

YEAR 7s — HIGH SCHOOL

Motion

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [10.03 am] — without notice: I move —

That this Council calls on the government to, as a matter of urgency, develop, adequately fund and implement a transparent and comprehensive plan to address all issues affecting the year 7 transition to high schools, and in particular to make allowance for the needs and concerns of small rural and regional communities.

I want to spend some time talking to members about this matter today. This is clearly a very important issue in the Agricultural Region. In my travels around the region over the last several years at all kinds of fora this matter is raised with me. From agriculture crisis meetings, where people invariably come up to me and express a view on their concerns about this issue, to smaller town hall meetings and in general constituent inquiries coming through my office now it is a recurrent theme, and I believe it fit to be brought to the house's attention.

The year 7 transition is something that may or may not be a good move for the education of year 7 students in Western Australia. We will wait and see after it has been implemented, but I find that it is having a significant impact in areas where the decision has not generally been thought through by those driving the decision. There are very many small schools in my electorate—schools of fewer than 100 children and 50 children—that may have only two classrooms and two very dedicated teachers taking up the extraordinarily difficult task of teaching multi-age classes. Some of these small schools rely on having their year 7s in the school. They are the leadership of the school and there is often only one, two or three of them. The schools rely on these children, obviously, for the extra numbers and, as we all know, schools are funded by the numbers. There are possible examples of schools that may lose resources and teachers as a result of losing the year 7s to high school. I am not arguing that taking year 7s to high school is a bad thing. I am arguing that it will have a big impact on some of the small schools in my electorate. Apart from the schools losing these students, there is also the education of the students, which needs to be put first and foremost. There are students in these schools who will have to hop onto a bus and travel for an extraordinarily long distance, some for up to 100 kilometres a day, to attend the nearest high school.

The PRESIDENT: Order! If members want to conduct a conversation, they should do it outside the chamber. If members are in the chamber and there is a debate on, they should be paying attention to it.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, Mr President.

Students will have to sit on these buses for an extraordinary long period of time to travel to the nearest high school. When they get to the high school, the number of children there may be fewer than 10. At that school there may not be a teacher as such, only a supervisor, and the children have to learn through the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education. I would argue that such children not only have to put in two, three or four hours a day on the school bus, but also receive a lesser form of education at a SIDE high school where there is no teaching staff or no more than a supervisor while they do their lessons.

I would argue that these children would be just as well off to stay in the small schools of 50 or 60 students that they have always attended, and that they would be better there because the teachers are quite up to teaching year 7 students. The teachers can adapt, because they teach multiple grades in their class anyway, and they can teach the national curriculum, which the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority tells us can be taught in existing schools, with some training and tooling up of schools required. However, I think that is a relatively minor matter when we are talking about it costing more than \$200 million across the state to tool up schools to year 7.

Most of the feedback I get on this matter is from the parents of these students. This is something very close to my heart because, as members would have heard, I have had to make that very difficult decision to send students away, and I sent them away in year 8. As members would know, every student is different. I have two students. I would argue that my elder child was quite up for going away in year 7; I think the experience would have been good for her had it been offered at that time. I do not think we would have sent her, but she is one who probably would have benefited from year 7, being the only girl in her class and in need of some broader girl-to-girl relationship, if you like, at the school.

She was quite ready to go. My son, on the other hand, was the total opposite. He was a very small boy at that age and he struggled in year 8. He almost never made it in year 8.

Hon Col Holt: Why didn't you send him to the local high school?

Hon DARREN WEST: I chose to send him away to a boarding school because I thought it was best for him. I am glad the honourable member has raised that, because that is what this discussion is all about—choice. As a parent, where I choose to educate my children is my decision. That is my choice. The honourable member or

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

anyone else in this place does not have the right to make that choice for me, but that is what is happening here. The parents of Beacon, which is a community in which I have spent a lot of time, are telling me that they are losing their right of choice to send their children to the local Beacon school in year 7. They are being told that they cannot do that. They have to keep them home, send them to Mukinbudin—85 kilometres away—to learn through Schools of Isolated and Distance Education, or send them to a school in Perth. One family has told me that it cannot afford to send their kids away for any longer. They have chosen to send their kids to school. They have budgeted that they will be away for five years at high school, or three if they leave in year 10 and do something else vocationally. We are throwing in an extra year. They have four boys. It is about \$40 000 a year. I am sure members can do the maths on that. An extra year for each child means they will have to find an extra \$160 000. They are telling me that times are tough and they will have to make some hard decisions. They cannot afford to do that even if they think their children are ready to go in year 7. A lot of factors are at play. I am asking that this choice be reinstated to those parents. As Hon Col Holt pointed out, it is very easy for people to say, “Why don’t you do this? Why don’t you do that? You should do this. You should do that.” When you have children, it is your choice. I am all about choice. I am not having a go at the year 7 transition or its impact in metropolitan areas and larger regional centres. I think that can all be managed. If that is the path that Parliament wants to go down, I respect that. However, there are clearly more discussions to be had about small schools in my electorate.

I have received lots of correspondence on this issue and some of it is quite heart-wrenching. We can tell that there is a high level of grief in this. I am looking at the people side of this. I am looking at how parents and students can get the best combination of the systems to benefit those kids. Members on the other side point out to me that we will create a two-tiered system and kids will be left behind if we do not go through with the year 7 transition. I do not agree with that; I am not proposing a two-tiered system. Even if the education at those small country primary schools was of an inferior quality, we should still throw that choice back to the parent. If the government were to say to parents that they have the choice of keeping their year 7 student at home, and made them aware that therefore they may not get the educational opportunities they will get in a boarding school or a larger centre, or sending them away and not having them at home, I guarantee members that parents would make that decision in the best interests of their children. Once again, it is not up to us to tell parents who live in Beacon where they should send their children. It is up to us to provide opportunities for the kids in Beacon that suit their needs just like what is offered in the rest of the state.

I will read members an extract of a letter that I received from a very aggrieved mother with twin boys. Her only children are twin boys who happen to be in year 5 and who will be the first students under this proposed transition. I will quote directly from the letter, if I may —

Dear Minister’s and Shadow Minister’s,

The reason I am writing you today is to ask for your strong support on behalf of over 4000 people who signed a petition which was tabled in Parliament House —

By me in regard to the transition —

This petition is only opposed to the Compulsory Transition of ‘many Regional Country Kids’ forced to boarding school to begin year 7. We are petitioning against this Policy because it takes away our parental choice and right to have our kids, as young as 11 and a half years old —

I understand that is in fact 11 years and eight months, but we will stick to the letter —

educated in our fantastic regional schools at year 7 ... and in our communities,

We are not petitioning to disrupt the choices of parents in urban WA as we do understand that urban families have many viable choices; however many regional families will only have 3 viable choices:

- Send your child to boarding school for year 7 where there is a secondary school
- Split the parents and one parent relocate to where there is a secondary school or;
- The whole family relocate to where there is a secondary school

This letter has opened up another possible scenario in which mum will move down to Perth to be with the kids because in year 7 the feeling is that they may not be able to cope with boarding school. Having been to boarding school as an 11-year-old, I can tell members firsthand that it is not an easy place to be. It is a foreign environment to these children, especially those who go from a school of 70 kids to a school of 1 000 kids with 200 boarders. Whether we like to believe it or not, there is a pecking order in these schools. It is a tough environment for these kids. It builds character and makes them stronger, but I am saying that we should do that the next year when they are older and able to look after themselves a bit more.

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

If this happens and we begin to fragment these families, everybody over there will know that this is the beginning of the end for these communities. If the wives and children move to Perth, dad will come down as well. We need more people in our rural communities, not fewer. In many places we are under-utilising the infrastructure in rural communities. Why would we create a transition that would exacerbate this? Why are we not looking at offering viable choices to get people to stay? Why do we not attract and retain people in our country towns? That is what this is about. I will go on with a few more quotes from the letter. I am not reading the whole letter; I am just picking extracts —

The State Govt believes that this transition is in the best interests of the State, they also believe that this transition is in the best interest of our child's education. This Govt will not see what our families and communities of regional WA can see and that is our kids will only be 11 and a half years —

I will again correct it to 11 years and eight months —

old when expected to leave home for boarding school on such a policy. They cannot see that it's not about education, it's about families.

What I am proposing comes down to family and choice. I do not know why anyone would argue against what is best for families, what is best for choice and what is best for kids' education. The writer has also sent me a précis, if you like, of her situation, which I would like to share with members —

My name is Jean Cashmore, I am married to Tim and we have two 10 year old boys who are 4th Generation Farmers. We live approximately 350km north east of Perth in a regional Wheatbelt town called Beacon. Our population is approximately 630 people and we are mainly a pastoral and cropping town.

Beacon also has wonderful nature reserves, several wildlife species and seasonal wildflower displays which we proudly promote for tourism, We are a very self sufficient town with wonderful medical & emergency services, sporting clubs, clubs & organisations, businesses & education.

Anyone who has been to Beacon will be able to back up the writer on that; it is a fantastic little vibrant wheatbelt community —

The main objective in our town is to keep our community and services forever viable and, in order to do so it is important to encourage people into our community. A strong way to do this is through providing excellent education in our regional school.

Education in our school is paramount to the success of raising a healthy family in Beacon, and really in any regional community. Our school offers families the ability to bring the community together socially. Our school offers families the ability to raise their children in a safe and healthy environment. Our school offers families an attraction into our community.

Unfortunately the education in our school, like neighbouring regional schools, has been jeopardised by the State Govt's Policy for the Compulsory Transition of Year 7 students to Secondary School. For my family this decision means that my boys final year at Beacon Primary School will be Year 6, they will be 11 and a half years old and expected to begin boarding school education, from Year 7 level, away from home.

This Policy will not only deeply affect my family emotionally and mentally, but to add insult it will also affect us financially. To send our twin boys to secondary boarding school a year earlier at Year 7 will cost my family at least \$60,872 after rebates, if applicable.

The financial cost is as follows:

Tuition \$12778
Boarding \$18873
Fees \$ 125
Book Hire \$ 315
Music \$ 1845
Other \$ 3500
Less Rebate \$ 7000
Total a child \$30,436

In the case of the Cashmores, we can multiply that by two. Once again, that reinforces my point that this is a serious financial burden on our regional communities. It has been pointed out, "Why don't you do this? Why don't you do that?" There are other options, but these are the only viable options that these parents are prepared to consider if they cannot keep their children in Beacon Primary School for year 7. I have spoken to Mrs

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

Cashmore since receiving this letter, and she tells me that the Beacon community is seriously considering hiring a teacher, homeschooling their students at someone's house, and paying the teacher out of their own pockets. They ask, "Why should we have to consider this when we had a perfectly good primary school in our town and a teacher there who is more than capable of teaching the national curriculum to our children? Why should we have to do this?" Can any members tell me how that is better for the five students in the Beacon community?

Mrs Cashmore's letter continues —

In 2011 the Federal Govt gave each Primary School in regional areas a \$980K building grant. Beacon used this grant to build a new Resource Building. Therefore I would rather spend money that is expected to be used for boarding away at year 7, on upgrading our Resource Building with resources and improved teaching in our regional school to accommodate to changes required by the State Govt and Department of Education.

That is an offer by the community to say, "Look, we've got this new resource centre; let's throw a few dollars at that and we can chip in. Instead of paying \$30 000 per student, we're happy to provide some in-kind and financial help to tool up this resource centre and the school so that we can continue teaching year 7 to the standard of the national curriculum."

The final paragraph of the letter is very pertinent. It reads —

I believe that any child under 13 is definitely too young to be forced into boarding away from home. Our family should not be punished by the State Govt's 'Compulsory' Policy to remove our kids from regional schools at Year 7. I would prefer my boys to remain in our beautiful school to be taught at Year 7 level. Secondary regional kids should be allowed to remain learning in their regional schools. The Compulsory Transition of Year 7's to secondary School is a really bad Policy. The State Govt did not consult me about this policy. They want my kids removed from their life, —

We could argue about that, but that is the writer's belief —

their school, their community, and their families because the State Govt believes it's in the best interests of my children.

I have received a lot of heartfelt, passionate letters, some from parents with children who are already at boarding school and who have already been through the difficulty of sending a child away in year 8, as I have. I can tell members that it is a very, very gut-wrenching feeling to drive down the driveway of the boarding house at Iona Presentation College, having just dropped one's eldest child off in year 8. I cannot imagine how it would be to drop a child off in year 7. This policy is going to affect our small schools emotionally and financially. It is going to be difficult for families and have a psychological effect on the men who are left on the farms on their own if the women decide to come to Perth.

I think there are some adaptations that can be made to this transition to accommodate the needs of these small rural communities. As I have pointed out before in this place, it is about working together to get the best outcome for the people that we represent, and we should never forget who employs us: it is the people that we represent. I represent the Agricultural Region, and I cannot understand why any member, especially those who represent the Agricultural Region with larger margins than I do, would not get behind the electors of the Agricultural Region to see if we can sit down and work out a commonsense compromise on the year 7 transition that would suit everybody. It is possible to do; it is just a matter of whether we have the will to do it. I will work on this with anyone who would like to, and put my ideas forward. I would like all members to come out to Beacon one day and have a chat to the community there, and hear firsthand what this will mean for them, and they are not the only ones.

I think I have made my point; I thank members.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Minister for Education) [10.24 am]: I thank the honourable member for bringing this motion to the chamber. It is a very pertinent motion; unfortunately, we do not have as much time as I would prefer to debate it. I would like to have a motion on notice at some stage to discuss this more thoroughly.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry; I just do not have time. I am inviting members to do that.

I would like to make some general comments with regard to the policy framework and the strategies that are in place to ensure that the process of moving into a six-by-six years educational framework is as seamless as possible; we are doing that.

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

I will not address all of the honourable member's issues, because they are primarily around issues in the regions, particularly around Beacon and in that agricultural region. I am very cognisant of concerns about that area, and the honourable member might be interested to know that I will be visiting that area over the winter break. What I would like —

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Look, I do not have time; I am sorry.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We have just had 20 minutes without a substantial interjection; I think the rules apply to everybody, and anybody on their feet is entitled to be heard in relative silence.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Mr President. Normally I do not mind interjections, but in this instance I would like to get through this detail because it is a very significant issue.

Any change in education is always going to be an emotive issue. When we moved to make years 11 and 12 compulsory, it was a very emotive issue, and when we moved to increase the school leaving age, it was a very emotive issue that had both positive and negative impacts on a raft of different schools and students across the state. On each and every occasion we tried to make the process as seamless as possible, but there will always be issues that arise and we need to deal with them. The fundamental reason we moved year 7 into the secondary level of education, so that we had six-by-six years of education, was to ensure that students in year 7 had the best possible educational facilities and opportunities. We chose 2015 for the reason that we will move into the national curriculum in that year. The year 8 level of education is very attuned to the specialist level of education, particularly in the four core areas of English, science, maths and history. It is very important that those students have that specific, specialist attention at the secondary level of education.

For example, last Friday I went to Ballajura Community College to launch the Switch program there. To see year 7 students in a specialist area of science at that college, with all the available facilities, was extraordinary. I talked to those students and asked them whether they enjoyed being at Ballajura, and they said they loved it and did not want to move back to the primary school level of education. That is a fundamental reason for that change. Yes, the students are six months older as a result of the change to the school leaving age, but I emphasise that that was not the primary reason for making the change. The primary reason for making the change was to ensure that students at that level of education receive the best possible education.

The decision was made after an enormous amount of consultation throughout the community; I will talk about that when I finish on this point. We also had to ensure that it was as seamless a process as possible, cognisant of the fact that, as I said earlier, there will be issues that we will need to address. First and foremost, we had to ensure that there was sufficient infrastructure across the state—not just in the regions, but across the state. Therefore, the government allocated \$265 million, and, as a direct result of that, 29 secondary schools throughout Western Australia will have massive or significant upgrades in their capacity to deal with an increasing student population.

Building Management and Works has assured us that all of that capital infrastructure will be on time and will be ready for 2015 to ensure that when students make the transition to secondary school, they will have terrific facilities and will be provided with the specialist education they so richly deserve. We also had to make sure that we had sufficient teaching capacity, so we allocated \$22.4 million for the Switch program, which I launched last Friday, as I said, at Ballajura Community College. That program is to provide for those teachers who are currently teaching at primary school level and want to move to teaching at secondary level, and to assist them through the changes necessary to accommodate the challenges of moving from primary to secondary education over the next 18 months. Again, there was some criticism that there was not enough time and that it was done at the last minute; it was not. It was done, quite legitimately, 18 months out. Teachers who make this switch will get a graduate certificate, and they will be provided with training facilities and in-house professional development. A significant number of teachers have expressed an interest in making that transition. One of the issues is that as a result of that transition and the fact that the half cohort will finish in 2015, we need to ensure that we have a sufficient number of secondary teachers to cope with that change. But we are also aware of the fact that there will be an oversupply of primary school teachers, and that is why we have offered the Switch program. The significant interest in the program at this stage is very heartening.

I turn now to the issues that were raised by the honourable member. This is where most of the dissent exists at the moment—almost exclusively, from what we have seen. There will always be issues in some areas about whether the building will be appropriate or there will be a sufficient number of teachers. An implementation team has been working with the Department of Education since the announcement was made in 2011, and it will continue to work with schools and communities to ensure that the process is undertaken as seamlessly as possible.

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

I do not mean to diminish the honourable member's comments at all, but some areas in the regions are very comfortable with the move, and my Nationals colleagues will make some comments about that in a moment. However, in some specific areas, in particular Beacon—I am conscious of that community—there are some issues. I have already had a discussion with a number of members from the Beacon community, and I will be going to that community again in the very near future.

The member raised his concern about a two-tiered system. Yes, unfortunately that is a very real prospect. The member said that it should be up to parents to make that determination. Yes, it should be. But we do not want a situation in which students who are taught in Beacon are not given the same opportunities as students who are taught in Merredin or Meekatharra, or wherever, or students in the metropolitan area. Ideally we want an education system that will provide students throughout Western Australia, no matter whether they live in the metropolitan area or in the regions, with the best opportunities and the specialist attention that they require to enable them to meet the challenges of the national curriculum in 2015. That is a very real issue that we must address.

I turn now to the issue of boarding schools. At the moment, a significant number of parents in the regions make the conscious decision to send their year 8 children to boarding school, either in the city or to one of the eight residential colleges in the regions. Those parents understand the financial implications of that decision, particularly for students who go to private boarding schools. I taught at Scotch College for 15 years. I am very aware of the significant financial impost on families who choose to send their child to a private school. But the simple fact of the matter is that people in the country, as do a significant number of people in the city, make that sacrifice for their children to go to boarding school. They make that choice because they know that their children will get specialist attention in those schools and will get a quality education. The eight residential colleges that are operated by the Department of Education are located in Albany, Broome, Esperance, Geraldton, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin and Northam. These residential colleges are outstanding. Last year, I opened an extension to the Merredin residential college, along with Hon Brendon Grylls, and I have to say it is like Club Med. I am not being flippant. It is a magnificent institution.

Hon Ken Travers: I hope they don't have alcohol!

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, never—certainly not the students. The residential colleges are very good facilities for students who want to move into that area of accommodation. Students can go to Merredin College or Northam Senior High School, for example, and be given that quality education. I went to Northam Senior High School a couple of months ago to look at the trade training centre that is operating at that school. That is one of the specialist opportunities that is available to students who attend these educational facilities.

Students will move into year 8 at some stage in their lives. The honourable member correctly made the point that students are not one year younger now as a result of the change to the school leaving age. They are actually at a minimum age of 11 years and seven months. Half of the students will turn 13 in year 7 as a result of the change to the school leaving age which was made by the previous government, and which we supported. So we need to make sure that we keep things in perspective with regard to this change, because students will not be one year younger.

Some special consideration will be offered by the Department of Education to people in the regions, on a case-by-case basis. That is a direct result of the concerns that were articulated to the department when this decision was first made. If a child has a sibling in the school, if there will be potential financial hardship, or if there is a specific concern for a child or a family, the family can seek an exemption from that transition for up to three years, until 2017, to ensure that the process is as seamless as it possibly can be for all Western Australians. This exemption applies only for people in the regions, and it will ensure that we assist people in the regions as best we can. I accept the honourable member's comments with regard to the cost of boarding, particularly at the private level of education, because for some families the cost can be excessive. However, I am sure the member is aware that families in the regions are eligible for boarding allowances of up to \$9 500 per student to assist them in this process.

I would have liked to extend on the comments that I have made. At this stage I have given only a broad overview so that all members of the chamber will understand that we have not just made this decision and said let us go for it. We have identified each of the areas that requires more work. We want to ensure that our schools are provided with the necessary infrastructure to enable them to cater for the influx of students in 2015. We have introduced the Switch program in recognition of the fact that there will be a shift in the teaching requirements and demands in both secondary and primary schools. We want to ensure that all our teachers are prepared for the national curriculum. We also want to ensure that students who start high school in year 7—which is what over 90 per cent of students throughout Australia will be doing in 2015—are provided with the best specialist educational opportunities, and that that is transferred through to senior secondary levels to enable them to make appropriate

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

career choices. In addition, we are very aware of the challenges in the regions. That is why we have extended the transition phase for three years, and why we have made further investments into accommodation facilities in the regions. Also, over the next couple of months, I will be visiting a number of the areas that are under particular pressure to further listen to the concerns of those communities.

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [10.39 am]: Mr President, I congratulate you on your recent re-election to the position. I also congratulate Hon Adele Farina on her election.

This is a very emotive issue. I think we should break the issue down, as the minister has done, into its nuts and bolts to stop the muddying of the waters. Let us not forget that the national curriculum was introduced by the current federal government as a way of equalising the syllabus and the curriculum throughout Australia. The uniformity of the national curriculum ensures that the specialty teaching that is provided prepares our children for higher learning throughout their high school years and into tertiary education.

The main point I would like to make is that the Nationals (WA) have invested a large amount of money through royalties for regions in residential and educational colleges in regional WA. An amount of \$9 million was allocated for the redevelopment of Merredin Residential College. There are now four new accommodation units, housing 48 new beds. It is at full capacity. We are now looking at getting the Department of Education to put on another 77 beds to effectively accommodate the demand in Merredin. The new K–12 college in Merredin, which was opened by the Minister for Education in September last year, currently has a 650-head capacity for kids throughout the region. Another \$12 million has been invested in the residential college in Esperance. A total of \$50 million has been invested in residential colleges throughout the state. There is plenty of capacity for regional students to be educated within the regions without having to go to Perth, as the honourable member mentioned in his speech.

Merredin College amalgamated with the two primary schools and the high school in Merredin at a cost of approximately \$16 million to create that 650-head capacity. It took a lot of negotiation to get that going. It had a few hiccups along the way, but it has been very successful. On top of all that, there is \$2 million from royalties for regions for the boarding away from home allowance to help regional parents send their kids to residential colleges. As the minister alluded to, the current cost of sending kids to Merredin Residential College is approximately \$12 000, but after all the boarding allowances are taken into consideration, it comes back to approximately \$2 000. That is considerably cheaper than kids living at home while they are being schooled, not that that is a consideration; nonetheless, it is a very cheap way of schooling kids away from home.

The number of teachers in the regions has increased now that preprimary school is compulsory. There are more qualified teachers for our children in remote areas than there ever has been. There has been an increase in the number of teachers provided in schools. The Nationals (WA) fought for the right of regional parents to have their children exempted from going into year 7 at high school from 2015 to 2018 to allow the transition to be a lot more effective and a lot more fluid.

Hon Ken Travers: And what happened?

Hon PAUL BROWN: There have been four applications for exemptions for children going into year 7 at high school. They were all from one area. Out of the 4 500 signatures on that petition, there have been four applications for exemptions.

Hon Adele Farina: Do they actually know that they can make an application?

Hon Ken Travers: Is it an individual application or the whole school?

Hon PAUL BROWN: It is on a case-by-case basis. If a parent puts in an application, the Department of Education will assess it on a case-by-case basis. Currently, there are four individual applications and they will be assessed in due course. As I said, they have all come from the one area, as the honourable member mentioned. Nonetheless, there are four in total.

I think the member was a bit simplistic with the choices he alluded to. The parents of these children currently have a number of choices that they can avail themselves of. Firstly, they can choose to apply for an exemption from the transition to year 7 and have their children schooled at the primary school that they currently attend. This may put them in a class by themselves, as parents of the other children may well choose to send their children elsewhere, preferably to one of the residential schools within regional WA. Secondly, they can choose to send their children to one of the fabulous residential colleges and learning centres throughout regional WA. Thirdly, they can choose to send their child to a boarding school in Perth and bear the additional cost. I know where I would rather send my children. I have been to the new K–12 college in Merredin. It is fantastic. There were a few hiccups initially, but everybody is now on board and the place is working fantastically. Not one bad word comes out of there now. There were a few little hitches in the early stages; when three schools amalgamate,

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

there will always be a few harsh words. But it is now working beautifully. I have been to the residential college a number of times; in fact, a number of friends manage the place. Hon Martin Aldridge and I went up there last year and had a tour of the facility. It is second to none. The quality of accommodation and the services provided within that facility are equal to anything in Perth or anything that I have seen. I would be more than happy to send my children there. I wish I had the ability to send my kids to a Perth-based boarding school. Unfortunately, I do not have the same capacity as Hon Darren West. Apparently, he can afford to send his kids to boarding school in Perth. Not many of us can. It is a rather large expense. But congratulations to him on being able to afford that.

Hon Darren West: I live in the country. Hardly any of you live in the country.

Hon PAUL BROWN: The member lives a couple of kilometres away from Northam Senior High School. He could have sent his kids to Northam high school. It is a fabulous facility. He chose to send his kids to Perth for whatever reason.

Hon Darren West: It's my choice.

Hon PAUL BROWN: That is exactly right; it comes down to choice.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PAUL BROWN: My kids live in Perth, do they?

Hon Ken Travers: I said that half your members live in Perth.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Our members live in the Agricultural Region; the opposition's members live in Perth.

It all comes down to choice. Parents can choose where they want to send their kids. There are great educational and residential facilities in regional WA that are cheaper than sending their kids to Perth. Anyone who says that they have to send their children to Perth for schooling is just tilting at windmills. They obviously do not know the reality. They need to look wider. They need to have a better look at the choices. Not only that, but also 50 per cent of the children who will be going into year 7 at secondary school will be older—about 12 and a half. My daughter will be one of them. She is in the early cohort.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [10.49 am]: There are actually two elements to the motion moved by Hon Darren West this morning. The first part calls on the government, as a matter of urgency, to develop, adequately fund and implement a transparent and comprehensive plan addressing all issues affecting the transition of year 7s to high school. That is the primary point of it. That does not say that we are opposing the move. What we are asking for is that the minister has a proper plan that is transparent and comprehensive. The second issue is the one Hon Darren West and the member for Albany, Peter Watson, have been particularly focused on in recent weeks, and a lot of the debate from Hon Darren West was around this issue; that is, making particular allowances for the needs and concerns of small rural and regional communities. There are two elements to the motion. Firstly, we are urging the government to do the transition of year 7s to high school but to get it right. Secondly, we want to make sure that we will not be disadvantaging the young people who live in regional Western Australia because of their personal circumstances. Hon Darren West made it very clear that the best people to make that decision are the parents of those children—not the bureaucracy, not the National Party, not the principals, but the parents of those children. That is what both he and the member for Albany are calling for. It is no wonder that in this place we are sceptical of the Liberal Party and the National Party and the way in which they deal with regional education because we sat here when they stopped the funding for year 11s and 12s in district high schools, which was going to result in young people leaving the education system. I have got to say that it was because of the work of a committee in this place and of people like Hon Philip Gardiner, who actually came from the old days of the National Party when they used to stand up for regional Western Australia, that some changes were made to ensure that those people who, through specific circumstances, were not able to continue their schooling beyond years 11 and 12 were able to remain in the education system. So we are sceptical of the ability of the Liberal Party and the National Party to understand the importance for people living in regional Western Australia to get an education, and that sometimes we need to make special allowances for that. That is the point that has been made.

The area I want to focus on this morning is the first part of the motion; that is, to make sure that we have an adequately funded, transparent and comprehensive plan. The minister went through what he is doing, but we are concerned about whether there are things he is not doing. This issue goes back beyond the days of the minister's government. When we were in government, we got advice from the Department of Education about what this process was going to involve and how much it would cost. It is clear that complete provision has not yet been made in the budget for this program. That is what we want. We want the minister to outline everything that

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

needs to be done and to not just come in here and give us bits and pieces of it. The minister should give us a comprehensive plan of everything that needs to be done, when it is going to be done by and whether it is actually funded. The State School Teachers' Union of WA pointed out that it is very concerned that the minister has not made provision for enough funding. In fact, the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*, followed by the *Pre-election Financial Projections Statement*, actually list funding for the year 7 transition as one of the funding risks, yet the minister has not gone through it. We heard about the great new facilities at residential colleges. Is the minister confident that there will be enough places at those colleges to handle all of the year 7s?

Hon Peter Collier: We will keep monitoring it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No; is the minister confident? I do not want to know that the government is monitoring it. Is the minister confident?

Hon Peter Collier: At this stage, yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the minister absolutely confident?

Hon Peter Collier: At this stage, yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What does "at this stage" mean?

Hon Peter Collier: I have answered your question. At this stage, yes I am.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Will there be enough places for every year 7 to go to a residential college if their parents choose to do that?

Hon Peter Collier: At this stage, yes. As I said, we had 90 000 people come into the state last year. Of course it is going to add pressure, so you have got to continue to monitor it. It is the same in any school environment; it doesn't matter whether it's in Meekatharra or Shenton College.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the minister saying that he waits until the people get here before he makes an allowance for it?

Hon Peter Collier: No, of course not. That is what monitoring means.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: This is why the minister's budgeting processes are so wrong.

Hon Peter Collier: Do I build another residential college in Merredin and then —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is there enough accommodation for teachers who will be at the high schools in these regional areas?

Hon Peter Collier: Did you listen to what I said?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, I was listening.

Hon Peter Collier: At that stage I told you that we have a specific task force within the Department of Education that is working on every single aspect of the implementation to make sure that it is as seamless as possible.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What we said in our motion is that we are calling for the government to be transparent about that.

Hon Peter Collier: We are completely transparent.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do not have it hidden away in the department. With something like this, the minister should be able to lay out a report for the Parliament and the people of Western Australia outlining how many current year 5s we have who will be in year 7 in 2015; what allowances there are if the growth over the past three years continues, and the budget allocations for that; the budget allocation for employee expenses and contingencies around that; the budget for the additional buildings; the budget for transportables; the budget for grants and loans to private schools so that they can accommodate the transition; the budget for regional teacher housing; the additional recurrent costs that will be incurred; the additional capital costs that will be incurred; and the additional depreciation on the capital costs that will be incurred. If the minister does not have a report in the department that goes through all of that, he should have. Why will the minister not share that with this Parliament? Why will he not share that with the people of Western Australia? I suspect, and it goes back to the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*, that the minister does not yet actually know the full figures. That highlights how poorly his government manages affairs like this. It reminds me of the train circumstances. I got the same answers that the minister just gave to me: "We cannot tell how many trains we're going to need in 2011", even though the Public Transport Authority was telling the government that it needed to

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

order more trains. In this case we will get to 2015 and the government will not have its schools ready, it will not have enough accommodation, it will not have the teachers' housing and it will not have the proper budget. Then it will be, "Oh, we didn't predict that", even though we are telling the minister that he should be able to predict that. I suspect that deep in the bowels of the Department of Education they do know, and that the reason the minister will not be transparent about this is that he knows he does not yet have the funding to properly and fully implement this program. That is the first part of the motion that needs to be addressed. I do not think the minister has addressed it by saying that he is hiding it in his department and is not going to tell or outline all those costs. Those are the costs that are incurred in a program like this. I will ask another question of the minister: is the minister confident that all of the upgrades will be done in time for the opening of the 2015 school year?

Hon Peter Collier: Yes, I am.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the minister absolutely confident?

Hon Peter Collier: Yes, I am confident. That is the advice that has been provided to me. I said that in my presentation.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Are there any problems with the rolling out of that program to the upper grades of the schools?

Hon Peter Collier: Did you hear my presentation?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes. I am happy to take interjections on this one, Mr President, because it is very important. Is the minister confident that the program to roll out the upgrades to provide for year 7s at high schools is on track and will be completed in time?

Hon Peter Collier: The advice that has been provided to me is, yes, they are on track.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I love the way the government has now become a commentator on it!

Hon Peter Collier: How can you say that?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: He is not the minister responsible anymore; he is just a commentator on the Department of Education.

Hon Peter Collier: No!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The minister is ultimately responsible. I want to know whether the minister is confident, not, "I have been advised". The minister should put his own body on the line.

Hon Peter Collier: Okay. You have asked me a question; come up for air. I have said that, based on the advice that has been provided to me, yes, I am very confident.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So there are no problems with the rolling out of those upgrades?

Hon Peter Collier: If you're aware of some issues, share them with the chamber.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How would I know if the minister does not know?

Hon Peter Collier: You are making accusations.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That would be a bit embarrassing for the minister if I knew and the minister did not! He is the minister; he should be on top of these things.

Hon Peter Collier: I am on top of it.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hansard has got no chance of recording an exchange when both people are talking at once. We do not mind a little bit of robust debate and banter, but give Hansard a go in terms of recording the debate.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is good advice, Mr President, because I want the minister's answers on the record. Is the minister absolutely confident that there are no problems?

Hon Peter Collier: For the eighth time, I have been advised that everything is fine. I am taking that advice and I am confident in that advice. If you know something that goes beyond that, share it with the chamber.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the minister confident that there is enough money in the budget to cover all of the recurrent costs?

Hon Peter Collier: At this stage, yes.

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am not fishing; I am just getting the minister on the record to see whether he is across the detail of that portfolio, because he is hiding the truth.

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [11.00 am]: I commend Hon Darren West for bringing this issue before the house. It is a very important issue, particularly in small rural communities. It is not just an issue in the Agricultural Region; it is also an issue in the South West Region. The member for Albany has raised his concerns about this issue on numerous occasions and he has also discussed in great detail the concerns he has about three of the schools in small communities in his electorate. This issue is not just isolated to the Agricultural Region or little pockets; it occurs in small regional communities right across the state.

The concerns that have been raised by parents are very valid. The minister may have some programs in place to address the transition of year 7 students from primary school to high school but I do not know that we are addressing the concerns raised by parents. Fundamentally, the parents are concerned about sending their children off to high school and boarding school six months or a year younger than would otherwise be the case. We might trivialise the period of six months but we need to assess this on a case-by-case basis. Some children are more emotionally capable of dealing with that transition than others. I do not think it is something that we should make light of. For those in many rural communities it means sending their children to boarding school, be it in the country or the city. In some cases it results in a much longer travelling day for students to get to high school. All this has an impact on the emotional and social wellbeing of the child, which should be as important as the academic achievement of the child. I do not think we can stress enough that the whole context of this issue needs to be looked at, not just the academic side of things. I do not know that we have fairly addressed it. I agree with Hon Darren West that the views of the parents should be paramount.

Families are also concerned that they may need to relocate to areas with higher populations where local schools are available rather than split up the family. That will be an issue for small regional communities. They cannot afford to have that displacement of population. Many are struggling already. Do we really want to bring that about? Once we remove a number of children from a small regional school or families from that community relocate to larger regional centres so they do not have to split up the family, those communities decrease in size, making those schools less viable, which means a greater displacement right across the board for all the kids in that community if that school closes. I would like the minister to tell us what assessment has been done of that likely impact and what measures are being put in place to address those sorts of issues. That is the issue that the minister has not answered. I would appreciate receiving some advice from the minister about what he is doing to address these issues.

Then there is the issue of the financial cost, which Hon Darren West has run through. The minister said that some financial assistance is available, which is great, but it does not go anywhere near the real cost. Of course \$9 000 is great but when we are talking about costs of \$30 000 to \$40 000 —

Hon Peter Collier: It is \$12 000.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Sorry; it is \$12 000, is it? It is still a significant cost for families. We need to look at all of this.

The biggest issue is the impact on not only year 7 students but also the whole community if families move out of that area and the school closes because the numbers get so small that it is not able to sustain that primary school any more. What assessments has the minister done on that and what measures is he putting in place? So far we have heard nothing.

In Queensland we saw a far more transparent approach as the plan was made public. It produced a green paper and consulted the community before it moved down this path. Then it produced a white paper before it moved down this path and then it decided to implement a trial with 20 schools and examine the impact as a result of that. That is a transparent process where there has been wide community consultation. Queensland is stepping it out trying to identify the impact on families and rural communities before transitioning it right across the state. Our state is a lot bigger than Queensland and our small rural communities are far more isolated than they are in any other state of Australia. The issues that will arise here will not arise in the eastern states. We have to look at what is best for Western Australia.

The minister indicated that he made a concession that the Department of Education can assess applications from parents on a case-by-case basis to leave their children in primary schools. That is great but it is a very short-term fix; it is not an answer to the problem. There will be a transition period for only three years. It does not address the concerns raised by these rural families and it does not address the concern of what will happen to those small rural communities if families opt to relocate rather than split up their families as a result of this policy decision.

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

I do not understand what support there will be for those primary schools if they decide that they will allow those concessions and allow those children to remain in the primary schools. The minister has indicated that he does not want a two-tier system by having a different policy. The reality is that we already have a two-tier system in place. Many schools in regional communities do not have the same range of subject options as those in the metropolitan area simply because the Department of Education allocates teachers on the basis of the number of students at that school. This quota has been in place forever. It is a rigid quota, as everything is within the Department of Education, and maybe it needs to be because of the size of the beast. The reality is that as a result of that, children in regional areas are already disadvantaged in their education. We have a two-tier system, judging it on whatever basis we like. If we are able to make a case-by-case exception for individuals, why not do that for schools as opposed to individuals?

The 2007 report by the education department into this issue—unfortunately, I will run out of time before I get a chance to say everything I wanted to say—identified that there was no benefit in relocating year 7 students from primary school to high school. It indicated that those educational benefits could easily be provided in the primary schools. If the minister is allowing some students to remain in primary schools, will he provide those additional facilities to those primary schools to ensure that those children have the same educational opportunities that he is so determined to hold onto in not wanting to create a two-tier system? Again, we have had no advice from the minister at all. In the cases where those exceptions are provided, what additional facilities will he provide in those primary schools to ensure that those children will not be disadvantaged? That is an issue that was identified in the 2007 report.

There are another two issues that I want to refer to very quickly before I run out of time. I understand that schools contribute \$13 900 per primary school student and \$19 000 per secondary school student. I understand that a concern has been raised about the fact that in transitioning the year 7s from primary school to secondary school, the government intends to continue to pay only \$13 900 for those year 7 students, even though they are now in secondary school. It begs the question: how did those schools provide all those additional facilities and specialised teachers when they are getting paid less to do that? Again, the minister was silent on this issue that has been raised in the community and in this place. I further ask the minister: exactly what funding will be provided to secondary schools to deal with the year 7 students that come through?

Another point that was raised in the 2007 report was that a literacy strategy would need to accompany any relocation of year 7 students to secondary schools. In this state we know that our students are performing very poorly in literacy. It is a major concern for parents right across the state. This report identifies that the transition of year 7 students from primary school to secondary school is going to need a program in place to address literacy. Again, we have heard nothing from the minister about what is in place to address this concern that has been raised by the Department of Education in its report; it is a significant concern. The minister needs to be transparent. He needs a plan and it needs to be transparent.

HON BRIAN ELLIS (Agricultural) [11.10 am]: One thing I will say from the start is that I agree with Hon Darren West that this is a hot and very emotive topic, particularly in the Agricultural Region. But like a lot of emotive topics or issues, reality can be lost amongst that emotion. I chair the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council that reports directly to the Minister for Education. Opposition members on the other side would know about RREAC because Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm used to chair it when the Labor Party was in government. It is a very important council for rural and remote people because its charter is to make sure that children in country areas have the same access, if possible, to what city children enjoy. I can assure Hon Darren West that all his concerns are being addressed. RREAC has some 16 or 17 stakeholders including the Country Women's Association, the Department of Education, the teachers' union, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and the Catholic Education Office of WA—we have a wide range of people who have a stake in the best education possible for our country students.

I can assure Hon Darren West that we are keeping an eye on the progression towards 2015 when year 7 will be the start of high school. I will just take up that point. Everyone is talking about taking year 7 students and throwing them into high school. This is the start of high school; year 7 will be the start of high school. Members should just keep that in mind if we want the best for our country kids. As I said, RREAC is watching the transition to make sure that everything is in place by the time that 2015 comes around, even to the point that it is getting updates at each meeting on the year 7 transition.

Yes, there will be some additional costs. There is no doubt about that; I do not deny that. But Hon Darren West keeps talking about choice. I will give an example because it is fairly close to my heart—I am having these discussions with my son. I have a grandson going off to boarding college next year in the normal year 8. My son will have two more children who will go when year 7 is the start of high school. It is his choice to send them away, probably for an extra cost of \$40 000 a year, to a private school. He does not have to do that. Just taking

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

up the member's point, he is saying that the government is forcing him to choose. The government is not forcing my son to choose that right now. It is his choice.

There has been a lot said about the Merredin country hostel as well, which is a beautiful complex that I went to the opening of. I wish I had that choice when I was at boarding college rather than being in a dormitory of some 30 kids and being fed food that—well, I was hungry, I ate it. Merredin is a brilliant example of where country hostels are going, but I will say from the outset that because it is so good, it is filling up. From RREAC inquiries and field trips we know that, until Merredin, Broome was the only country hostel that was full. If these country hostels that taxpayers are paying for and improving are not full, then it is hard for me to argue the case for country parents who want to send their kids to private schools in Perth, as the country hostels provide them with facilities and bedding that are not being used.

Coming back to the cost, I have not got the exact figures, but the minister has mentioned there are state and federal allowances. If a parent qualifies for all of them, he or she will be paying at the country hostels about \$50 a week. I would hazard a guess that it would cost them a lot more to have a child at home. When we talk about the extra cost, it is only very marginal if parents are to send them to those country hostels that are provided for. There may be a very good case for a country hostel in Perth sometime in the future. That is probably where our attention should be aimed at rather than trying to hold our children back in the country and giving them a second-class education. I do not think most parents want that because parents have been making this choice for a long time.

Hon Adele Farina mentioned something about children being too young. When I was at boarding school, pastoralists were sending their kids away in the first year to a boarding college. It may not be the best but that was their choice, too. This has been going on for a long time when schools have got too small. Numbers became less in country areas and parents made the choice. In my experience, because I have been through this twice, when schools close, it is the parents who make the decision; it is not governments. When parents see that the school gets too small, they shift their children to another school. I know that because it happened in my grandchildren's case. Yes, some people will have to take their children to a bus stop for a longer trip. My son is already doing that. He drives 10 kilometres to meet the school bus that goes to his children's school. That has nothing to do with years 7.

I do not want to take too much time because I know other people may have something to say, but I really wanted to get to some of the key issues and cut through some of the emotion. As I said, I have the same emotion from my family. I have to say that my 12-year-old grandson at the moment is far further advanced than I was at 12. My 10-year-old grandson had to show me how to use my phone! Things have moved a long way from those days, I can assure members. The minister mentioned a lot of other changes that have happened along the way and there was a lot of emotion around those changes in education, but none of the concerns were realised. I am not trying to be flippant about the concerns of some people because it is emotional. However, I see RREAC's role and the government's role as allaying those fears and being well prepared by the time 2015 comes around when year 7 becomes the start of high school. As I said before, the numbers at country schools have been reducing over many years. Parents have been making those choices for a long time, but they have been making those choices to give their children the best possible education. To hold their children back in a small community just simply because they may want to keep the nippers football side going is not a viable argument for not giving their children the best possible education.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.20 am]: What we have heard this morning by way of the government's response to this very clearly expressed motion is a symptom of the underlying problem, which is that the government is simply incapable of listening to the community's concerns about these matters. The Minister for Education can shake his head but the reality is that if he had listened, he would have responded to the specific terms in which Hon Darren West has couched this motion. His motion is very specific. He is out in his electorate every day of the week listening to what people in small regional and rural communities are saying about the devastation that will be wreaked on individual families and small school communities by this government's decision.

Hon Peter Collier: Have you read the motion?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: We listened when we were in government and that is why we did not do it.

Hon Peter Collier: Do you oppose it?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Go back to the press release. The minister will see what the Labor Minister for Education and Training said. Obviously, Hon Peter Collier needs to be educated on this.

Hon Peter Collier: Do you oppose it?

Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Brian Ellis;
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Let me tell the minister what the Labor minister said in 2007, which is exactly what we are asking the current minister to do but he is refusing to do it. The Labor minister said that the Labor government would look at specific instances and support people in their own choices. That is what we are asking the minister to do. This is a classic case of government bungling. I know that the current minister was not the education minister when this decision was made. I bet that if he had been, the decision would have been quite different. I hope it would have been. I bet members that the minister's senior advisers and Sir Humphreys told the government at the time that this was a courageous decision. I bet they used the language of Sir Humphrey, because they have been through this before. At the end of the last process, the minister had the foresight and integrity to say that the government had considered all the evidence and listened to what the communities were saying and that we would not do it but that we would make exceptions based on individual needs in small communities. I can tell the minister that his Sir Humphreys have been through this before and I bet they told him it was a courageous decision. The minister knows what that means because I am sure he has watched the series *Yes Minister*. There is another part of the *Yes Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister* series that this reminds me of, and I will share that with honourable members in the short time available to me.

Hon Peter Katsambanis interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Do members remember the definition of “politicians’ logic” in the television show *Yes, Prime Minister*?

Hon Peter Katsambanis interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The member might want to listen to this. He is in a different place now and he might just want to listen.

Hon Peter Katsambanis interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, it is not question time!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Politicians’ logic goes like this—premise 1: we must do something; premise 2: this is something; conclusion: therefore we must do it. That is what this decision is based on—we must do something, this is something, therefore we must do it! That is all the integrity this decision has. Many members on the backbench listen to their communities. I was watching them when the minister was on his feet and I can tell the minister that he wants to get some footage of the expressions on the faces of the members of the backbench. They are not happy with the minister because they have to sit in their electorate offices every day of the week when we are not sitting and listen to the people who come in and tell them exactly the same stories —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! All Hansard will record for the last 10 seconds of that debate is that there were multiple interjections!

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.