant issue and trend on page 391 refers to the social impacts on students. The minister is aware of my views on bullying. From research I have been exposed to over the past few years, my view is that bullying is one of the most significant factors to impact on students' potential learning outcomes and on the environment in which students are learning. Has bullying been identified as a serious issue within Education? Are we aware of its extent? I understand that research has been undertaken and is continuing by Associate Professor Donna Cross and her team at Curtin University of Technology. Is the Education Department playing any role in that research? What strategies are likely to be more effective or what strategies are in place that could be effective to reduce the impact of bullying? I view bullying as a social problem and not an educational problem. However, most of the research I have read indicates that schools or education forums are the most cost-effective intervention points to deal with bullying and the impact of bullying on perpetrators and victims.

Ms LUCAS: Bullying has been identified as a significant issue within our schools. Part of our curriculum framework emphasises values, and children are being taught across all the learning areas about respect for other people. By the end

of this year schools will have behaviour management policies in place. Part of the packages that have gone out to schools talk about schools being positive learning environments. We also talk about the effects of violence, bullying and harassment and also gender issues in that context. The Education Department has many staff who are working with Donna Cross. One of our district student services managers is an expert in anti-bullying programs in her own right. Included in the programs that the districts are running now are programs titled safe schools, friendly schools. We view bullying seriously and we are working in the context of behaviour management in schools to act against bullying.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you provide me with any information about the number of students who are affected? Has any research quantified the impact of this issue across WA schools or is it impossible to quantify?

Ms LUCAS: We have not done it. We have collected data on suspensions and exclusions but nothing on bullying specifically.

Mr NICHOLLS: Have you any information about trends? The information I am receiving is that bullying by females is a growing trend. I am not sure whether that is because previously bullying was regarded only as a male issue or whether something has changed within the school environment?

Ms LUCAS: That is why part of our support materials address the general gender issues.

[11.40 am]

The CHAIRMAN: My business paid \$16 000 to set up an information technology system that allows us to talk to Ford Australia in Melbourne. Instead of sending my mechanics to Perth for training we have a camera which allows us to speak with the instructor who runs the training course from Melbourne. Has that been looked at? The use of satellites is very cheap now. It is worth looking at providing training from Perth and those types of issues. I put that as a suggestion, because it is an excellent service.

Mr BROWNE: We are operating in three areas, one of which is from West Leederville - the School of Isolated and Distance Education. We now have the capacity to talk to every rural and remote school in Western Australia through satellite. It is audio back; however, there is also a large number of models which the Chairman has mentioned. District offices are increasingly fitting themselves out with the terrestrial version; that is, they use landline. The schools in rural and remote areas are also accessing it because it can now be done for about \$6 000. The cost of the line use is not exorbitant. It also means less teacher down time and greater safety, because teachers are not on the roads in rural and remote areas. The amount of work we are doing through the Internet is also considerable.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: My concern is with the system by which we run the high technology - not the maintenance or the purchasing of it. As I understand it, the school decision-making process puts the funding at a school level and it decides how it is spent. Small state schools are lucky if they have one person who has the qualifications or the ability to run the computer system appropriately. Larger schools are different. Schools with 30 or 40 teachers, like those in Rockingham, usually have half a dozen people on staff. My nine year old goes to a state school with 154 students. It is an excellent school, but only one person on staff has been trained in information technology. If that person is not available, nobody else can effectively operate that system. If the school-by-school decision-making process must decide how the budget is spent, who is interested and who will be trained, small schools in the metropolitan area will be disadvantaged by that management process. Remote areas have trouble getting people to fix the problems. If a school has 12 teachers, it is lucky if one of them has the skills that are required. The system must be looked at. There needs to be a central policy decision which would require 25 per cent of the teachers at the school to be trained or whatever, so all of the schools, regardless of their size, are adequately covered. Are you aware of the problem? Do you recognise that one of the ways to overcome it is to have a central formula that applies to schools rather than leave it up to the individual schools to decide how it will be implemented?

Mr BROWNE: I was trying to work out whether the member was talking about the technical maintenance or about the inservicing of staff so they can use the computer as a learning tool.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Yes.

Mr BROWNE: I will refer to Mrs Moroz because she answered the question earlier, which may be of some use to the member. She spoke about the amount of professional development which goes into IT.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I heard that answer, but it does not overcome the fact that the problem with the school I mentioned is that, beyond the teacher with the learning skills, there is a rapid fall in quality.

Mr BARNETT: What the member is saying is true. To some extent schools are now brimming with technology. There are computers, fibre optic cabling and satellite dishes everywhere. The challenge now is to raise the level of competency of staff, and there is a long way to go. That is not a criticism in any sense, but there is a long way to go in better using that technology in a lot of learning environments. That is the bigger challenge rather than putting more equipment into schools.

Mrs MOROZ: As part of the implementation of the learning technologies program - the \$80m - we have developed a comprehensive implementation plan which targets the kinds of skills that teachers need to develop. Each school has a plan to address what we call the staff capabilities and the staff skills in learning technologies. There is a gradation of skills which are required at a very low level right through to a high level, and a standard is set. All schools are working towards moving all their staff along that continuum to develop a high competency in learning technologies. Mr Home will also talk about a specific program which has targeted 100 graduates.

Mr HOME: Last year the centre funded 100 teachers going through the graduate certificate in learning technologies that was developed between us and Curtin University. That was targeted at relatively isolated schools, but it is a bit of a first in that it is an online program and is readily accessible to anyone. The response from the teachers who have been through that course has been overwhelmingly positive. Part of that arrangement was that those teachers would become catalysts for professional development within their own schools. We have planted something in a school that hopefully will grow. I am not sure of the extent to which this has occurred, but a lot of schools have become aware of that course and, as part of their professional development, have funded their own teachers running the same course. That sort of facility will increasingly provide access to professional development expertise within schools.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: My fear is that with all of that taking place in the smaller schools in the metropolitan area, we will still see the weaknesses, because there are simply not the numbers. If the teacher at my son's school took sick leave for a week, the whole program would literally stop. I am not being critical of the other teachers, but they do not have the same skills. I do not know what is driving the program which Mr Home has suggested is in place. There is a problem in those smaller schools. The system works better in the other state schools in the same area as my son's, which have numbers of teachers. If it is 10 per cent of 12 teachers, it is 1.2 people; if it is 10 per cent of 60 teachers, it is six people. We need to recognise that isolation from high technology should not be measured in distance from the metropolitan area. We must look at how schools are made up. I suggest that there is a problem in those smaller schools and the staff do not have the skills to deal with it. It needs to be addressed. I am suggesting that we probably need a central program to look at that area and put more funding into it.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind members that we have been on this division for nearly three hours, and we have three more to go.

[11.50am]

Mr CARPENTER: To expedite matters, I did provide notice of the questions. I want to ask a couple of questions about class sizes and the retention rate. There are headings in the budget for major achievements but no heading for a major under-achievement. Retention and graduation rates are noted as achievements; in fact they are under-achievements. The retention or drop-out rate in our schools in Western Australia is one of the major public policy areas to which we should be giving more attention. The minister mentioned, as have I and other people, the figure of 90 per cent as the retention rate we should aim for as soon as possible in our secondary schools. I notice that it is stated in the budget papers that the rate has increased from 59.6 per cent last year to 60 per cent this year, a 0.04 per cent increase. A rough calculation indicates if we continue to improve our retention rate at that speed, it will reach 90 per cent in about 75 years. Neither the minister nor I will be around to applaud the arrival of that moment; therefore, we must do a lot better to improve the retention rate. Can the minister also explain why only 51 per cent of WA children are graduating? My specific questions are as provided: What provision has been made in the 2001-03 and 2003-04 budgets for an increase in the retention rate, bearing in mind we are all of one mind that it must be significantly increased, and what is the allocation in the budget for that possibility?

Mr BARNETT: I will make a brief general comment first. We can argue about statistics, but the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for Western Australia indicate the retention rate of full-time secondary students from years 7 and 8 to year 12 in 1999 was 71.5 per cent, which is slightly below the Australian average of 72.3 per cent. I too would like the retention rate to be around 90 per cent; we should have that objective. However, we must be conscious that a 90 per cent retention rate can be interpreted as students continuing with education and training in some form. For example, the numbers of students who leave school and continue their education in technical and further education programs should be included. When we talk about a school retention rate, it is really a retention rate right across education and training. It is not a bad thing either if people are mixing work and study. I would therefore define the retention rate fairly broadly. However, 90 per cent of young adults should be attending some further education and training.

Mr BROWNE: A budget allocation for an increase in the retention rate is incorporated in allowances for increases in the total number of enrolments. We do not work out a retention rate percentage but, rather, the basis of the whole enrolment.

Mr CARPENTER: The anticipated enrolment rate for secondary schools was something like 450, which was much greater than for primary schools. I take it that built into that figure is an assessment that the figures for years 11 and 12 will rise. If so, what is the anticipated figure for the next financial year and the year after for retention rates at years 11 and 12? Does the officer understand the point I am making?

Mr BROWNE: I do. I must point out that if one goes back through the number of students each year in our system, one will find aberrations. Some years have, inexplicably, considerably fewer students, whether it was migration -

Mr CARPENTER: Or electricity blackouts?

Mr BROWNE: Something like that could affect the figures. We find our numbers overall tend to stabilise at 400. It is a very small percentage of the total of our secondary population. We want to increase the retention rate, notwithstanding the other comments made by the minister. However, we do not calculate a figure and adjust our planning on that basis.

Mr CARPENTER: I cannot find out how much it will cost if we keep more kids in years 11 and 12.

Mr BROWNE: We calculate the figure quoted by the member, and then work out our teacher-student ratio and other costs accordingly.

Mr CARPENTER: Has the officer done that calculation?

Mr BROWNE: That is what we do when estimating the number of teachers we need.

Mr CARPENTER: For the forthcoming financial year?

Mr BROWNE: No, that is done later in the year. The exact number of teachers required to meet the ratio in 2000-01 is calculated at the end of the year.

Mr HOME: Based on returns given the previous year.

Mr BROWNE: At what time this year will we work it out?

Mr HOME: September.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister probably understands the information I am trying to find out. We want to improve the retention rate in the same way the minister wants to improve it, and we want to know how much it will cost. These items must be costed. If a formula or a projection has been made of that potential growth or expected growth, could that be made available?

Mr BROWNE: Indeed. The point I was making is that in September each year the schools survey the number of students it anticipates will return in years 11 and 12, that census data is returned to us and the staffing is worked out on that basis.

Mr CARPENTER: I asked two other questions in that section about class sizes. What is the current commitment for class sizes and how will that projection change? Has funding been provided in the budget year and forward years to 2004 for a reduction in anticipated class sizes?

Mr BARNETT: I have been advised that at secondary level, although we can talk about class sizes and criteria, the reality is roughly one teacher for every 15 students. They may be configured in different ways but class size is not such a great issue, although the State School Teachers Union of WA would perhaps raise class sizes as an issue for years 8 and 9. It has a fair point as that is an adolescent period and there are other issues in those years. The policy is to reduce average class sizes in years 1 to 3 to no more than 24 by 2003, and there is a budget allocation to achieve that. We also indicated that the savings from the half-cohort program with the change to the school starting age will be used to reduce class sizes. Class size is an issue and it is important for us to address class sizes where it matters; that is clearly in the early childhood area and probably in the first few years of secondary school.

Mr CARPENTER: Will the minister provide the budgeting figures that will meet the change in class sizes by way of supplementary information?

Mr BARNETT: Yes, we can do that.

Mr CARPENTER: The minister said it would all take place in one calendar year rather than a graded reduction in class sizes.

Mr BARNETT: It has been reduced this year in the early childhood area, and we will reduce it further.

Mr McCaffrey: The changes to the four and five-year-olds are in our forward estimates, and the change to the cohort program has been factored into each year.

Mr BARNETT: The department funds schools according to that program; schools may choose to configure them in different ways.

Mr CARPENTER: I understand. However, will the minister provide us with the costings that go with the commitment he has already made about class sizes?

Mr BARNETT: It can be calculated.

Mr CARPENTER: I assume it is already budgeted for in the forward estimates.

Mr BARNETT: I am sure we can calculate the cost of reduction in a class size, bearing in mind this has been introduced when a half-cohort program is going through. However, we can indicate the cost of a reduced class size.

Mr CARPENTER: Specifically, in relation to the commitment from the Government about reducing the numbers from 28 to 24, I assume that is accounted for in the budget calculations for recurrent spending and perhaps even capital spending in future. Is that change in class size numbers catered for in those figures?

[12 noon]

Mr BARNETT: We can provide some figures on the costs.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have a question about the Mandurah senior campus and the associated changes to schools in Mandurah, which comes under capital works on page 412. What arrangements have been made to facilitate the appointment of staff to the positions that will be created at that senior campus at the start of next year, and will those positions carry permanency? What will be the implications for Mandurah Senior High School, given that for about the past 20 years it has been "demountable city"? I hope that the senior campus will create the opportunity to remove all demountables from that site and for some upgrading to take place to address some of the problems associated with Mandurah Senior High School.

Mr BARNETT: Some money is being spent at Mandurah Senior High School.

Mr HOME: I do not know the specific staff numbers with regard to Mandurah. All the teachers at those schools have been given transfer rights, and we are going through a process of working out who will be settling into those schools. Some additional staffing has been provided for the setting up of the school, in the form of registrar, principal and deputy principal time.

Mr NICHOLLS: Will those positions carry permanency or will some of them be temporary? What number of staffing positions will be created, and how is it proposed to fill any vacancies that might arise at local schools from which staff have been transferred?

Mr HOME: Teachers within the existing schools in Mandurah will have first right of transfer to those schools; so, for example, a teacher at Coodanup can choose to either stay at Coodanup or go to the senior campus. If more teachers choose to go to the senior campus than there are positions at the senior campus, the principal of the school will decide which of those persons will secure the job. We believe that the majority of teachers will be able to go to their place of preference.

Mr NICHOLLS: How will the vacancies created at the other schools be filled, bearing in mind that Halls Head middle school will also be seeking to attract new staff?

Mr HOME: After all the transfers within Mandurah have taken place. If there are residual vacancies a decision will be made on which of those vacancies will be filled on transfer and which will be filled on merit. That decision has yet to be finalised.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is it proposed that non-permanent teachers in the Mandurah area will have an opportunity to fill those positions that have not been filled?

Mr HOME: They will have an equal entitlement to put up their hands and compete for any positions that are filled on merit.

Mr HARVEY: With respect to the Mandurah Senior High School, a small amount of money has been set aside to convert the high school into a middle school. That project is due to be delivered by the start of next year. That will obviously result in classrooms being taken from Mandurah Senior High School and relocated.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am interested in when that conversion is likely to happen. I do not wish make a point of it, however work was planned at that school which supposedly would take place during the holiday period but did not. I understand the construction work has been completed at the school while students are trying to use the facility. When are that work and the associated minor works or modifications likely to take place?

Mr HARVEY: I cannot give an exact date for when they will be completed. The undertaking is that they will be completed by the end of the year. Naturally, we try to keep the disruption to an absolute minimum.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is that the end of the next calendar year, or next financial year?

Mr HARVEY: The end of this calendar year.

Mr CARPENTER: In relation to classrooms, how many unused or empty demountables are there in the public education system? What is the cost of a demountable classroom? Page 417 of the *Budget Statements* shows an allocation of \$1.2m in 2000-01 for transportable classrooms. How is the funding expended? Page 417 of the *Budget Statements* shows an allocation of \$4m for transportable relocation. How many classrooms are expected to be relocated in the 2000-01 year? From where and to where are the classrooms expected to be taken?

Mr BROWNE: There are no unused demountables. More demountables could probably be used. The cost of a demountable is \$60 000.

Mr CARPENTER: Is that to purchase them from scratch? Does it cost \$300 000 to buy five demountables?

Mr BROWNE: They have them built to the department's specifications.

Mr CARPENTER: At a cost of \$60 000 each?

Mr BROWNE: Yes. The \$1.2m the member referred to is for 20 new demountables. The department expects to relocate up to 100 demountable classrooms at the end of this year. Those figures are based on history. Where does the department anticipate them coming from and going to? In August or September, as part of the work Mr Homes referred to a while ago in respect of getting all the census data, the department, through Steve Harvey's area, will work out how it will make all the moves at the most economic rate. It then sets about shifting them at a time which will cause the least disruption to everybody. I am unsure of the patterns and the trend as to where they will go. I can give the member the answer to the growth areas, but that is not a very helpful answer.

Mr CARPENTER: That is sufficient. Does the department anticipate that the transport or relocation of about 100 of them would cost around \$4m?

Mr HARVEY: It averages around \$40 000 to relocate a unit because of the cost of connecting it to services and the like. That is a high figure, but considering that includes relocating them across the State, including rural and remote areas, the \$4m accommodates all the department's requirements, which is approximately 100 moves a year. I make the point that we have been talking about demountables; the department has a combination of demountables and transportables, and there is a difference. The figures the department refers to are not strictly the cost for demountables, but are the cost for transportable buildings. There is a distinction.

Mr CARPENTER: Perhaps you had better illuminate my dim-wittedness and explain.

Mr HARVEY: The department has both within the system. The demountables, as their name suggests, are deconstructed, demounted and relocated. Transportables, are picked up, and the whole classroom is moved. The department's program is for transportable classrooms. That is what the \$60 000 refers to. The department does not build demountable classrooms anymore, it builds transportable classrooms. The figure of \$1.2m is for transportable classrooms.

[12.10 pm]

Mr NICHOLLS: Page 391 of the *Budget Statements* refers to social impacts. Attention deficit disorder and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder are issues of significant community interest and, from my knowledge, they have reasonable focus in the Education Department. Is behaviour management and/or medication necessary for students diagnosed with ADD and ADHD, and has policy or procedure concerning giving medication to students changed? I have heard suggestions, usually voiced in various forms of media, that students are selling or otherwise providing medication to other students for financial gain or other reasons. If true, that would be a concern. Has the Education Department identified that issue, or is it a fallacious claim? Is any provision made for specialised educational services for or management of ADD students who are unable to continue education in the mainstream classroom environment?

Mr BARNETT: I make a personal observation, which I suspect is the member's view too: Although a significant number of students require medication, it is too easily and overly prescribed. Evidence suggests that this is particularly the case in Western Australia. I ask for professional comment.

Mr BROWNE: The member raised three points. Regarding levels of medication, I share the minister's view that it is overprescribed. The prescription is by the medical practitioner, and the Education Department has responsibility to handle the student rather than be involved in the rate of prescription. The second question concerned the availability of what appears to be surplus medication - is it sold in schools? If it is occurring, it would be an issue. I read, as did the member, of circumstances in newspapers, but the general view is that it is not widespread. It is monitored, as is the use or possession of any illegal substances in our schools. It would not be tolerated. The third question was about the management of student in the mainstream system.

Ms LUCAS: Those students come under the umbrella of our alienated students programs as part of the retention and participation money for districts to provide off-campus programs. The best programs work when we put in place strong behavioural management policies in schools. An expert medical practitioner ran some workshops for our teachers, and he commented that behaviour management in conjunction with medication is the best method of managing a student with ADHD.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do you have any estimates of the number of students diagnosed with ADD or ADHD?

Ms LUCAS: We do not.

Mr BARNETT: I asked a similar question of the department some time ago and figures were provided. I do not know their source, but the department will trace them. They are general figures dealing with prescription rates. The prescription rate for boys was significantly higher than that for girls, and higher than the national average.

Mr NICHOLLS: I believe that many of the students involved in truanting or excluded from classes or school for behaviour problems may fall into such a category. Has any attempt been made to identify the link between ADHD and truanting or exclusion from school?

Ms LUCAS: The data collected on suspensions and exclusions contains information about why a child has been suspended or excluded, but no causal link with ADHD is noted. The data indicates that a child was suspended for flagrant disobedience of a rule or some infringement of the school rules; the behaviour is not attributed to ADHD.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is there a direct or indirect relationship between behaviour disorders and the disciplinary or exclusion processes? I am concerned that students may be excluded from schools because they are flagrantly disobeying the rules, and that that has occurred not because they have no respect for the school but because they are suffering from a disorder that involves acting out or antisocial behaviour. If that is the case, their learning options are likely to suffer more because of their affliction, rather than because they do not want to obey the rules.

Mr BROWNE: One of the main objectives of suspending students these days is to get parents involved in the management of their children. In some cases, parents are required to come to the school prior to the student being readmitted. It becomes evident in those discussions whether the misbehaviour can be attributed ADHD or ADD. The statistics show that a student has been suspended for a misdemeanour; they do not show the cause of the misbehaviour. The follow-up relates one issue to the other, but we do not keep those statistics.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The budget papers contain a statement that the department is working its way through the backlog of leave. What is the current situation? I understand the department still has a large leave liability. Where is that occurring - at the principal or teaching level, or at the primary or secondary level? I am also particularly concerned about the number of teachers being subjected to physical abuse in schools. Are any figures available indicating the number of teachers who have been attacked? I would like a breakdown of those figures for the past 12 months. I would like the number of teachers who have been attacked in the classroom or the school, and details of the people who attacked them - that is, were they students, parents or interlopers - and a breakdown of the percentage or number of female teachers who have been attacked as opposed to male teachers. Is there a trend showing an increase in that sort of activity in schools?

[12.20 pm]

Mr BROWNE: I need to talk further about whether we can compile the statistics in the form the member wants, because much of the detail is kept at a school level. Every time we seek details from schools, we add another impost on their time. If I may, I will talk further about how far the member wants to go. I will give the global figures on attacks or assaults. As Ms Lucas said, we have categories, and that for assaults is also inclusive of verbal intimidation by students. The pattern has remained at 6 per cent of the total number of suspensions or exclusions. Therefore, there is consistency in the pattern. However, the number of suspensions increased slightly from last year to this year. This was caused by one particular district that deliberately introduced a policy whereby it could not get parental involvement to suspend a student but had to warrant it and get the parents to come in and speak about the management of the student. That one district accounted for all of the total increase. If that district is cut out, the number of exclusions and suspensions has remained constant, and the number of category one assaults has remained pretty constant at 6 per cent.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Is category one for physical assault?

Mr BROWNE: It includes physical assault and intimidation.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: The sort of detail I require is whether the things we are hearing from the media and teachers in general is true; that is, that increasing attacks are taking place on teaching staff. I would like a breakdown of the numbers involved. I am amazed that the department has not made an attempt to acquire that knowledge centrally. As I understand Mr Browne's answer, it is simply left up to the school process. I would have thought for leave requirements, understanding stress, cost need factors for replacing teachers and so forth, it would be absolutely necessary for the department to have those figures before it at all times. To the degree that it is not occurring, may I suggest that it should be? It would be similar to handling attacks on police officers on a station-by-station basis.

Mr BROWNE: I think there is a misunderstanding. The member asked whether we centrally held the aggregated statistical data, and then he gave six or eight categories, and asked whether the assaults were by males or females and whether they were on males or females. I said that as a matter of course we do not divide our statistics up in that manner.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Therefore, there is a need to go back to the schools to -

Mr BROWNE: I am sorry, I must now go on to say that there is no significant increase in the incidence of teachers being either intimidated or assaulted in schools. Compared with the increase of assaults and crime in our society, the increase in our schools is less, if that is of any use to the member. We receive what is called a critical incident report of any incident of that nature. It is possible for us to go back through those to ascertain whether the incident was male upon male, female upon female, male upon female or vice versa, the age groups and so on.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: That is the sort of detail in which I am interested at the high school and primary school level. Anecdotally, there seems to be an increase in physical violence against teachers in primary schools. Will the department provide a breakdown of that information?

Mr de GARIS: The critical incidents, which are incidents of a nature that need to be brought to the notice of the centre, rather than dealt with at the school or district level, are recorded. In 1998-99, for threats of violence against staff, 30 incidents were reported; for actual violence against staff, 27 incidents were reported. The breakdown of those incidents would be fairly simple to put together, I imagine.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: Has there been a subsequent increase or decrease in stress leave for teachers? I am not saying that all stress leave is necessarily related to that activity; it is just a question on stress leave. Is stress leave quantified against other types of leave; and if so, is there an increase in stress leave in the department, or in high schools and primary schools?

Mr HOME: I do not have detailed information on that, but stress leave has certainly been a growing phenomenon over recent years in the school system.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I ask for that information to be supplied for the last two or three years so that we can see the trend.

Mr BARNETT: To the extent that we can provide information, we will do so.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: I would also like the breakdown in the senior and primary school systems.

Mr CARPENTER: I would like some straightforward information on teacher housing. What are the budgeted payments from Education to the Government Employees Housing Authority for teacher housing in 2000-01, and what is the forecast expenditure for the years 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04? Further to that, what is the level of subsidy paid to private house owners for teacher housing in the same years, and what is the forecast expenditure for the same years?

Mr HOME: The estimate for expenditure for teacher housing in 2000-01 is \$16.6m. That figure is the difference between the rent GEHA charges and the rental income received from tenants, and encompasses both GEHA-owned and GEHA-leased properties. It is difficult to estimate expenditure levels for the years beyond that, because we are not yet aware of the capital works program for GEHA, and we do not know which of our requests has been or will be acceded to. We do not anticipate that it will be less than the \$16.6m figure for the forthcoming financial year. I am not sure what the member's second question means.

Mr CARPENTER: I do not know if this is the case, but I am exploring the possibility that there are locations in which there is no GEHA housing but in which teachers are given subsidised payments by the department for private rental. If that is so, what is the amount of money involved?

Mr HOME: Generally if no GEHA house is available in a particular location, GEHA will enter into lease arrangements with a private provider.

[12.30 pm]

Mr CARPENTER: Is that included in the payment the Education Department makes to the Government Employees Housing Authority?

Mr HOME: The Education Department pays the Government Employees Housing Authority \$4.5m for properties that it leases from private providers, rather than constructors.

Mr CARPENTER: Is that over and above the \$16.6m?

Mr HOME: It is part of it.

Mr CARPENTER: What is the cost of converting teachers with temporary status to permanency? Are there any identifiable financial benefits in having temporary rather than permanent teachers?

Mr BROWNE: Temporary teachers are not cheaper. Throughout 2000, the department will grant 600 permanencies, which is huge step forward. There are always temporary teachers in the work force because if the number of teachers greatly exceeded the number of jobs, the department would be faced with a surplus if those teachers all had cause to seek reinstatement of their positions.

Mr CARPENTER: What event would precipitate that action?

Mr BROWNE: If there were a downturn in the economy and the spouse was not working. Circumstances exist now in which the number of teachers exceeds 100 per cent capacity.

Mr CARPENTER: Is that in particular locations?

Mr BROWNE: No, in particular disciplines.

Mr CARPENTER: Is the department required to provide a permanent teacher with a position that meets that person's training, as opposed to merely providing permanent employment? If the department has 110 per cent of the number of maths teachers required, must it employ every one of them as a maths teacher, or can it simply provide them with employment at a suitable salary level? I do not accept the rationale that if there is 110 per cent of the requirement, the teachers might all turn up on the first Monday of school. I do not think that would ever happen, unless some massive calamity was about to befall the economy.

Mr HOME: The issue of permanency has its main impact in the Perth metropolitan area, which is where the vast majority of temporary teachers are. Those teachers are engaged on a temporary basis because of the conditions permanent teachers enjoy and avail themselves of. At any time, about 15 per cent of the department's work force is on authorised leave, such as parental leave, maternity leave, leave without pay and so forth. Any teacher who is absent for a year or less is allowed to retain their position in the school. If a teacher at Subiaco Primary School took a year off, the vacancy in that school would be for only one year. The department could not put someone in that position on a permanent basis. However, it could put someone there on a permanent basis if the teacher who took the leave vacated her position at Subiaco Primary School. That option is open to us, but it would not be well received. The department is talking to the State School Teachers Union about the issue, as it has concerns about the availability of permanent teaching positions. We have indicated to the union that we do not have any difficulty with extending permanency per se, but we need to ensure that the department is not placed in a situation whereby it guarantees to employ people and then overruns its establishment, which would be enormously expensive. That situation has arisen in other States. For example, other States gave guarantees that if someone went to the country and served a certain number of years, they could return to the capital city and have permanent employment. They mismanaged that and spent millions of dollars carrying supernumerary staff.

In the main, it is a location specific concern. Over the past year we have fundamentally reassessed the way in which we determine who can have permanency and how they can have it. The initiative we put in place provides that people can be offered permanency in clear vacancies that remain after all permanent teachers have had their transfer requests considered. They were primarily country positions. Country schools have been staffed by a substantial number of temporary teachers because they were being considered overall. The reality is that large numbers of permanent teachers did not want to go to those schools, so we have assigned permanency subject to a qualifying period. We can and will extend further the notion of permanency over the next couple of years.

Mr CARPENTER: It is an interesting change. I do not know if it is recognised publicly, but the system created a problem for itself by severely reducing the ratio of permanent teachers, although that is being redressed, which is a good thing.

I gave some notice of a question about trying to get more indigenous people into careers in teaching. Can I have a brief idea of the initiatives and some costing? I know some scholarships and so on are available. How many people are taking them up and what are the costs involved? Further, what strategy will be introduced to improve the outcomes and participation rates for indigenous students and to assist indigenous people to enter teaching? It is perhaps loosely worded, but there are two issues in the question.

Mr WYATT: Initiatives for indigenous education have been taken on a number of fronts as part of the department's mainstream programs and services, by having more secondary students who succeed at the secondary schooling processes

enter TAFE-VET pathways which lead to employment or opportunities to enter tertiary institutions and, we hope, teacher training through fast track programs.

The other part is the initiative for the national indigenous English literacy and numeracy strategy, which is an element targeting secondary students to encourage them into teaching positions or positions as Aboriginal and Islander education officers. Under that strategy, the Commonwealth is providing \$465 000 in its first year, \$375 000 in the second year and \$450 000 in the third year. The aim is to have as many indigenous students as possible enrolled in tertiary institutions across the Education Department, the Catholic Education Office and the Aboriginal independent community schools, because children move between the three sectors. It is a joint initiative. That is in addition to the education services scholarships and the 10 cadetships offered by the Education Department to Aboriginal and Islander educational workers.

The NIELAN strategy, which is a national strategy, will also offer up to 10 scholarships to train indigenous students to become teachers. They can progress along a career pathway from Aboriginal and Islander education workers to stages where they can be used as teachers in schools until they gain their full accredited training qualification.

[12.40 pm]

Mr CARPENTER: Thank you for that information. All those aspects are important. There is great scope for improvement in the number of Aboriginal teachers by stepping up the number of AIEWs because they are already in the system doing quasi-teaching functions. Especially in those remote areas, it is recognised that if people from the community can be recruited and trained, the teachers will be from the community, and the retention rate of the students and their performance levels will be far higher. Three or four outcomes will be achieved. What amount of money is allocated to each of those initiatives? Perhaps that can be provided as supplementary information. I think there are three or four different initiatives for which sources of funding are different. I was given a global figure of \$400 000 from the Commonwealth.

Mr WYATT: Yes, but only in terms of that element. If I can backtrack, in terms of indigenous education and strategic initiatives, we have been provided with \$8.6m from the Commonwealth to improve educational outcomes for indigenous students. In that \$8.6m is a focus on the employment, professional development and skilling of both indigenous and non-indigenous staff, so there is cross-cultural understanding of the needs of indigenous students which then allows for a school environment that encourages Aboriginal children to stay on. Another element is the new initiative by the Commonwealth, in which it will be making \$27m available over the next triennium. Of that, \$13m will go to national initiatives such as partnerships with the Australian Primary Principals Association to tease out what primary principals across Australia and all schooling sectors see as the key directions that need to be taken to encourage Aboriginal children to stay on. Another element is the professional development unit of the Australian Primary Principals Association which will undertake professional development of principals to focus on the educational outcomes of indigenous students, with a view to getting them from primary school years into either school and vocational education and training pathways or to completion and tertiary studies with a view to targeting some key employment avenues to make a difference in indigenous communities.

Another problem with teacher training is that when we skill our teachers or indigenous people to become teachers, other government agencies entice them into leadership roles, which I do not have a problem with. To one extent it means that we are increasing the number of indigenous people across all sectors of government, and at the same time bringing it through others. Another element is that, of the \$27m, \$14m will be split among the States and Territories for particular initiatives with the six elements. Western Australia has been very successful with the \$14m. We have negotiated for \$6.83m to be expended in the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the goldfields and the Perth metropolitan area of Swan, with a view to improving attendance, the skilling of indigenous staff, otitis media and the underlying health issues, and improving educational outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The other global view of that strategy is that if the levels of literacy and numeracy are improved and the gap is closed, the employment opportunities in the private sector will also improve. This strategy will have a two-pronged approach in the public and private sectors. In addition to that is the \$12.5m this State provides for Aboriginal-specific programs. They are all interrelated and complement each other, with a view to bringing children through 12 years of schooling, seeing successful outcomes in educational attainment and achieving work placement.

Mr CARPENTER: I may not recall everything that you have said, but am I right in saying that the state-generated money, as opposed to money initially provided by the Commonwealth, is \$12.5m?

Mr WYATT: Yes, that is right.

Mr CARPENTER: The rest of it is commonwealth money.

Mr WYATT: An amount of \$8.6m is recurrent funding for the indigenous education strategic initiatives program, and \$6.83m in the next triennium is for the national indigenous English literacy and numeracy strategy.

Mr CARPENTER: Essentially, it is \$12.5m from the State.

Mr WYATT: Yes.

Mr CARPENTER: Are specific initiatives such as scholarships funded out of the \$12.5m or are they sourced elsewhere?

Mr WYATT: That is sourced elsewhere. The only component for the 10 additional scholarships is the national strategy. That will be handled by the Department of Education Services once the commonwealth and state agreements are signed and the money flows.

Mr HOME: A sum of \$120 000 will be spent on Aboriginal cadetships and scholarships in 2000-01, on top of substantial funding that was provided in the current financial year. Cadetships have been offered to 10 Aboriginal people as part of a plan to increase the number of Aboriginal staff in our system. Cadetship recipients will undertake one year full-time study for completion of a teaching qualification. We have been commended by the commonwealth Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business for that approach and for providing those opportunities. In addition to that, a sum of \$80 000 will be spent in the coming financial year on a number of internships which relate to other initiatives. An Aboriginal career plan and a new promotional teaching-based position titled "Aboriginal specialist teacher" are being developed to provide a career path for Aboriginal staff to move away from support-based school roles into teaching-based roles. In addition to that, we have appointed someone to the human resources division to run a mentor program for Aboriginal staff. He is making contact with all Aboriginal people working for the department and, hopefully, through those contacts, reaching out to other Aboriginal people who may wish to work for the department. We are also exploring on-site teacher training through telecentres for remote Aboriginal communities. There has therefore been a raft of initiatives, all implemented in pursuance of the targets we set ourselves for Aboriginal employment in the department. When we initiated that program a couple of years ago, 1.6 per cent of our work force was Aboriginal; we have now reached 2 per cent with an intention to reach 3 per cent this year. These initiatives will assist us to reach that target.

Mr CARPENTER: Basically, the department hopes to increase the number of indigenous teachers, as opposed to other staff members, which is important too. How many indigenous teachers do you have now and what are the targets?

Mr HOME: We have 48 Aboriginal teachers. We do not have targets for particular groups, such as teachers or teacher aides or non-teaching staff. However, 48 is well below the 3 per cent target and we are keen to do something about that. I am sorry, that figure of 48 applied some months ago; it is now 77. On 30 May we had 66 Aboriginal teachers, 10 school administrators - people in promotional positions - and one other person. The total employment of Aboriginal people in the department is 558, out of total current full-time equivalents of 24 987.

Mr CARPENTER: Are those scholarships worth \$12 000 each? There is \$120 000 for scholarships, and there are 10 of them.

Mr HOME: They are worth substantially more than that.

Mr CARPENTER: How much are they worth?

Mr HOME: We are meeting the full salary and higher education contribution scheme costs of those scholarship holders. I do not have the figure with me but the overall value of the scholarships is substantially more than that.

Mr CARPENTER: Let us say, hypothetically, I wanted to increase the scholarships from 10 to 20; how much would that cost?

Mr HOME: That is the same question I was unable to answer before. I am not sure of the cost per scholarship but I can provide that information. It is certainly far greater than \$12 000.

Mr BROWNE: The member should not confuse those 10 scholarships with the 10 scholarships offered by the Department of Education Services which are also fully funded for the higher education contribution scheme but do not have the salary component that the Education Department's scholarships have.

Mr CARPENTER: We will come to Education Services. What is the difference? Who are the recipients of Education Services' scholarships and how are they different from the Education Department scholarships?

[12.50 pm]

Mr BROWNE: It would be more appropriate for the people from the Department of Education Services to answer that question.

Mr BARNETT: I suspect the member for Willagee would be keen, as would I, for the number of scholarships for Aboriginal students to be increased. Initially it was quite difficult to find suitable applicants, because there is a limited pool of people who are qualified to apply. I anticipate the number of scholarships will increase in line with the availability of suitable candidates. It is not a matter of simply doubling or trebling the number of scholarships, because that may not work, but we need to start somewhere.

Mr CARPENTER: Is it correct that about 30 scholarships are HECS-funded?

Mr BARNETT: A brochure has been produced that summarises all the scholarships, because they come from different areas. We have consolidated all that information in one presentation to students.

Mr CARPENTER: Does that brochure have a breakdown of the costing? How much is the department spending on those scholarships, and how many people are the beneficiaries of that spending as an inducement to get people into teacher training?

Mr BARNETT: We will give the member a copy of the brochure. In addition, we will provide the cost of those scholarships and the number of people who are taking them up.

Mr CARPENTER: When did the department apply for the \$26m or \$27m of supplementary funding, when was approval given, and when will the money arrive?

Mr McCAFFREY: We attended, with the minister, cabinet budget committee meetings in August and October last year, where we discussed our budget. The negotiations with Treasury were along the lines that we mentioned earlier. On 28 May we finalised the application for supplementary funding to state Treasury, and we are waiting for formal advice on the transfer of the additional funds into our bank account in June.

Mr CARPENTER: Three days ago?

Mr McCAFFREY: We leave it until the end of the year so that we are close to being sure what our out turn will be and we do not put in a submission that is higher than we need.

Mr CARPENTER: Is that \$27m included in this budget figure?

Mr McCAFFREY: The expected out turn for 1999-2000 reflects the higher level. The figure for our allocation last year was close to \$25m or \$26m less than what we will show in our out turn.

Mr CARPENTER: In relation to the finalisation of those figures, we are within a few weeks of the end of the financial year, and I assume that within a couple of weeks of that point the department will have a very good idea of what its budget actuals were for the current financial year. Will that be made available? Rather than having to wait for next year's budget papers, to see what the actual figures were for this current financial year, will that figure be made available when the department knows it?

Mr McCAFFREY: The department is required to prepare its financial statements for preparation and inclusion in the annual report for the department. That will be completed by mid-August when the audit is completed. The department is reluctant to release those figures until the auditor has been through it and is happy with the presentation.

Mr CARPENTER: Will I have to wait for the annual report?

Mr BARNETT: The department might be able to give the member a provisional figure on the total outcome. That will only be an unaudited figure. It will be a provisional estimate. The department can look at doing that, but it will not be the full final audited account of the department.

Mr CARPENTER: During question time, I asked the minister a question about the compliance and implementation costs of the goods and services tax. The minister provided me with a figure of about \$7.3m. My recollection is that the minister said that was the implementation cost of the GST rather than the ongoing compliance cost. Is that correct?

Mr BARNETT: The figure of \$7.3m was a number derived from the South Australian model, as applied to the school system in Western Australia. I will let the experts answer that question.

Mr CARPENTER: What is the anticipated implementation costs of the GST to the department? Also, what are the ongoing administrative and compliance costs to the department?

Mr McCAFFREY: The budget that the department put together to undertake the training, software development and introduction of the GST into schools was \$900 000. The department expects to spend about \$450 000 in 1999-2000, and the balance will go into the next financial year. There is an element of providing some relief for staff leaving the schools to attend the training, as well as the district officers. I am not sure how the draw down will be affected. In some cases if it is not required, the figure may be lower.

With regard to the ongoing costs, there is not a lot of maintenance outside the normal operational responsibilities of running a school. The department has been fortunate to have software that it has been able to adjust to include a component to calculate the GST automatically. That has greatly reduced our earlier fears about an additional impost on the processing times. The earlier estimate that was provided - which I calculated myself - was based on the South Australian model, which included a great deal of extra clerical relief time. That model was provided as a comparison. The department never imagined it would have to spend that amount of money. The department thought it would have to build some major software; however, it was fortunate that both the systems it has, across the central area and the districts, include a component that has been able to be adjusted for the GST.

Mr CARPENTER: Does the funding of community preschools come under this section or under Educational Services?

Mr BARNETT: They are funded through the Education Department.

Mr CARPENTER: I have had some communication from people who are involved with community preschools, who are concerned that they are in danger of losing their funding because the preschools have been put on the same site as other schools.

I could not find any specific allocation in the *Budget Statements* for community preschools, so I could not tell them they have been allocated X amount of dollars for the next two or three years or whatever. Can the minister give me an indication of the anticipated funding allocation for community preschools this year?

[1.00 pm]

Mr BARNETT: That has been an issue for several years. We have attempted to tackle it on a case-by-case basis. The future for community kindergartens is primarily the kindergarten program. There has been some transition and contracts of service have been entered into to see us through that period. It is difficult to generalise to some extent because there have been different resolutions for different situations.

Mr CARPENTER: I knew that had been the issue in relation to community kindergartens. It may just be that there is an interchange of the names being used here. Are community kindergartens and community preschools one and the same?

Ms BURNS: No. Community kindergartens are a separate group and are funded differently from the kindergartens within the government system. The government supplies, at the moment, a common funding model which comes to an end in June of next year. At the moment we are looking into other methods of continuing funding. The present money that is being spent on community kindergartens is \$730 000 and that excludes teachers' salaries and includes operational costs.

Mr CARPENTER: I am not sure whether I heard you correctly, but I asked whether community kindergartens and community preschools were one in the same thing? I thought that you said no.

Ms BURNS: Community preschools is the term that was previously used but from next year, with the implementation of the Education Act, they will all be community kindergartens. There are some at the moment that are named community preschools and kindergartens. However, they will all be community kindergartens in the future, although some of them may choose to continue to call themselves community preschools.

Mr CARPENTER: Are they providing for four year olds or five year olds, or both?

Ms BURNS: At the moment, we have about 10 or 11 community preschools that are both; in other words, they provide pre-primary education as well as providing for kindergarten teaching, which tends to be for four year olds. In the future they will be entirely community kindergartens.

Mr CARPENTER: Could you provide some documentation which might satisfy some inquiries about those funding levels because I did not see the details in the budget papers? Do I take it from what you are saying that there is no specific intention to reduce the funding for this area in the immediate budget period? Did I hear you correctly in relation to that?

Ms BURNS: As I understand it, yes.

Mr CARPENTER: So they can rest easy?

Ms BURNS: Yes.

Mr CARPENTER: I have a language development centre in my electorate. I think there are four in the metropolitan area. The continuing issue with them is the problem of the excess of demand over supply of places. I know it is a difficult thing to keep up with demand. However, I think there is an understanding now with educators and parents that there is a necessity to ensure that children get off to a good start in their education. There is heightened concern among a lot of parents whose children meet the criteria for entry to the language development centres that they are unable to get access to them, and they fear greatly for their children's educational future because they understand that it will be impossible later to redress the damage that may occur in the early years of education. This question may have to be taken on notice: Could you provide me with the number of children on the waiting lists for the development centres; the expected rate of enrolment increase so that we can see the growth in demand and the growth in anticipated supply; what is the funding for speech pathology services; the cost of the proposed speech and language plan; and where in the budget am I able to locate funding for these centres? They are fairly easy questions. I had questions on notice sometime in the Parliament last year about this and the numbers on the waiting lists were quite significant. I wonder whether those lists have been reduced at all?

Mr BARNETT: There is a modest increase in funding in this budget; I think it is about \$250 000. We are very conscious that the language development centres and the outreach program is very effective. I recognise that increasingly demand is proportionately above the population growth for this area.

Mr CARPENTER: I refer to page 413. I have a question in relation to the Eastern Goldfields High School and the senior college and the funding that has been earmarked for that. Has the \$3.425m allocated for the current financial year been spent? If so, can I be provided with a breakdown of the figure? What amount of the remaining \$8.575m budgeted for next year will be spent at the new campus, and at the existing school?

Mr HARVEY: The budget allocation will be spent at the existing school. The amount for the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School and Curtin in Kalgoorlie is roughly divided into \$3m and \$9m, for a total of \$12m. We will spend money next year on the existing eastern goldfields site and at Curtin, but this year's budget will be spent only on the existing schools.

Mr CARPENTER: Even though I understand the transfer of students is imminent.

Mr HARVEY: It has already occurred.

Mr CARPENTER: It was drawn to my attention that the Kalgoorlie Primary School is the only primary school in Kalgoorlie without a program for four year olds. Parents want to know whether and when they will receive a centre for four year olds.

Ms BURNS: I will look into that. I know that in local area planning, all children are able to access a place in a kindergarten in their local area. I am not aware whether the specific school has a program.

Mr CARPENTER: It is a matter of how big is a local area.

Mr BARNETT: It is an important point, and I probably have a slightly different perspective from the department's. The preprimary program for five year olds is at the schools. The kindergarten program, which is sessional, is often at schools, but can be elsewhere such as a community kindergartens. Many communities choose to retain a community kindergartens

separate from the school site. Anecdotally, many parents like the idea of four year olds being in a specialist off-school centre. Not all schools have a four-year-old kindergarten program at the school, but a program is available for every child.

Mr CARPENTER: Regarding pay negotiations with the State School Teachers Union of WA, it is no secret that the Government is offering a 3 per cent salary rise this year and 3 per cent next year. Is that calculated in the budget figures, and is the 3 per cent embedded in the projections for the year?

Mr BARNETT: Yes.

Mr McCaffrey: The operating statement is a good place to see it. The 3 per cent is roughly \$30m for us in the full year, bearing in mind that the 3 per cent will be a part-year effect if it is paid out in any portion of this financial year. The full 3 per cent is in 2000-01, and provision for another 3 per cent kicks in around March-April. In total, \$37.5m is in our budget already for those increases.

Mr CARPENTER: Does the \$30m embedded in the figures come into calculation when deciding the department has a real 2.8 per cent increase in its budget?

Mr McCaffrey: All costs are calculated as part of the percentage increase.

Mr CARPENTER: I suspect that more than 3 per cent will be paid. However, is that not considered to be part of the inflationary increase?

Mr McCaffrey: It is more a reflection of inflation than part of it.

Mr CARPENTER: Does Mr McCaffrey understand my point? When talking about budget increases in real terms and nominal terms, Education has a 5.8 per cent increase in its budget in nominal terms. However, when taking into account an inflation rate of 3 per cent, 2.8 per cent is left in real terms. Is the anticipated rise in salaries factored in as part of the inflation projection, or is it part of the non-inflationary growth? Therefore, does it impact on real growth?

Mr BARNETT: It cannot be counted twice. The increase is 5.8 per cent or whatever in the current budget. Assuming 3 per cent inflation - although it will probably be a little higher - the allocation increase will be 2.8 per cent. Allowing for a student population growth of 1 per cent, there is a 1.8 per cent per capita increase in funding. It is a very modest real increase in spending this year in contrast to very big increases in the preceding years.

[1.10 pm]

Mr CARPENTER: I have not heard that figure previously.

Mr BARNETT: The growth in enrolment in government schools is about 1 per cent a year. One can measure it as the nominal increase, the real increase or the per capita increase.

Mr CARPENTER: Taking into consideration all the factors, the real increase is 1.5 per cent.

Mr BARNETT: No, it is a real increase of 2.5 per cent. In real per capita terms, it will be a little less.

Mr McCaffrey: The department's budget on salaries is about 75 per cent of the total allocation. That is calculated on current enrolment trends and base salary requirements. This is an increase of 3 per cent as a portion of 75 per cent. That tends to distort the percentages. For the recurrent side to get up to 5.8 per cent, there must be a much greater increase in the budget rather than the other way around.

Mr BARNETT: This year's Education budget is a consolidation after a period of rapid growth. It is more than maintaining real growth in the system, but the increase is modest.

Mr CARPENTER: That is what I was getting at.

Mr BARNETT: That is true.

Division 27: Country High School Hostels Authority, \$4 204 0000 -

Mr Bloffwitch, Chairman.

Mr Barnett, Minister for Education.

Mr J. Hopkins, Director, Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mr P.S. Albert, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mr B. Parkin, Director, Office of Non-government and International Education.

Mrs E.M. Iaschi, Manager, Financial Services, Department of Education Services.

Mr RIEBELING: I refer to the capital works program on page 302 and ask why the college accommodation units project in Karratha seems to have stopped. Is there any intention of rekindling the survey that was conducted about a year or so ago? Are there any moves afoot to revisit the Karratha accommodation proposal?

Mr ALBERT: The survey that was conducted did not establish a need. However, there have been ongoing discussions.

Mr HOPKINS: Before we institute another survey, we will be able to use the Isolated Children's Parents Association and its network to perhaps assist with the survey. There is some concern that the survey did not get into the most remote parts of the Pilbara. It is still our intention to re-survey the Pilbara. We are looking at the options. We have made inquiries with the Department of Land Administration for possible sites that we could utilise in Karratha. We are looking at it on two fronts and have not yet dismissed it entirely. If there is a strong level of interest to sustain a hostel for residential student accommodation, in conjunction with the further development of Karratha Senior High School and its location, we must be mindful of that in our planning.

Mr RIEBELING: I was particularly disappointed by the lack of response to the previous survey, to a point where I think the Onslow response was basically that no-one was interested. The member for Ningaloo would no doubt confirm that basically everyone sends their kids to hostels out of Onslow. The Onslow response is very dubious. There is also the fact that Tom Price was not polled. I understand the reluctance to do that, because the authority did not want to weaken the high school's position, but the people who decide to send their kids away from Tom Price could have been identified and polled to find out whether they want to send their kids to Karratha rather than Perth. Those were two weaker areas in the survey.

[1.20 pm]

Mr BARNETT: As a broad policy direction, I would like to see a substantial upgrading of Karratha Senior High School and the addition of residential accommodation, on the principle that within each of the regional areas there should be a well-equipped, high standard, wide choice of subject school with a residential option. That is a fact in Geraldton, and some investment is going into new residential facilities in Geraldton. I guess that survey was disappointing, but I do not think we should lose sight of that. As the member pointed out, when we start to talk about these things, there is always a danger that we will unsettle the other schools in the area. A fair bit of sensitivity surrounds the issue. However, I believe that will be achieved in due course and there will be that development in Karratha.

Mr CARPENTER: I take it that the same factors will apply in Kununurra, because there has been speculation there for some time, or proposals coming and going, about the provision of hostel accommodation, particularly for Aboriginal students.

Mr BARNETT: Yes.

Mr CARPENTER: Then there was consternation from Wyndham, for example, about what it might mean for its school. I presume there is no foreseeable intent to construct hostel accommodation there either.

Mr BARNETT: At Kununurra, allocations had been made for a hostel. I think the problems on the site, somewhat ironically, relate to native title. Kununurra is still an option, as is Carnarvon. Perhaps Mr Hopkins might comment on that. We have been working very hard to get a hostel at Kununurra. I am particularly keen because it should be seen as a community benefit out of the Ord stage two development.

Mr HOPKINS: The go-ahead at Kununurra is awaiting native title negotiation and settlement. Crown reserve land has been identified for the site, but it is subject to native title negotiations. There was initial agreement, but there has been a revision of the view since the Miriung-Gajerrong native title negotiations have been entered into. We are now awaiting the final outcome of that native title review.

Mr CARPENTER: From which court has the revision emanated?

Mr HOPKINS: I think it is now in the High Court of Australia.

Mr CARPENTER: No. Did Mr Hopkins say that there was some preliminary agreement but there has been a subsequent revision of the position?

Mr HOPKINS: Yes. When we were looking at the site and the need there, we had strong support from the Aboriginal community and from the local head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission council. He and his group included people who were part of the Miriung-Gajerrong group, who were supportive of the site that had been identified and of the construction of the hostel. However, there has been some delay. As those native title negotiations have gone on, there was a win to the Miriung-Gajerrong which caused a review of their position, I suspect, and we now have to await the outcome.

Mr BARNETT: The Country High School Hostels Authority reached agreement with Aboriginal Hostels Ltd on the joint project. A site was identified. The clearing of that site for construction has become caught up in native title, where there are disagreements between different members and groups within the Aboriginal community in the area. It is not a lack of commitment, as I understand, between any of the organisations looking at funding the hostel; it has simply been a question of getting access to the site to build it. That is disappointing and, as I said, sadly it is ironic.

Mr RIEBELING: The native title claimants are not releasing that part of the land.

Mr BARNETT: That is right. There are disputes among them about who has the right to release it and the like.

Mr RIEBELING: Have approaches been made?

Mr BARNETT: Yes. This has been going on for at least a couple of years. The hostels authority negotiated the arrangement with Aboriginal Hostels probably 18 months ago, and the only thing that has held it up has been the disputes. Everyone has agreed on the site. Unfortunately, that is part of the story of native title. Everyone agrees but nothing happens.

Division 28: Curriculum Council, \$8 819 000 -

Mr Bloffwitch, Chairman.

Mr Barnett, Minister for Education.

Mr B. Parkin, Director, Office of Non-government and International Education, Department of Education Services.

Mr P.S. Albert, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Department of Education Services and Curriculum Council.

Mr J. Hopkins, Director, Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mrs E.M. Iaschi, Manager, Financial Services, Department of Education Services.

Mr BARNETT: We are in the process of amalgamating the Department of Education Services to oversee the Curriculum Council, the Country High School Hostels Authority, the Office of Non-government and International Education and higher education. This will mean that the Education Department will run the schools, the training agency will be responsible for the TAFE colleges and the Department of Education Services will take on many of the policy and intersecting roles. The whole area of education and training will be reduced to just three agencies and three chief executive officers.

Mr CARPENTER: That will be much better. This question is not specifically related to the budget allocations. The big issue for the Curriculum Council is its review of curriculum. I think it is imperative that changes are made to the way the curriculum is assessed and provided in post-compulsory schooling. Could you provide an idea of the stage the council is at with this process and the time line for change?

Mr ALBERT: The Curriculum Council put out a discussion paper last year about various options for years 11 and 12. Significant public debate on that has followed. The submissions closed in April, although we allowed people to put forward further submissions beyond that date. The main thrust of the submissions is that people would like more detail about the proposed direction. In October, the council will release a position paper which will specifically outline the direction it feels should be taken with years 11 and 12. That paper will be open for consultation for the rest of fourth term and for first term next year. The council aims to report back to the minister in April 2001. Nobody disputes the need for change, although there has been intense debate about the pace of change and the way certain aspects of the changes should be made. The council has a degree of confidence that it took the right step by commencing the review when it did.

Mr CARPENTER: I probably should have raised this matter in the earlier division. Part of the studies the council is doing are about what subjects should be provided as options in post-compulsory years, how valuable they are to students and the pathways that open up as a result. As the Curriculum Council considers the provision of vocational training subjects, is it undertaking some parallel analysis of the funding ramifications? Is the council looking only at the desirability of providing a broader range of subjects and the way they will be assessed? If a far greater range of vocational subjects were provided, they would be assessed in such a way that would allow students to go on to tertiary education. I imagine that providing those subjects so that they meet the aspirations that the council is trying to engender in people would have a significant cost component. Has any other analysis been undertaken?

[1.30 pm]

Mr BARNETT: I will ask Paul to comment on how conscious the people of the council have been about that. In principle, they should first look at it from an educational and career opportunity point of view. That is their proper role. Undoubtedly, funding implications will arise, but that should not compromise best education. It is a logical way of proceeding.

The member for Willagee commented about the range and number of vocational programs. The number may reduce. I have a personal view that although a growth in vocational education has been fantastic, there is a high level of variability. It might have blown out too quickly and there is an argument for having a wide choice, while having a more standardised module to ensure the quality is consistently high.

The Education Department and post-compulsory review are conscious of ensuring we do not lose control of vocational education. There is great enthusiasm for it and it has almost grown beyond the planning of it.

Mr ALBERT: As the minister said, the best way forward is to consider what is best educationally and then to consider what that means in terms of resources. The October paper we propose to prepare will indicate the resources that may be involved, and perhaps a time frame for when it might be implemented. With the resources issue, not just the money aspect, it is a matter of the capacity of the schools and teachers to adopt whatever changes are recommended. The general thrust of the feedback on the number of courses is along the lines the minister suggested; that is, people want a reduction in the number of courses but within the framework for courses, they want allowance for a number of options rather than the other way around, as occurs today. Too many different subjects and courses are available today.

Dr TURNBULL: I refer to significant issues and trends at page 336 of the *Budget Statements*, where reference is made to the emergence of vocational education in schools. Apart from educational values, will the discussion paper cover the capacity of TAFE to deliver those educational outcomes? It is important to utilise TAFE in that way. In areas in which TAFE does not exist, can teledelivery capacity for some of the vocational training be provided under the actual TAFE models rather than under the accreditation certificates being given in schools at present?

Mr BARNETT: It is fair to say that the relationship between TAFE and vocational education in schools is not settled as

it should be. There is also now a proliferation of private providers, again, of variable quality. Many private providers would argue that TAFE should leave some areas. A few policy issues are yet to be resolved in that area.

Dr TURNBULL: There certainly is. In Collie, the relationship with TAFE is extremely good. Those accreditation models through the TAFE system are valuable.

[1.30 pm]

Mr ALBERT: The Department of Training and Employment are intimately involved in the review because vocational programs in schools are crucial to the way the system will develop in the future. As the minister indicated, a range of policy issues must be dealt with. We have a vocational schools working group, which involves representatives from all the schools, employers and the TAFE system, to work through some of those issues. The TAFE issues are complex, and part of the problem is that a variety of arrangements exist in other States. Every time we have examined a TAFE course in another State, a different arrangement has created a problem here. Part of the review's aim is to help resolve those issues.

Dr TURNBULL: If a representative came from a country area to be part of the vocational schools working group, would the school be compensated for allowing that person to be a member of that group? Are there people from the south west or the north west on the vocational schools working group?

Mr ALBERT: The vocational schools working group comprises all the key people from the various head offices. We have consensus and district meetings which are run in the country and which specifically focus on vocational education. We also run a similar session over Westlink to remote communities, whereby we give people an opportunity to have an input. There is good interaction between what is going on in rural areas and what is happening in the centre.

Dr TURNBULL: My next question relates to the second dot point under the significant issues and trends, which refers to a five-year phasing-in period. Will that five years be a discrete time or will more time be allowed for that phasing in? The next dot point states that the schools require significant assistance in the form of curriculum support materials. How extensively will that be covered, because some schools feel that they are not getting much support with the materials and the professional development advice?

Mr ALBERT: The five-year period was initially established by the council because it was felt that the changes were so significant that a substantial period would be required. Normally, with curriculum change we talk about two and a half years. In this case the council has decided to make it five years. Whether the council will reconsider the date, in which case it must go back to the minister for approval, will depend on how schools are going with implementation. Support documentation is a real problem because not many people are expert in undertaking an outcomes approach to classroom teaching. Outcomes education is not new; good teachers have generally done that anyway. However, we have had to find those good teachers and document what they have been doing. The initial stage in support documentation has been slow. However, all the preliminary support documents for the curriculum framework have now gone out and we are in the second stage.

Dr TURNBULL: Taking into account that slow time in starting it, would there be any point in extending the time if necessary?

Mr ALBERT: The council's preferred position is to wait and see. The council is very conscious that some schools have moved quickly while other schools have struggled. At the moment the council intends to just wait and see, and if it must, it will extend the time frame.

Dr TURNBULL: Quite a lot of teachers feel that the extra load has been quite marked, especially with the lack of support material. As you say, now that more support material is coming, it might help to implement it more quickly. One must be very careful about how many people are allowed to go to these professional development days, particularly those from country areas. This does have an influence on how quickly it can spread through the school.

Mr CARPENTER: Taking up the point made by the member for Collie, there is a general view among teachers in the country that they are under-resourced when trying to come to grips with implementation of the curriculum framework. The professional development budget is \$1.5m. Is complementary professional development funding specifically for this task other than in the main Education Department budget? The member for Collie would probably agree that, as members of Parliament, we hear teachers say they need much more help, not necessarily for an extension of the time line but more help and resources to implement the changes.

Mr BARNETT: The Curriculum Council has its specific professional development allocation but a fair bit of the Education Department's allocation also goes on curriculum and, of course, the schools have a discretionary component. This issue probably should have been raised in the last division. However, the Education Department is now trialling laptops for teachers through many of the new information systems that have been put into schools. Although most people, including me, look forward to using them as administration systems, they equally have a component which relates to the curriculum, outcome statements and the like. I believe teachers will find it will get progressively easier but I recognise that it is a workload.

Mr ALBERT: It is a workload situation and teachers are looking for much more support. It is heartening from the Curriculum Council's perspective because one of the earlier problems was with people not recognising the significance of the changes and thinking initially that it would be easy to do.

Mr CARPENTER: Which people?

Mr ALBERT: Some teachers and administrators. Now that teachers have started to grapple with the problem, they realise there is a lot more in the change than they at first thought.

Mr CARPENTER: I have not met any who thought it was easy. I have met many teachers who thought there was a huge workload involved, especially of reporting and so on. I have not met any who think that workload is easing up.

Mr BARNETT: I am sure the member would agree that teachers, to their credit, have embraced the new curriculum to an extraordinary degree. I am thrilled by the way they have taken it on.

Dr TURNBULL: Do the schools have to pay for the material produced by the Curriculum Council?

Mr ALBERT: No.

Dr TURNBULL: I know laptops are being provided to remote teachers; however, is consideration being given to supplying them to rural teachers, especially to assist in accessing information?

Mr BARNETT: That has been examined. We started off with \$1.5m which bought 250 laptops. That will be progressively extended throughout the education system. Obviously, the priority is in non-metropolitan areas where the benefits are greater.

Division 29: Education Services, \$165 391 000 -

Mr Bloffwitch, Chairman.

Mr Barnett, Minister for Education.

Mr B. Parkin, Director, Office of Non-Government and International Education.

Mrs E.M. Iaschi, Manager, Financial Services.

Mr CARPENTER: I refer in this division to the change in allocation of per capita grants to non-government schools. Earlier, I calculated a 13 per cent increase in per capita grants. Bearing in mind that the transfer of funds from the government sector in Education, particularly from the Federal Government to the non-government sector, is already a matter of controversy, how did the minister arrive at the increase in the allocation and how is it justified?

Mr BARNETT: In broad terms it is driven by two factors: Firstly, enrolment growth is stronger in non-government schools compared with government schools. Growth in non-government schools is increasing by about 3 per cent; in government schools it is growing by about 1 per cent. Our non-government sector is relatively smaller than those in the other Australian States, so we expect it will probably level off at some point. The other factor that drives it is that the Government made a policy commitment prior to the last election to increase funding for students in non-government schools to a level of 25 per cent of the cost of educating a child in a government school; and that policy commitment, plus strong enrolment growth, has given rise to a significant increase in total funding. We have now achieved that 25 per cent target, so we will not have similar growth figures in future years, other than to the extent to which it is driven by enrolment.

Mr ALBERT: Another factor is the move to full sessions of kindergarten funding and full-time preschool funding.

Mr CARPENTER: I understand the Government made a policy commitment before the last election, but at the same time there has been a greater transfer of federal funds to the non-government sector. There is a widely-held view by teachers and parents of children in the government sector that funding for their schools is suffering as a result. It would be desirable if funding to the government sector were increased by the same proportion as funding to the non-government sector. I note that New South Wales and Queensland have been adjusting their allocations to non-government schools to counteract the additional funding that the Federal Government has been providing to those schools in order to ensure that non-government schools do not get significantly more funding. An issue that needs to be addressed in Western Australia very quickly is the perception that government school funding levels are not keeping pace with the increase in funding to non-government schools and that educational standards are declining as a result.

Mr BARNETT: In broad terms, for non-government schools as a whole the Federal Government funds about 37 per cent and the State funds about 18 per cent, and the remaining 50 per cent is funded by parents. It is true that the Federal Government has increased funding for the non-government school sector. The State has honoured its policy commitment to achieve 25 per cent, and that is where we will stay. We do not intend to go beyond that, because that is a fair figure. Often when people think of non-government schools they think of the so-called elite non-government schools, but of course the majority of students are in fairly typical non-government schools, and that includes the large number of students in the Catholic education system. Many of those schools are not particularly well resourced and are well below the standard of government schools. This is a philosophical debate that goes back for decades. I believe the current state government policy of funding to 25 per cent is right.

Mr PARKIN: The relative percentages between commonwealth and state funding vary, but it is the average figure to which the minister referred. The proportion of commonwealth and state funding in the Catholic system is higher, because that system is regarded as being in greater need.

Mr RIEBELING: What is the federal contribution?

Mr BARNETT: It is 37 per cent, across the whole non-government sector, of the total cost.

Mr CARPENTER: To what does the 25 per cent refer?

Mr BARNETT: The State Government set a policy prior to the last election that we would provide per capita grants to non-government schools to the value of 25 per cent of the cost of educating a child in a government school. That then varies according to the category of the non-government school, so we give proportionately more to a low income Catholic school than we do to Hale College or St Mary's Anglican Girls School, but on average it is 25 per cent across the system.

[1.50 pm]

Mr PARKIN: That target of 25 per cent means that, on an annual basis, the amount of money that goes to each school is indexed according to the change in the cost of government school education. Although the department is striving to achieve the 25 per cent target, on an annual basis, that accounts for only part of the 13 per cent increase. Part of the 13 per cent which is calculated includes provision for the enrolment growth, but it also takes account of another approximately four per cent for movement in the cost of government school education, to which the non-government grants are tied in order to achieve the overall 25 per cent target.

Mr RIEBELING: The 37 per cent is -

Mr PARKIN: That is a commonwealth figure.

Mr RIEBELING: What is that a figure of?

Mr PARKIN: That is a simple proportionate share of the revenue that a typical non-government school gets. It receives that amount of money from the Commonwealth Government.

Mr RIEBELING: I understand that. What does that 37 per cent figure represent?

Mr BARNETT: It is 37 per cent of the total cost of running the school. That is how it works out. The department does not allocate it on that basis, but that is what it is equal to. It is fair to say that public funding gets close to 100 per cent of the cost of running some non-government schools. The Catholic schools in the Kimberley would fit that category. The Catholic school system runs the schools in the Kimberley, and the state government school system could be accused of not running schools in that area. Essentially it is a Catholic school system which is publicly funded.

Mr CARPENTER: What was the base figure to reach the figure of 25 per cent? What was the percentage of funding four or five years ago?

Mr ALBERT: It was always disputed. A department committee agreed that the figure was about 22 per cent.

Mr BARNETT: It was 22 per cent from memory.

Mr CARPENTER: I will ask a question about the low-interest, or is it no-interest loan scheme. There is a concern among some people in the non-government sector that the availability of those funds is bottlenecked. What is the situation concerning the flow of those funds? Is the reason for the bottleneck of those funds a greater increase in demand over previous years, or is there another reason for it?

Mr BARNETT: It is a very good scheme, and it is very popular. The demands have exceeded the allocations. The Government has progressively increased the funding for it, but the demand has run ahead of that.

Mr ALBERT: It is a popular scheme. Western Australia is the only State which has such a scheme. Other States look at it with some envy. People will look to the scheme to obtain a loan because the interest rate is subsidised at a heavy rate; the demand for money has therefore risen. The department is in the process of introducing new procedures to make sure that people understand that when people apply for the loan, they will not automatically qualify for it. There has been a sense of expectation of approval which has been built up among some schools.

Mr CARPENTER: I understand that some schools have been given an agreement that they would be able to access the loans and have then gone ahead and started a project and borrowed other funds while they were waiting the arrival of their low-interest loan funds. What has then happened is that their funds during that waiting period have blown out.

Mr BARNETT: Some measures have been taken to ensure that does not happen in the future. When schools put in their applications and have met the criteria - I suspect that they have been advised that they have met the criteria - they have assumed that means that the funds are available, which has not always been the case. More schools have qualified under the criteria than the available funding. The department is very careful to make that distinction to the schools.

Mr CARPENTER: Following on from the question I asked in the earlier division about scholarships and provision of inducements, a reference was made to some of the scholarships being funded through the education services. What are those funding arrangements? Who are the recipients? Who are the beneficiaries? How many beneficiaries are there? What are the total funding allocations?

Mr ALBERT: The Department of Education Services provides HECS scholarships; in other words, the HECS fees are paid. The Education Department has its own scholarships for its own workers. Ours are available to Education Department staff, as well as people working outside the Education Department. They are available for Aboriginal aide workers. The only criterion they have to meet is university entrance requirements. For the year 2000 we will offer 18 Aboriginal scholarships along those lines. That is the relationship. The Education Department has 10 scholarships specifically for its own staff; however the ones through DES are related to the payment of HECS fees, and people from the Education Department are eligible to apply.

Mr CARPENTER: These are scholarships available for indigenous people already working in the system in order to upgrade their skills so that they can become teachers?

Mr ALBERT: Yes, to become qualified teachers.

Mr CARPENTER: There will be 18 places?

Mr ALBERT: Yes, 18 for indigenous people.

Mr CARPENTER: What will the value of those scholarships be? I do not know what the HECS fees cost.

Mr ALBERT: The HECS fees vary according to each university but it can range between \$1 200 and \$1 500. From memory I think we budgeted for \$1 500 per semester.

Mr CARPENTER: Are there a sufficient number of people to take up the offer of those places?

Mr ALBERT: Yes. They have all been taken up.

Mr PARKIN: Twenty-nine Aboriginal teaching scholarships have been awarded in the past three years, and that has met the demand for places from suitably interested and qualified Aboriginal people.

Mr CARPENTER: Why is this category funded through the Department of Education Services and the other category through the Education Department?

Mr BARNETT: It is available to anyone. We do not distinguish between people working in government or non-government schools. To some extent, the scheme started off in the Department of Education Services, and because the Education Department had staffing problems in country areas it picked up some of the components. I was conscious that we were getting several schemes and that is why we have presented them jointly in a common brochure.

Mr ALBERT: We do work closely with the Education Department on the allocation of the scholarships as well.

Mr CARPENTER: Am I to take it from the fact that they are a Department of Education Services scholarship, even though they are available to everybody, that a significant component is people who work in non-government schools?

Mr ALBERT: No. I think a significant component is actually from the government school system, but we are very conscious that the Catholic system makes a substantial teaching effort in the Kimberley, so that is why it is a cross sector scheme.

The CHAIRMAN: Edith Cowan University puts through about 10 students every two years in Geraldton. They have all been successful. Ten of them have got through. The first year brings them up to a level where they can cope with the study. The scheme works very well.

Mr CARPENTER: I would like to ask a question that only tangentially relates to a budget allocation. With state government funding for non-government schools and the level of accountability that is required for performance in non-government schools as a contingency of that funding, an issue has been brought to my attention in relation to a specific school in the northern suburbs. I will not name it because a matter from that school is currently before the courts. What capacity is there for the department to overview the activities in a school when difficulties are brought to the attention of the minister or the department, and then act upon complaints or concerns about those issues?

Mr BARNETT: The department has a capacity to have people visit and inspect a school. The ultimate penalty is that the department can refuse or revoke a school's registration which means that the school can no longer qualify for either state or commonwealth funding. The ultimate power of sanction is quite strong.

Mr ALBERT: That is right. The department can do what is called a registration visit and all aspects of the school can be examined. Recommendation can then be made to the minister as to what should happen.

Mr BARNETT: The member might recall last year or the year before the case in which a non-government Greek school became very difficult. Differences arose among the Greek community. I, as minister, and the Department of Education Services became involved as it was providing low interest loan and grants, probably to a greater degree than one would want to be involved. It was like a trap. One would not want to see that replicated. Non-government schools get into trouble for whatever reason and, obviously, the member for Willagee has another example in mind.

Committee adjourned at 2.00 pm
