

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2017–18 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2018**

**SESSION TWO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Members

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

<011> B/3

Hearing commenced at 12.46 pm

Hon SUE ELLERY

Minister for Education and Training, examined.

Ms JENNIFER McGRATH

Acting Director General, examined.

Mr STEPHEN BAXTER

Acting Deputy Director General, Public Schools, examined.

Mr JAY PECKITT

Acting Deputy Director General, Education Business Services, examined.

Mr LINDSAY HALE

Executive Director Public Schools, examined.

Mr JOHN FISCHER

Executive Director, Infrastructure, examined.

Mr PETER TITMANIS

Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives and Performance, examined.

Mr ALLAN BLAGAUCH

Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards, examined.

Mr DAMIEN STEWART

Executive Director, Workforce, examined.

The CHAIR: This is the hearing with the Department of Education. On behalf of the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearing. Can each of the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"? I know there are two witnesses at the back who will also need to participate in this exercise. For the benefit of Hansard, we will start from the left.

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Agencies have an important role and duty in assisting the Parliament to review agency outcomes and the committee values your assistance with this.

Minister, do you have a brief opening statement to make?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: We will go straight into questions. We will start with committee members first. We have an average of about 15 minutes each.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thank you. Minister, I have a question around financial information presented on page 112 of the annual report in particular. It is the statement of comprehensive income. I am interested in the \$238 million deficit recorded for the period. I do not recall a deficit of that magnitude recorded in prior departmental reports. I am just wondering: does the minister want to confirm this is the first time a deficit of that magnitude has arisen?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I could not answer whether that is the first time but I can ask Jay Peckitt.

Mr Peckitt: The reason for that deficit is essentially a non-cash item related to the machinery-of-government changes. Because we amalgamated with another department, the reserves we previously had held were essentially zeroed off. Because there was a decrement in the valuation of buildings during the year, that decrement had to be expensed in the income statement. It is, essentially, a non-cash item that was related to the machinery-of-government changes. When that is removed, the department did underspend its budget by about \$59 million, or 1.2 per cent. That, I suppose extraordinary item if you like, has been taken out of our key performance indicators. Given it is a non-cash item, essentially, unrelated to the performance, so is really just a technicality around the accounting entry.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is the question I wanted to raise. There are two issues as I understand. Effectively, there is a re-evaluation of your current asset base, which is obviously lower than previous estimates led to believe. But you have recorded this because of the way in which machinery-of-government changes were effected and you were certainly not the only agency affected by this change. The Auditor General identified this in her report of last week, and on another occasion, I will try to get to the magnitude of these writedowns across government. That just leads me to machinery of government impacts across the agency generally. Can I just clarify how many financial, human resource or administrative systems are currently being utilised across the agency? Do you have one standalone system or are you running multiple systems?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think the question is both, is it not—finance and human resources. Is that what you are asking?

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Financial systems, human resource systems and any other administrative systems. To give you some context, minister, to perhaps frame the response. I refer to the Auditor General's report on page 23 from last week. I will give you a direct quote about machinery of government impacts. It reads —

- progress with amalgamating systems of the various constituent entities is slow, with most departments continuing to operate on several financial, human resource and administrative systems. This is impacting the realisation of cost savings that can be achieved by rationalising systems.

I want to see how the Department of Education is fairing against that.

<012> I/4 [12:52:54 PM](#)

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you for reading out the quote; it is useful if you are going to refer to another document that we did not bring with us. If we could have it in front of us —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I have it right here, if you would like.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you. In any event, I think we can answer the question and I will ask Jay to provide an answer.

Mr Peckitt: The department essentially uses only one finance and HR system. The Department of Education Services was amalgamated with the department and was already on the department's

payroll, using our finance system. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority, which obviously still exists, is an entity but the staff have moved over to the department. They also were supported by the department, so essentially there is one HR system and one finance system. There might be some other, smaller elements with some of the smaller parts of the business, but essentially two.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: But nothing of any consequence. This is not a trick question; there are agencies that have demonstrated various competencies in implementing changes. DPIRD is in a lot of trouble; I suspect the Department of Communities is in even more. I just want to establish how the Department of Education is faring.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I could just add to that—you might not recall this because you were not in government—a decision was made some time ago to bring country hostels within the Department of Education; they were previously a separate authority. There might be some residuals of their existing systems, but that was a decision made long before MOG.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Just looking at the annual report, pages 10 to 11, under “Year scorecard”, some of the KPIs there and some of the short forms in those KPIs. I am wondering where the department’s plan to meet the unmet key efficiency indicators is at.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You are looking at page 11?

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Yes, pages 10 to 11 and the key efficiency indicators table there.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I just want to make sure that we are all operating on the same page numbers, because they start to appear on page 11 in the document I have. At the top it has “Year scorecard”.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Yes, page 11 specifically.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Okay. I can start some of those conversations and then we can add others. There is a whole series of things in there—the participation rate, retention rates, secondary graduation rates—and then there are a range of KPIs around NAPLAN. I will make some comments about NAPLAN and then we can go to each of the others up the top, if that is what the member wants to do.

You will be aware that there has been public debate about this already. NAPLAN results, in some people’s minds, have stalled at the 10-year mark. There have not been significant shifts in achievement. At a national level, there are two reviews going on. One is in relation to some technical issues that arose recently around NAPLAN Online, but there is also a broader review of how NAPLAN is reported and, more generally, into how NAPLAN is being conducted, on behalf of the Australian Education Council, which is the council made up of all the education ministers around the states and in the commonwealth government. That will, I guess, spark debate more broadly about how we do standardised testing. It is my personal view that parents still want transparent, easily understood information about how their child and, indeed, their school is travelling. Whether that ends up being called NAPLAN, or is NAPLAN in its current or some other form, remains to be seen. Essentially, there has not been a huge shift in these numbers recently. If the member wants to go through each of them specifically, I will ask one of the advisers to speak about that.

I want to talk a little about the secondary graduation rate. You may recall—I suspect others around the table will—that there was a deliberate decision made to link the state’s standardised testing, referred to as OLN, online literacy and numeracy assessment, to the achievement of a WACE, the WA Certificate of Education. That was a decision made by the previous government and it was driven by the policy sense—which I support—that employers in particular are looking for indications of literacy and numeracy when students leave school and enter the labour market. The decision was made that every Western Australian student needed to achieve by the end of year 9 the equivalent of band 8 in NAPLAN in order to then go on without having to sit an additional test between then

and when they finished year 12 to demonstrate a level of literacy and numeracy. We are still in the early days of rolling that out, but we have seen a reduction in secondary graduations because it was linked to a new measure. I actually think it was the right thing to do because it has focused teaching on literacy and numeracy in particular. I will ask Mr Titmanis to make some comments about that.

<013> N/4 [12:59:09 PM](#)

[1.00 pm]

Mr Titmanis: I think the other thing worth noting here is that Western Australia has been one of the better performing states and territories in terms of literacy and numeracy over the last eight years. If you have a look at any of the RoGS and other reports, you will see that there has been a gradual improvement in the performance of just about all the students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Perhaps the only challenge that we have got is with writing, and that is a national trend. It is not just a WA trend. I think we can take some comfort that WA is one of the better performing states in terms of that improvement in student performance in literacy and numeracy.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If the honourable member wishes to talk about the other efficiency indicators on those two pages, I can find someone —

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I had a follow-up question that I am more interested in. With regard to agencies affected by the machinery-of-government changes, the Auditor General noted that some entities are still in the process of determining the appropriate outcome-based management structures and appropriate KPIs that would best represent their performance. Are your KPIs likely to change in the 2018–19 budget in any way?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think the committee lodged a question about this in advance and we provided an answer. We can go through that for you if you want to, but you actually have a written answer already.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I think the question submitted by the committee prior to hearings was about the —

Hon SUE ELLERY: Outcomes-based management.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: It was a similar question but it was for 2017–18. I am wondering if they are likely to change in 2018–19. Can you give us an answer to that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is not the reporting period that we are being asked about today, but I will ask Mr Titmanis for an answer on that.

Mr Titmanis: Every year we take a look at our indicators. In this last 12 months we have been doing that and reviewing what might be reasonable to change, but there has been no firm decision to actually change them at this point in time.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Thank you. I refer to page 24 and that the department is examining the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In your report you mention it under significant issues for the financial year. When is the department's review of the recommendations of the report into institutional responses to child sexual abuse due to be completed?

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is work across government. It is led by a directors general implementation group that was established early in 2018 to progress, as I said, the across-government response into the royal commission's recommendations. We did make an announcement. I thought that the Minister for Child Protection and the Premier—I am sorry, I cannot remember specifically when—did make an announcement about some early responses to those recommendations. I am sorry, I cannot remember the detail of that. There was a focus on an immediate response, then a 12-month response on implementation, which is due to be completed in December this year, and then a staged

implementation framework that sets out all of the priorities of the work that needs to be done. That framework is being developed now as well and it is due to be completed by December. The Department of Education is part of that process and will be part of feeding into the whole-of-government decision that is anticipated to be made at the end of this year.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I refer to page 50 and your stated intention to market Perth internationally as an education destination. Is it not true that the figures released in August show that WA is the only state in the commonwealth currently recording a decrease in its international students, something like 8.2 per cent fewer than last year, which seems to me to be a pretty significant drop? To what do you attribute that dramatic drop?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think there are a combination of things, not the least of which is the economy. But you might recall that just a month or two months ago, we released an international education strategy. StudyPerth, which is a non-government body but it is funded by the department, is made up of all the major education providers across the sector, so it has school, vocation and tertiary level representatives on it and it is chaired by Rod Jones. StudyPerth and three government agencies—DJTSI, the jobs and economic agency; the Department of Training and Workforce Development; and the Department of Education—have been working on that international education strategy and there is more work to be done on that as well. Most recently, the government announced the “brightest and best” or “best and brightest”—I cannot remember the name of the policy—which introduced a particular stream of availability to enter into the Western Australian education sector for those students, graduates and higher degrees. We are also looking at extending that into vocational areas as well. This was one of the areas you will recall that we announced before the election that we were going to do some work on to produce the strategy. We have done that and we are working across the sector and with industry to improve Western Australia’s capacity to take more students and to encourage more students to come and study here.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Can you help me understand in what way a downturn in the WA economy affects international students numbers?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If they think that they are coming here looking for jobs, for example, and they want to study as part of that, the economy has a direct impact in that way as well. Plus, if employers are taking on less formal training positions—like apprenticeships, traineeships and pre-apprenticeships, for example—there are less opportunities. That is how there is a relationship between the two. We did take the view that there was significant capacity for Western Australia to lift its game in this area. If you think about the Asian economies in particular, for many of them we are in the same time zone and we want to be in a position where they are choosing to visit and stay and study in Western Australia rather than choosing to do that on the east coast, for example.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I have just a couple of questions. It was mentioned earlier in this hearing about NAPLAN scores in terms of meeting our national minimum standards. We are coasting along—from what I am reading on page 99—in numeracy for the last five years and sort of keeping up with what we had been doing. But in writing it drops off considerably through the years from 3, 5, 7 and 9, and our target is lower as well. I understand it may be happening nationally, but what are we doing to address that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get Lindsay Hale to make some comments and then perhaps others. Writing is a problem across Australia and I think in part that has driven consideration of whether or not we need to look at NAPLAN more broadly, but I will ask Mr Hale to make some comments about it.

Mr Hale: Yes, we have identified that writing is a concern, as the minister said. It is a concern right across the board, but it is of particular interest to us in WA. This year, we asked schools and provided support to schools to focus their efforts in relation to literacy and numeracy on writing. We provided

a range of resources, online professional learning modules, workshops and so on. That effort will continue into next year, but alongside that we will be introducing some further strategies. One of those is to focus particularly—writing is a concern generally, but we are particularly interested in what seems to be a concern around upper primary and lower secondary. We will be working next year with schools to have teachers work together around that year 6–year 7 transition and make sure that we are focusing on the right things in teaching writing, both in year 6 and in year 7 and the transition from one to the other, the moderation and the sharing of strategies, making sure that we do not have slippage as kids move from a primary to a secondary environment.

<014> P/D [1:09:38 PM](#)

[1.10 pm]

The other significant new strategy for next year will be the delivery of the government election commitment around a centre for excellence in literacy and numeracy. While, obviously, it is broadly around literacy and numeracy, writing, being a particular area of concern, will be a key focus as we unfold that work. We are also hoping that into next year we will make some significant room for some other project work we are doing. In the Kimberley Schools project, the first significant pillar of that work has been in the area of targeted teaching under the guidance of Professor Bill Loudon. We are hoping that out of that we will not only start to see a trend of improvement in literacy in particular, but also we will learn from that what might be applied, because we also know that while there is an issue across the board, the greatest challenge is for disadvantaged students, for Aboriginal students and for remote students. There is a range of programs in place that will continue and there will be some new strategies introduced as we go into next year.

Hon DIANE EVERS: Following on from that, has there been any research looking into why this is happening? Has the standard been assessed recently in terms of maybe things have changed in how young people write and maybe that they are learning other things? I am wondering: what is the underlying problem? It cannot just be that we have not been doing it well enough because we have been doing quite well in the past. What has changed?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Perhaps Lindsay can say something, but then I will ask Mr Titmanis to make some comments about the actual measure as well.

Mr Hale: I think Peter is much better placed to talk about the actual standard. My take on this is: to some extent, we probably do not really know in a hard evidence-based sense. However, there is a lot of speculation about the shift to much more time spent on screens and with technology. It is interesting to note—Peter can probably comment more on this in terms of performance—that students, it appears, when they do writing assessments using technology, particularly boys are likely to do better. It is thought that the reason for that is probably the ease with which they can edit their work compared to working in handwriting.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Change their stories!

Mr Hale: Yes, indeed, minister. But I do think on the issue of standard, I would probably defer to Peter.

Mr Titmanis: Thank you. One of the things that is little understood about the standard is that it was set back in 2008 and it was referencing the literacy and numeracy benchmarks that preceded that. As you can see by the numbers, which are around the 95s and 90s, the bulk of the students have actually achieved the standard. There is a large group of students who do not achieve the standard who are our students with disabilities in various different ranges. For example, students who do not sit the test, like a lot of our students who are in ed support centres or in support schools, are automatically exempted unless their parents wish them to sit the test. What you see in those numbers quite often is a reflection of the three or four per cent of students who have levels of

disadvantage that make it difficult for them to engage with the sort of formal education that the majority of our students might do in a normal sort of school. So what we will find right across the country is the same story—that it is going to be difficult for the states and territories to shift those numbers in any significant way into the future. So in some states, and nationally, it has also been discussed: what would an alternative standard look like? There have been proposals put forward to ministers for discussion—no decision made at this particular time.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I appreciate there are other committee members who want to ask questions, but if I can just add quickly to that, one of the recommendations out of Gonski 2.0 was that education systems look at progressions. So rather than assume everyone has to be at standard X, and if you are not standard X, that is a deficit, if what you measure is each of your progressions—to what extent you as an individual are in fact lifting your performance—is that something that we ought to look better at? That is certainly what Gonski 2.0 recommended.

In Western Australia, more than 470 schools, predominantly primary schools, across the three sectors have taken on a program called Bright Path, which is a way of teaching predominantly literacy, but it is broadening beyond that. It provides teachers with the tools to actually measure the progress of each child. So for the child who may well be coasting, you are also measuring whether they are progressing as well, as well as lifting those who are not doing so well. That is something that I think we will see develop more as a result of the recommendations out of Gonski 2.0.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I have just one other brief question. This refers to page 104 in relation to the residential colleges. It is showing that it has dropped off not only last year but also the year before in terms of the number of students enrolled. Is the department doing anything in order to encourage students to take up this option and stay regional?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Baxter to talk about that.

Mr Baxter: Yes, we have seen a decline in enrolments at the nine residential colleges over the last 10 years. We have over 900 beds and a little over 500 students. I think that rate is 56 per cent this year. The reality is that there are less people living in the wheatbelt than there were 10 years ago. You see a fairly close correlation actually between population decline in the wheatbelt—I am choosing that one because I think three of our residential colleges sit in that region—and the number of students coming. In some ways, it is a business model around agriculture. Once upon a time, you would have had seven farms of 2 000 acres; now you have one large farm with no children on it. Once upon a time, those seven small farms may have had 15 or 16 children who would have attended the small level 3 school and over time would have attended the hostel in their region. You can see that one has over 200 beds and I think there are 94 kids there. You look at the numbers in the level 3 schools and the district highs, and there are a lot of them in that region. That is essentially the explanation. Investment in those facilities has occurred—training of staff, increasing school psych support time for the kids who do go there. Certainly the service, I think, has improved.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If we can go to page 64 in relation to staff, my first question is in and around the voluntary targeted severance scheme. I see that there have been a number of acceptances of voluntary severances. Is the scheme still being offered within the department? What is the current status?

Hon SUE ELLERY: As you would recall —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: A plethora of information there, minister.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes—a plethora of information is coming my way.

The question that was asked was: is it still open? There are a number of positions. Remember, we made a range of announcements about savings—so, some of those, like the camp schools and the like. For those where we wanted people to stay on until the end of the year, we got a special exemption to continue to keep the VTSS open to enable those people, by the end of the year, if that is the choice that they wanted, to be able to exercise that choice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thank you for that. That is in part my next question, which refers to the fourth dot point on page 64 in the section that refers to four staff from sites closing or changing at the end of 2018. I am presuming on that basis we are talking about sites like Landsdale Farm School and the other camp schools. Okay; it is open for them until the end of the year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. Where we required them to keep operating the service until the end of the year, we did not think it was fair to say to them that they had to make a choice earlier.

<015> M/2 [1:19:04 PM](#)

[1.20 pm]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: There are a couple of paragraphs down from that that refer to the state government's commitment to permanent employment with respect to reviewing contractual arrangements for education assistants, cleaners and gardeners. I am keen to get a bit of a better understanding with respect to this. What is the process for education assistants, cleaners and gardeners, as identified in the annual report, on becoming permanent? Is it for a period of time? There is certain period of time, as I understand, for which they have to be working in a certain position. I just want to get an understanding of the process and the application of how the permanency is applied.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is indeed a process, and I will find the information. I have it here. Good thing I can read the file! The Public Sector Commission has released the commissioner's instruction 23 on 10 August this year in respect of the conversion and appointment of fixed-term contracts and casual officers, and that document sets out the arrangements. I will ask Damien to give a bit more detail of the process within the Department of Education.

Mr Stewart: The question related to education assistants, cleaners and gardeners, which was a process of looking at their fixed-term contract employment prior to the issuing of the commissioner's instruction, so the work of Education was well underway ahead of the formal commissioner's instruction being issued, although that work did inform the shaping of the commissioner's instruction. So, there is a correlation between the commissioner's instruction and the work that the department had already undertaken to do in conjunction with United Voice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can I just clarify just there, with respect to the commissioner's instruction, that was not solely based on instruction related to the Department of Education, was it—it is across the board?

Mr Stewart: It is across the sector, yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can interrupt for a moment, there was a position where in respect of employees in the Department of Education it was certainly arguable that the department had not been honouring industrial arrangements around the use of contract and fixed-term employees, so that is why the initial work began.

Mr Stewart: In terms of the absolute numbers, education assistants are our second biggest workforce area. We had some 10 000 of these employees, and nearly 25 per cent of them on fixed-term contracts, so in absolute terms that is quite a high number. That obviously led to the work to have a look at our compliance with industrial instruments in terms of their employment. That work

is largely complete now and in the order of 1 100 of those people have been converted from fixed-term contracts to permanent.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: In terms of that, take education assistants for example, by becoming permanent, how are they tied in with the student? I am talking about students obviously with special needs and assistance. Are they tied to the student now or are they tied to the school?

Mr Stewart: They are tied to the school, although as a result of this process and the conversion to permanent employment arrangements to a school, we have flagged in our conversations with United Voice and, in fact, with our principals and the employees themselves, that they really will have to be accommodated to some extent. If the work moves, then we expect our employees to move to where the work is, within ordinary and reasonable arrangements that apply.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes, because obviously a student may move on from different years to different schools, and yet the education assistants to whom they were quite appropriately attached, if I might put it that way, if they stay, it sort of defeats the purpose in that regard, notwithstanding there will be no doubt other students who may require equally that assistance. What is the mechanism for a principal, should the case happen that an education assistant is no longer required and is perhaps more suitable to another school where there is another need? What is the process that principals would go through?

Mr Stewart: We have a term we refer to, which is “employees requiring placement”. In context, the schools often have a number of these employees. We still have approximately 10 to 12 per cent of these employees on fixed contracts for legitimate reasons—covering backfill, maternity leave. They are a section of our workforce for which there is quite a bit of churn as well, so within a large school they may have 10 to 20 of these education assistants and there is a capacity, I guess, to manage within those numbers. To the extent that they cannot and the person is then surplus to that school, we have staffing processes that allow us to look at other schools within a boundary. We do not have these people travel extensive distances, obviously, for their employment. They are often part-time as well. We have a recruitment process that looks after their placement ahead of jobs being advertised.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think it is worth adding as well that for each child with a disability who may leave a school there are more students coming as well.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I understand that; I accept that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think the point also needs to be made that if you look at the categories of education assistants, there is a whole range of functions that they perform, not just looking after kids with disabilities. There are literacy and numeracy programs; there is a whole range of things they do.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I understand that. I am just trying to get an understanding of how the school manages the process. You also note in that paragraph that this work will continue next year. Is it the case that there is a review underway with respect to the conversion to permanency for fixed-term contract and casual employees for teaching and non-teaching staff? Obviously this paragraph refers to education assistants, cleaners and gardeners, but I am specifically interested with respect to teaching staff and administrative staff as well.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, in-principle agreement has been reached with the teachers union regarding a process of—what is the expression used?—I will say translating fixed-term and casual employees to permanency as well.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Is that underway at the moment?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: How many staff? Do we have an estimate? In this annual report we are referring to 1 570 education assistants et cetera. Have you got a ballpark understanding as to how many teachers and non-teaching staff we are talking about?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think so. I will get the acting DG to talk about that in a minute. But if I can correct *Hansard*, the terminology I should have used was “conversions”.

Ms McGrath: The review of the education act employees has 5 433 current fixed termers and 4 971 casual, so that is the scope of the work we are working through.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: When is that review expected to be completed?

Ms McGrath: It started a couple of months ago and will be complete early next year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I just say that in the same way as education assistants, the system will always need a certain proportion of fixed-term and casual teaching staff as well to account for things like maternity leave, long service leave and all sorts of things. We will always have a pool, if you like, of that category of employees. This is the check: is it the case that that number is appropriate?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I understand that. Can I get some clarity in relation to, I suppose, education assistants, cleaners and gardeners, but also particularly teaching and non-teaching staff? Has the department done any analysis as to how it could impact school budgets? They are being informed that they have to make one, two, three teaching or non-teaching staff permanent at their school, and I appreciate that we have indicated to me is that there is an opportunity for them to identify, if required, to the department that they might be surplus to their school requirements, but quite obviously this could impact school budgets, the one-line budget, the ability for merit selection and the like. I am keen to get an understanding as to what discussions you have been having with schools and whether you have done any analysis in terms of its impact on school budgets.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get one of the officers to make some additional comments in a minute, but if I can make a starting comment. In terms of school budgets, they are generated by the student-centred funding model introduced by the previous government, which, if you like, pays out of different buckets of money, if I can describe it that way, based on the characteristics of the students, not staff—so what the students’ needs are. Every year, before student-centred funding model and since student-centred funding model, around about this time schools are looking at what their needs are based on their projected enrolments and the characteristics of those projected enrolments next year. That happens every year. They are making decisions about what is the appropriate mix of staffing they need to meet the needs of their students. There is nothing new about that. They are adjusting their budgets every year.

<016> K/D [1:29:31 PM](#)

[1.30 pm]

Ms McGrath: One of the reasons why we started this process a couple of months ago was to make sure that we took the opportunity where schools in term 4 are actually looking at recruiting additional staff for schools that are increasing numbers of kids in enrolments. We have been doing that. We have continued to monitor to understand the impact across the whole system. It really will not be until probably early next year, into the calendar year—the school year—that we will know the outcome. From the analysis that we have done, we believe from the system perspective, we will be able to manage with the continuing normal staff that leave the department, the growth that we need in certain areas, and we have been working with Treasury around that.

Mr Stewart: It is probably worth noting this is not new cost. These are employees who we employ on fixed-term contracts and we are changing an employment status. In total terms, the section of the workforce that we are looking at costs us, each year, in the order of about \$60 million, but it is

not new cost. Those things are managed, as the minister pointed to, at a school level—single-line budgets and the mix of things that schools consider in terms of their own budgets.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Do you think it impacts with respect to concern particularly for IPS schools with respect to merit selection and determining the appropriate mix within their schools? Obviously, schools, as you say, will have a teacher or some other teaching staff that may be employed on a fixed contract for a specific purpose. It may well not be the staff member; they might want a different mix or model for a teacher as a permanent. Do you see that there are any concerns with respect to reducing their ability to select on merit?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No. They retain the ability to hire their own staff. That has not changed. What I did ask them to consider was if they identify they need to bring in somebody new, they need a particular set. What I have asked principals to consider in that process is, if there is someone in the existing employees who needs placement—what used to be called the pool—if there is somebody in the pool that matches what they want, they are asked to consider them. But ultimately they make the decision about whether that is satisfactory to them or not.

One of the consequences of IPS was that those schools who, for a whole range of reasons, will never be IPS, and that is an increasingly smaller group of schools, but say, for example, because of the particular disadvantage of the cohort, the community that they serve, but because of that disadvantage in fact they have the greatest need for the greatest flexibility. Because they were not IPS, and would never be IPS, they have the least flexibility. To try to make sure that there was some movement and that when one of those schools identified that they needed a literacy specialist, to use an extreme example, they were not sent a history specialist, to get some movement in the pool, I asked IPS principals to consider but did not take away their right to hire. That remains, and they will still make those choices based on merit and what their particular school needs.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I might just ask one quick question. It is on page 45 and is in relation to the student-centred funding model. There are a couple of references within the annual report too. I might just join it all up together, if I may. The first part is in relation to the review that is underway. When does the government expect that to be completed on the student-centred funding model? I am actually referring to the top paragraph, which refers to the equity adjustment. Earlier, you do refer to the review, so I am joining it all up here to make it helpful.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The independent evaluation done by an external organisation has been completed. The consideration of those findings and a response to it is still before government. I would anticipate that we would have more to say about this in the first half of 2019 and that if there are any changes proposed to the model, we would not rush to make changes but perhaps implement them over maybe a staged period of time. In terms of timing, that is where I think we are.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: You have answered my next question which was: when would the changes take effect from? I am presuming it depends on what the outcome is.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It will depend what they are, but I would not want to turn the system on its head. I do not propose doing that in any event, but I would not want to make significant change quickly.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Wise, minister.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Always!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Of course.

With respect to the organisation that has undertaken a review, which organisation is that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not think there is any secret in me saying that —

Mr Titmanis: Nous —

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you—Nous Group.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: My next question—I will leave it at this and then other members will no doubt wish to speak—is in relation to that first paragraph with regard to the equity adjustment. My recall is that about \$12 million or thereabouts was obtained, if I might put it that way, by changing or reducing the funding rate for schools with student enrolments above 1 200. My understanding is that around \$6 million of that was transferred to —

Hon SUE ELLERY: Reallocated.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thank you, minister—reallocated to smaller schools. I am keen to understand why not all of the \$12 million was reallocated.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Budget savings measures as well. There was —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If you are taking from the schools, should you not reallocate it to the smaller schools? If that is what you are doing, a readjustment, why was the funding that would ordinarily go to the school not reallocated to the smaller schools?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The money was split in how it was spent on a range of different things. There was never a proposition put, or not that I am aware of, that in order to address the issue that the smaller to medium-sized schools had raised, that you needed X million dollars to do it. The issue was around economies of scale. You would appreciate big schools—I think of a couple in my electorate, Willetton, but you have got to think about bigger schools like Churchlands as well. Because of their sheer size, they have much greater flexibility in how they allocate their budgets. But for smaller secondary schools that were not having that, they were clearly demonstrating; the secondary education principals organisation had a view that they needed a bit more assistance. We knew that we wanted to generate money to spend on a whole range of things, so half of it was deemed that it would go to that reallocation to the smaller size secondary schools and the rest of that \$12 million was spent on a whole range of other things.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: On election commitments.

Hon SUE ELLERY: On a whole range of other things —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: On election commitments.

Hon SUE ELLERY: — including some election commitments.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Which election commitments were they, minister?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know that I have a full list here. If you want, I could take that on notice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If you could, please.

[Supplementary Information No B1.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I just find it intriguing that you can reallocate schools' budgets to other schools, which is a reallocation and that is fine, but you will still take \$6 million out to pay for election commitments.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Which are things that go to other schools.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I appreciate that, but it is for operational and funding to schools. You took out \$6 million to pay for unfunded election commitments.

Hon SUE ELLERY: To go to schools.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I will leave it at that at this stage so that others can ask questions, but we might come back to it.

The CHAIR: Hon Alison Xamon.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Thank you, Madam Chair —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It was a direct cut.

The CHAIR: Thanks, member.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Before we finish —

The CHAIR: Thanks, member, you have had your time.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will disagree with that. The money was reallocated to schools.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Hon Alison Xamon, your time starts now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, I refer to page 23, “Significant issues for the next financial year”, and specifically the first paragraph. I was hoping that you could give an update regarding negotiations with the commonwealth on school funding, and particularly whether you are anticipating an increase or decrease in school funding.

<017> G/2 1.39.22

[1.40 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is a live issue —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Which is why I want an update.

Hon SUE ELLERY: — so I am limited in what I can say to the committee—negotiations are on foot now. The commonwealth proposal does involve additional funds; however, there are strings attached to those additional funds, which go to, I guess, restricting the way the state can allocate its resources to education.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, you made reference to that in the report.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am trying to give you some information. I cannot reveal the negotiations because they are happening now so it would be inappropriate for me to do that. There is additional money but it comes at a cost.

Hon ALISON XAMON: When is it anticipated that those negotiations are likely to be finalised? When are we going to get some certainty around what is happening with the commonwealth funding?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We need certainty by the beginning of school year 2019.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Okay. Is that likely to be achieved?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Really, I could not say more than that. We need certainty by the beginning of 2019. I would anticipate that we will resolve it before then but I cannot—we are literally negotiating now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Let us hope there is not an early election that is going to disrupt negotiations.

Hon SUE ELLERY: An early election would be a good thing, I think.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Unless it puts it all on hold.

In relation to the issue of commonwealth funding, specifically for students with a disability, are you anticipating an increase or a decrease in the funding that is available? What is on the table?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know that you could say that it is sort of separated out. I mean, the state would pull the money and allocate it according to the state’s prioritisation of funds. I do not think I can give you any more information than that. If you think about the education reform, if this assists, that is attached to the national partnership, it is around the things that were outlined in Gonski 2.0, which did not necessarily go to students with disabilities in particular.

Hon ALISON XAMON: No. I will take that to say that there is not necessarily an expectation of an increase in the amount of funding available to students with disabilities.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not think that would be accurate, honourable member. I think what we would anticipate seeing is additional money from the commonwealth and then the state will determine how that is allocated.

Hon ALISON XAMON: And this is all part of that same time frame that you just referred to.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Again on page 23, the significant issues for the next financial year, I refer to the fifth paragraph where there is discussion around the development of a new plan to address violence in schools. Can I please ask: what are the anticipated elements of that particular plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It was not my plan to make a government announcement at the estimates committee hearing today.

Hon ALISON XAMON: This is my chance to ask you questions.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Of course it is. I have canvassed some of the things already publicly but government will make an announcement before the end of the school year about the detail of the range of things. I think it would be fair to say—I have said these things publicly—it will include things that make it clearer to staff what their obligations and rights are in respect to, for example, physically intervening where there is a violent incident occurring between schools. It will include elements that make it, I guess, tighter and stronger around what are the triggers for suspension and the triggers for the exclusion process. It will include elements around, I guess, making it clear to students that there are consequences of that kind of violent incident. I probably should have said at the beginning, I preface all of this by saying that this is not about students with a disability.

Hon ALISON XAMON: That was going to be part of my question.

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is about what in my language I call violence with intent. It is not about students who are not able because of a disability to regulate their own behaviour in that sense. It is as much about an ongoing discussion in the community about violence is something that we all have to take responsibility for. There is a view that, pick a social ill and assume that the school curriculum can fix it—whether it is whatever and assume that the curriculum can fix it. The violence that occurs in the lives of many of these young people does not begin and end between 8.30 and 2.20 pm. It goes on in their lives around that, and as a natural consequence of what is going on around them in their homes et cetera, it erupts at school as well. Those are some of the elements that it will include.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Obviously the plan has been finalised. Is any funding attached to that; and, if so, how much?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is fair enough question but I will not make the announcement here.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So there is specific funding attached to this.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, you would be reading into my response. I am not going to make the announcement here.

Hon ALISON XAMON: You mentioned already the special needs of students with disability and how there needs to be separate processes potentially or assessment for how to address that. Is that a part of the plan at all?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, honourable member. Perhaps I did not express it as clearly as I needed to. This piece of work is not about students with disabilities. I have not commenced another piece of work about violence and students with disabilities. I am just saying this is not about those kids.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So potentially is it about children that might have FASD or might be potentially undiagnosed FASD?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will have systems in place where decisions are made or not made based on the developmental capacity of a student.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I look forward to the announcement and being able to unpick it. Hopefully, we will get some of the detail I am trying to seek now.

I move to page 27, paragraph 3, and the issues of student attendance and attendance advisory panels. It refers to an evaluation. Can I please ask when was that undertaken and who did that evaluation?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Hale to talk about that.

Mr Hale: Thank you, minister. Purely by coincidence once again the folks that were engaged to do that were the Nous Group. That piece of work was concluded in 2016. What we were attempting to look at was not only the effectiveness of attendance advisory panels but also of badged attendance officers and, as a result of those findings, provide a review of resources, particularly through our online attendance toolkit. Those will all be updated by the end of this year. I might just note, though, one of the things we have learnt particularly about attendance advisory panels is they can be useful but they are more useful if you use them in the right context. Sometime ago—I think I am right in saying it was probably heading into 2016—the then director general wanted, as part of our thinking about impacting our concerns about attendance, it was her expectation of schools that there should be more use of attendance advisory panels. A lot of that was directed to those kids in the highest-risk category. Many more panels were conducted on that basis. One of the things we learnt out of that was that is probably not the best process for those children and those families because this is actually about engaging the family. One of the things we have learnt is attendance advisory panels can be useful but they are more useful as an earlier intervention strategy when you can see a child's attendance is getting onto the wrong trajectory and intervening with a panel with the family.

<018> F/2

[1.50 pm]

Usually what that involves is a respected community member's involvement in that, which is particularly important for some groups in our communities, to actually encourage the family to engage and rethink and agree to a stronger commitment to having the child or young person attend school. That effort has continued, but it has mostly been focused on making sure schools are helped to understand when an advisory panel is most likely to be beneficial, and providing advice about how best to construct that panel in a given situation.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is it possible for a copy of that evaluation to be tabled?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It was done before my time. I will have to investigate that. If you want to put that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No B2.*]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am on the same page, page 27, paragraph 4. I would be interested in hearing how successful responsible parenting agreements have been as a tool to improve student attendance. There is reference to 149 responsible parenting agreements, which were initiated last year. I am interested to know whether they did actually result in improved student attendance.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The advice that I have in front of me, and then I will find someone else who might be able to add to it, is that that increase in the agreements is because some education regions chose to emphasise those agreements as a particular strategy to improve student attendance. Beyond that, I do not have any information.

Mr Hale: I am sorry, minister; I do not have the data here that relates to the outcomes of those.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will take it on notice. I am not sure what we will be able to provide, but I will see what we can provide about that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: To be clear on what I am asking, it is noted here as a particular tool. For whatever reason, potentially very good reasons, schools have chosen to pursue this. I am very interested to hear whether, as a tool, it is successful or not.

[Supplementary Information No B3.]

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Just for a reference point, I refer to page 29 under STEM education. I wanted to ask a few questions on this. There are just over 800 public schools—I think I read that somewhere else in the report—and it is intended that about 200 will have the opportunity of converting a classroom over to a science lab. We are partway through the first 100, which is where I believe we are at the moment. My real concern is that rather than just focusing on the conversion, are there programs in place—I noticed one in the report with regard to the workshops delivered by Scitech—with regard to giving teachers the expertise to utilise those science labs?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. As part of the broader government STEM strategy, some work has been done on professional development. There is funding available to provide professional development for, I think, 1 200 additional teachers—that is, professional development in STEM for those teachers. That will then have a flow-on reach to tens of thousands of students. The science labs in primary schools is a great initiative—I am really proud of it—but if you do not have the teacher backup with expertise in those areas, that would have limited success. Ensuring that we continue to build on the professional development of teachers in the STEM area is important. There is a range of programs for professional learning and mentoring opportunities. That includes coding in primary schools, which I think began under the previous government; teaching resources for digital technologies and ICT; STEM resources and professional learning; there is Scitech, which you talked about; there are teacher development schools; there is an IPL STEM leadership program; and there is a range of other programs in place as well. In addition—yes, I know it is his writing, because I cannot read it. SCASA provided sample tasks and marking keys—those things are codes, for the non-assessment geeks in the room—to support teaching of science. In addition, annotated work samples have been made available to support teachers as well. That is to help them with resources to do that teaching.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Would I be correct in thinking that most teachers now work more generally, and this is trying to skill them up for STEM?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not necessarily. In primary school, that would be the case. In secondary, of course, it is the reverse and you have very specific subject-trained teachers.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Just going on from that, this is more about my area, which is the northern suburbs, as the minister knows. There were currently 100 offered. How many schools applied in the northern suburbs, if you can give me that figure?

Hon SUE ELLERY: While somebody sees if we can find that, we have just announced the second round of 100. The election commitment was for 200. We have just announced the second round of 100. I may be able to get you the numbers if I take it on notice. Certainly more applied than we were able to meet.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: That might answer my other question.

The CHAIR: Do you want that information?

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Yes, and can I add to that? It is part of the same information. If you can provide the numbers in the northern suburbs and basically how many were successful in the northern suburbs, if possible.

[Supplementary Information No B4.]

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: I think you have already answered my other one, and that was regarding demand in the future.

I deal with a number of schools and they are quite excited with regard to the direct to market, where instead of being seen as government jobs, obviously with a premium, they can go direct to market. I just wondered how successful that is and whether there are any key performance indicators with regard to that so you can determine whether that is a successful model or not.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The program has been running for six months. It took us a little while to set the system up. There are probity parameters in place. There is a range of things that the schools can use the money to purchase. It cannot be on anything. The way I describe it as well is that you cannot use your dodgy brother-in-law who lost his plumber's licence. There are government arrangements about the whole system. As at the end of September, 12 projects have been completed. The program targets lower-risk maintenance and minor works projects and enables schools to procure across 24 project categories. There are tool guides available to assist the schools to work through that. It is minor works up to \$20 000. As at 12 November, there are 27—\$236 000 worth of projects.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: This is on page 44. It talks about security incidents—it is sort of related. I wonder whether there is any view with regard to the damages, which is listed at the top there, and whether there is any difference between the schools that choose to be fenced and the schools that choose to have an open view, where they believe that having it accessible actually reduces it, and whether there is any view as to which is more successful.

<019> Q/L [1:59:16 PM](#)

[2.00 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am sure that fences play a part—logic would tell you that that is the case—but I will ask Mr Fischer if he has any further information on that.

Mr Fischer: Thanks, minister. The amount of wilful damage that is undertaken in schools is monitored. There is funding made available to fence schools and that is based on the priorities determined about the amount of wilful damage that is undertaken at schools. It is shown that you can design and reduce the amount of damage that occurs around schools. Fencing is only one; there are other ways of reducing damage, including the visibility of what is on the school—lighting, security cameras et cetera. But most schools like the idea of having a fence, particularly around the buildings. We do not fence the ovals but around the facilities and we do allocate some money—probably only to four or five schools a year—where we provide the opportunity to fence to reduce the wilful damage. There are other reasons for fencing as well besides wilful damage. Those things might relate to intruders, drug use or those things which are not necessarily measured as damage.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: At the outset, before I ask my first question to the minister, I will just apologise to you and the committee and the witnesses for my late arrival. It would not be satisfactory for a witness and it ought not to be satisfactory for a member, either. No discourtesy was intended.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member—your question, please.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, during the reporting period, were you briefed about the male perpetrators identified during Operation Fledermaus who attend schools in Karratha and Roebourne?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I was not briefed about anyone in particular or the gender of anyone in particular. I was certainly briefed in a broad sense about what was going on with Operation Fledermaus. Indeed, I have visited schools in the Pilbara and talked directly to principals in the Pilbara.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Are any of the witnesses before the committee here in a position to have knowledge about the male perpetrators identified during Operation Fledermaus who attend those schools?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Perhaps what I can tell you is that the information that is provided to the schools comes from police. The school is then required to act. For example, let us say a student has been charged and there are certain bail conditions put in place which say that student cannot go within 200 metres of another student or whatever. The schools will be and, have been, provided information about those students and a specific case plan is put in place for each student accordingly.

To assist the honourable member as well, not long after we came into government, there was an incident I think at a private school in metropolitan Perth. It became clear as part of that that there was not a multi-agency agreement in place for not only public schools but also across independent and Catholic schools where you had student-on-student allegations of sexual abuse. So we put in place a multi-agency protocol, which involved police, Education, Corrective Services and Communities around making sure that schools were notified. What had tended to happen randomly up until that point, I am advised, was that perhaps the school was advised if a student turned up who had certain court conditions attached to them, but not always. Schools would then have to scramble to figure out what safety measures they needed to put in place to protect other students and protect the perpetrator student from others as well. We put in place a multi-agency protocol around that.

Separate to that, in respect to Operation Fledermaus, the department received notifications of 10 students who were enrolled in public schools at the time of the alleged sexual offences in the Pilbara. Of those 10, six students are currently enrolled in public schools in the Pilbara. All of those students have what is called a RAMP—risk assessment and management plan—in place for them. It mitigates the risk of reoffending against not only the victim but for the protection of all students. Then the department coordinates a multi-agency response to consider planning considerations and risk assessments for each individual case. Of those original 10, six are currently enrolled in public schools. The remaining four have either left school completely and are doing other things, or are enrolled in non-government schools.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Of the six that are currently enrolled, are any of them at the same school as their victim?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know that I could tell you that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Does anyone know?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised we do not know. Sometimes the courts will set a bail condition that might name a victim. Unless that happens, the school knows about the charges, knows if there is a risk, and any other information that is provided by the court and puts the plan in place accordingly.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: You mentioned there is a multi-agency protocol and one of the agencies you mentioned was the Department of Communities. The Department of Communities would most certainly know who the victims were, so in this multi-agency protocol is there no communication between Communities and Education as to who the victims are?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Identification of victims when those victims are underage is something the honourable member would be aware is not done. As I said, Education acts on advice from the court about the degree of risk that is posed and what the department needs to put in place in that school to keep everybody safe.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Has Education ever had a complaint from one of the victims that they are attending a school with one of the perpetrators in the reporting period?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not that I am aware of. I might just double-check. I think there was one in the metropolitan area but it was not related to Fledermaus.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: You mentioned RAMPs and that six of the current students have RAMPs, which are risk assessment management plans. How many of those have been carried out during the reporting period?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that they would be current but I might need to take it on notice to check the dates.

[Supplementary Information No B5.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: What is the current number?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is six.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: No, sorry; what is the current number of school-age sex offenders with a RAMP? I know the six are in relation to Operation Fledermaus, but outside of that there would be others, unfortunately.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Since implementing the protocols in May 2017, the department has been notified about 72 cases where students are either currently under investigation—I stress that “under investigation” does not mean that they are guilty—or have been charged and “have been charged” does not mean that they are guilty either.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It does not mean that they are guilty, but it also does not mean that the victim is not being traumatised by seeing the person every day at school.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is why, unlike the previous government, this government put in place a multi-agency protocol to ensure that we could put case management plans in place to keep everybody safe.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: No child perpetrator has been identified in Operation Fledermaus that does not have a RAMP.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Who is currently attending school?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not that I am aware of.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: You might not be aware because no-one in the department has told you, but does somebody in the department know who all the child perpetrators are that have been identified in Operation Fledermaus and are attending school?

<020> O/2 [2:09:16 PM](#)

[2.10 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: The information that is provided to the department comes from police, so the advice available to me is that the information I give in the committee today is accurate.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: You mentioned a multi-agency protocol with Police and Communities; are you in a position to table the protocol?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. Do we have it here?

Mr Hale: We do not have it here but we can provide it.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B6.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: While you are in the process of tabling things, minister, would you table any briefing notes you received during the reporting period about the education arrangements for the child perpetrators identified during Operation Fledermaus?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not necessarily. I will take advice on whether anything I have got is appropriate to be released.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So if it is not appropriate for release, it could be redacted?

Hon SUE ELLERY: And I will take advice.

[Supplementary Information No B7.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Will you ensure that those tabled papers include any documents created in preparation or as a result of the meeting that occurred on 3 November last year between the response team and the Department of Education?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I will not, but I will take advice.

The CHAIR: Have it included in that B7.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Chair, I can go to a different topic.

The CHAIR: Five more minutes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, what regular compliance check processes did the Department of Education undertake during the reporting period to ensure that all of its employees had a valid working with children check card or an application in process?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think it may well be part of the registration process as well, but I will find somebody who can comment on that. Can you provide advice about working with children?

Mr Stewart: The department has a range of checks that it puts in place ahead of employees commencing work for it. That includes a criminal history screening and a working with children check. In the reporting period, we did 18 434 criminal record checks, and we have an ongoing program with the working with children cards. They are valid for three years. Obviously, those things are maintained for all of our 50 000-odd employees.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: How many negative notices did the department receive during the reporting period?

Mr Stewart: Eight interim negative notices.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Eight?

Mr Stewart: Correct.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Would it interest you if I told you that the Department of Communities in answer to a question I asked prior to the hearing said that the answer is 19.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You are asking for an opinion, so let us —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am not asking for an opinion.

Hon SUE ELLERY: “Would it interest you”, what does that mean?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Well, would it?

The CHAIR: Thank you, member.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It interests me.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member. Your question is outside the scope of the hearing because it is asking for an opinion so perhaps —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I will ask a different question then, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, is it eight or 19?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised it is eight. I am advised that we can provide you with further advice to reconcile the differences, but we do not have it here today so we can take it on notice for you.

[Supplementary Information No B8.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, does the department have the capability to provide retrospective data reporting on working with children check cards?

Hon SUE ELLERY: What do you mean?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: For example, you might be able to provide me information current for today, but are you able to provide retrospective numbers for past dates?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Most likely. I mean, it would depend—because we have to keep that information, but it would depend on how far you wanted to go back.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: If I asked for a particular date in the reporting period, you would be able to identify how many employees at that particular point in time had a valid working with children check or an application in process.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I could, and I would be prepared to do that. If you were doing that because you thought, as per your last question, that there was a discrepancy between information provided to you, I would ask you to provide that to me as well so that I can reconcile that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes. I just wanted to know if it is possible. So it sounds like it is possible.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thanks, honourable member.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can I go to page 37.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thirty-seven?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I said 37, but that is actually not the page.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can you give us the subject?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It is the Educare commitment. I think I have written down the wrong number. I think it might be 137. I am wanting to get an understanding, I suppose, of the current status of the Educare commitment.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are a few elements to that.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I meant page 31.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are a few elements to it. One is about, I suppose, making it easier or taking a more proactive facilitation role in helping those schools that want to engage outside school hours care services on their site, so I will get someone to talk to you about that as well. In addition, it includes a component about seeing what we could do around what I describe as the footprint of the land that the department purchases for future schools to see if we can include space in that footprint for a long-day care centre if that was deemed appropriate. It would not be the case, for example, I am sure you would appreciate—you would not build a long-day care centre on every single new school that you built because, obviously, that would be too many. So there is a planning component to it. There is a facilitation component to it around assisting to get out-of-school care on-site if that is what they want. The planning work is continuing with discussions between the agency and the planning agency—and I am not sure who else I can get to add. John, if I could get you to add if there is any further information.

Mr Fischer: There were three components of the Educare commitment. The first one, as the minister mentioned, was to try to plan for the provision of long-day care centres on future school sites. The department has met with the department of planning to change the requirements for the size of school sites provision in future in planning —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can I just ask there: has that been adopted by the department of planning?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No.

Mr Fischer: The current provision for planning for primary school sites is governed by WAPC's guidelines, DC 2.4. That is being amended to be a provision in the liveable neighbourhoods documents, so the timing of that is really governed by when they can release that liveable neighbourhoods update. I understand that they have agreed with the provisioning of the additional land, but the planning for that will occur when Planning release that document.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So if the liveable neighbourhoods update does not occur for a while, because that has been ongoing for quite some time, would you be looking to request some assistance from the department of planning to expedite the process? That might be an answer for you, minister.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can answer that. Yes, and I have already had the discussion with the relevant minister about whether or not that is possible; how we might do it. I would say it is a work in progress. I do not want to wait if the liveable neighbourhoods is going to take however long; I would not be able to achieve the election commitments, so I would say it is live piece of work.

<021> R/L [2:19:38 PM](#)

[2.20 pm]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can I just ask with respect to the notion of a long-day care service, appreciating you need to get some clarity around that from the department of planning perspective, is there a mechanism now available to schools should they wish—and they have got capacity already—to have a long-day care service on a school site?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are long-day care centres adjacent to school sites. If you looked at the whole site you would think it was part of the school site, but I am advised there are not—I will get John to correct me if I am wrong. No, I can think of one in Southern River, for example, where the childcare centre is on the corner. If I looked at that site, I would assume it was all one site, but it is not. It would depend on the particular circumstances, and you could appreciate this. It would depend on what the projections were for enrolment growths at those schools. It would depend on, you know, are we talking about something in an area that is going into the ageing process, people in the area are getting older, or are we talking about somewhere that is going into the next generation? It will depend on all of those things. I do not know, John, if you want to add anything more to that? I guess, is there an obstacle now to a school having a long-day care centre on site?

Mr Fischer: There is a number of long-day care centres already on Department of Education land. Some of it stems back to previous agreements with the commonwealth, where they have established child and parent centres.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: But they are slightly different though, are they not?

Mr Fischer: Except that they are on education sites and they include a long-day care provision. There are a number of those around and they have now been incorporated into the child and parent centre model, which the department runs. There was also a bit of a legacy of other arrangements where sites, when they have been managed by a TAFE in the past as part of their things and that land has transferred to the Department of Education. I think there are about 17 sites which have got long-day care centres on. There is also a provision, I think, again a commonwealth program to establish

long-day care centres. An example of those would have been like at Warriapendi, in the Balga area, where land was excised from the school site. In terms of the question that has been asked, we have generally excised land to provide a long-day care centre on the school site, then provided the ground lease and allowed a private operator to develop or build that site. There is no real impediment, except those the minister has mentioned, which is the requirement for that land in the future for education purposes.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: On page 23, where we are discussing matters with respect to budget repair, how much savings has the government actually achieved? We all are aware of the original savings measures announced on 13 December, which were worth, you might recall, about \$64 million. Then there was a reversal—a good reversal, minister—of a number of those in January, which I think then made it to about \$41 million. Since then there have been some further reversals. I am keen to understand, of that original amount of \$64 million, what is the total amount of savings that have now been achieved, taking into account the reversals that have been made?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If we make sure that we are counting the same thing, and if you are referring to the announcement that was made on 13 December —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The infamous one, yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Pejorative language. If you are referring to the announcement that I made on 13 December 2017, I will see if we can provide you with that now; if not, I will take it on notice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thank you, I appreciate you might need to take that on notice.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think it might be easier, so that it is accurate, that we take it on notice

[Supplementary Information No B9.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Could I also understand whether the negotiations with respect to the final agreements with family support to WA been completed with respect to Landsdale Farm School and Fairbridge WA with respect to the camp schools; and, if yes, when was that finalised; and, if not, when do you anticipate them to be so?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get someone to add to this. As I understand it, all of the elements of what needed to be agreed have been agreed. What remains to be done is putting that into the language that is required in a lease document, but there are no outstanding issues to be resolved. I am anticipating that that should be fairly soon. I am not sure, John, if you could—it was mid-December I think we are aiming to have lease documents completed?

Mr Fischer: Yes, I am anticipating the finalisation of the lease agreement being drafted by the state solicitors at the moment. It is really just the legal language of the terms and conditions, which have already been agreed.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So it is not too far away, essentially?

Mr Fischer: Correct.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: With respect to the staff—I go back to my first question earlier today with respect to voluntary severance scheme—there was, I think, four staff identified there. Can you tell me what arrangements have been put in place with respect to staff at both the camp schools, as well as Landsdale? I am presuming, but I would like some clarification on what supports are being provided to them, firstly, throughout the year, because obviously it has been a difficult time for them, and now with respect to opportunities to continue their employment, if they so wish, at those facilities under the new arrangements? Is the department assisting in any way for those staff?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will have to do a swap. I will get Damien to come back. If I can provide an overarching comment, yes, support has been provided to them throughout the process from the

time of the announcement. In respect to ongoing options within the Department of Education—we touched on this in respect to another question earlier—in an agency of 46 000-some employees, it is normal for us to have positions where we no longer need person X to do that job there and for us to try to find other positions. That is a normal part of what is one of the largest agencies in this state. We do that regularly across all of our employees. I will get Damien to add information about the specific support provided to staff at those particular places.

Mr Stewart: The department's initial communications out to the camp schools and sites that were closing allowed individual employers to express an interest in considering a voluntary severance offer. We received those expressions of interest. The number that you see in the annual report, the four or five that were referred to, were some particular employees who we were able to offer a severance at that point in time without affecting the operations of the ongoing camp school.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: They did not have to wait until the end of this year?

Mr Stewart: Correct.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: They were in a separate category to those that have been held over?

Mr Stewart: Correct.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thanks for that clarification.

Mr Stewart: The other and much larger group of employees that we sought expressions of interest from responded. For those employees and for all of the employees, they were offered individual support case management, including some professional development around CV writing and interview skills. My team went out and visited them at the sites in terms of information sessions and extending those supports to them. We have, in fact, placed one person from one of the closing sites, who did not want to express an interest in severance, so that has already happened in terms of our ordinary process of moving our employees around. We are not receiving certainly any feedback from any employee that they are not feeling supported. Quite obviously, those that have expressed an interest in a severance have a different plan in mind.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can also add, both organisations that are taking over will offer opportunities to those staff to be considered for positions as well .

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I suppose that was just my follow-up question, which I think I mentioned at the beginning, so I appreciate you taking that up. Obviously, that is ultimately a matter for those organisations, and I accept that, but has the department had discussions with those organisations with regard to the potential, should those staff wish to remain at those facilities? What discussions, if any, have the department had with those respective organisations that they are entering into agreements with, with respect to staffing?

Mr Fischer: Discussion with the organisations was really that the organisations will then prepare their management structure for the sites. They have visited all the sites to talk about that, so the staff are aware of the opportunities. We have, I guess, in one sense, facilitated the access to those staff and those two organisations to talk about what positions might be available to them in the new organisation.

<022> B/D [2:29:27 PM](#)

[2.30 pm]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So you have facilitated discussions but have not required those discussions necessarily to be had?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No. We have not required them to employ; we have not told them who they have to employ. We have not required them to have those discussions but those discussions have taken place.

Mr Fischer: Certainly, they have been keen to go and talk to the staff, so we have done that several times since being appointed to that role.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: This is my final question in relation to those matters surrounding budget repair, obviously one of the decisions that was reversed was related to Moora Residential College. I recall, minister, from an answer you gave me probably a couple of weeks ago in Parliament that the department was awaiting information or further clarification from the commonwealth. I want to explore that a little bit more. I want to determine whether the commonwealth is waiting for anything from the department here at a state level in order for them to progress it at their level.

Hon SUE ELLERY: No; it is at their end.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Have you had to provide them with a business plan? I suppose my question is: what has the Department of Education been required to provide to the commonwealth in order to progress this?

Mr Fischer: The conditions for getting access to the grants, whatever the grants scheme was that they announced the funds from, required a request for information to be filled in, so we provided that documentation and that describes the purpose of the funds, the benefits that arise from the project—those sorts of things. We provided that information several weeks ago and they have had follow-up discussions to ensure the completeness of that information and now they have signed off on that. Now they are going through the process about seeking their approvals and then once the approval is provided by the minister, there is a deed of agreement, which actually outlines the contract that exists to deliver both the project and the recouping of funds.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can add to that, the approval of the minister that Mr Fischer just referred to is their minister.

Mr Fischer: Their minister, sorry.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: As I understand it, so that I am absolutely clear, you have provided all the necessary documentation and that has been approved at the departmental level perhaps.

Mr Fischer: It has been assessed at the commonwealth department level as being adequate or whatever and they have made their recommendation to their minister.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So it is at ministerial level.

Mr Fischer: Correct.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thank you very much.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 28 and the first paragraph talking about children with complex behavioural needs. I was wondering how many individual students did the Department of Education and CAMHS work collaboratively to support? How many are we talking about?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can you point me to the paragraph you are talking about?

Hon ALISON XAMON: This is the first one—child and adolescent mental health service.

Hon SUE ELLERY: To address complex behaviour support needs? You want to know how many students that involves?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Specifically working with the child and adolescent mental health service—CAMHS.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not think we would have that. It would not be collected in one place. Sorry; I do not think we can help you.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Where would that data be collected then?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It would depend where the referral came from, so is it referrals done by school site?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is that data being kept at the individual school level?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It might not even be kept. I do not think we can assist you on that data.

Hon ALISON XAMON: The reason I am asking is that the report alludes to the idea of some sort of collaborative arrangement, but it is a simple referral pathway. Is that what I am being told?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is more than that, but I will get Mr Hale to provide you with some more information.

Mr Hale: In relation to the first part, I think the difficulty is CAMHS would have a record of who their client base is but that would not necessarily give you the link. I do not think there would be a record of the engagement with a particular school. However, we have been working to reach out to CAMHS to try to get better inter-agency collaboration around individual students. I do not think even then we would have a register of those, but I will give you an example of the sort of work that means. At the Midland Learning Academy, for instance, one of the outcomes of that outreach to work better together is that we actually have CAMHS officers. We provide a facility there for them to be on site each week and to be able to work directly with young people and directly with their families. I think there are those sorts of tangible examples and the broader intent to engage. Another example would be in relation to the developing pilot of a full service school in Armadale, where CAMHS is certainly at the table there. As we develop case-management plans for each child who comes into contact with the hub, if you like, the referral to their service will be immediately facilitated by their contact with the hub, not having to go and find it. But I think it is more those sorts of levels that we are talking about—a stronger relationship and a stronger working relationship.

Hon ALISON XAMON: One of the reasons I ask is because I am also aware that other agencies have had extraordinary difficulty getting CAMHS to engage directly with the children that they are trying to assist. That is why I wanted to unpick the degree to which that may or may not be formalised, the degree to which that data may be kept. But it sounds as though there is no way to really assess how successful that arrangement is working across the agency.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know whether that is the only measure you would use to determine that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: It is one.

Hon SUE ELLERY: But I cannot say anything more than what has already been said.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I will ask another question then. It is on the same page, page 28, the last paragraph. Of the 12 685 students who were supported by the School of Special Educational Needs, how many students were supported by each school? I know, for example, that the medical and mental health supported 5 851, so I am interested to get the breakdown of the individuals. I am referring to the final paragraph on page 28. I was wanting a breakdown of those 12 685 students into each school.

Hon SUE ELLERY: By school?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think I can provide some of that information. With respect to SEN disability, in 2017, it is 4 337; SEN sensory, 2 497, although there is a caveat that that also includes students

from non-government schools; and in terms of SEN medical and mental health, 5 851, although that also includes students from non-government schools.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I get an idea of how many come from non-government schools in that breakdown?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not here I cannot. We could take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B10.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 30 and the final paragraph. I am wanting to know how many speech pathologist FTEs were employed at the language development centres?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We do not think we have got that here, but we could take it on notice.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Thank you.

[Supplementary Information No B11.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: If I am taking that on notice, can I please also then know where each FTE is based?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can provide you that, I will.

The CHAIR: We will include that in B11.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 40, “Services for students with disability”. Monitoring what is happening with the introduction of the rollout of the NDIS, I was wondering whether there is the opportunity, with the way the NDIS has been structured, for more flexible funding of educational support for individual families, specifically those families with students with special needs who may want to fluctuate between home schooling or schooling arrangements. Is there capacity within the NDIS to look at those to provide that level of flexibility? If that is not possible, would it be possible to explain what the barriers are—whether they are legislative or something else?

<023> I/D [2:39:47 PM](#)

[2.40 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is a lot in that question. I am not in a position to answer it now; I can take it on notice. To the extent that I am able to provide you with an answer to that, I give you the undertaking that I will. I will say this: there is a cross-government high-level working party looking at how the NDIS rollout will impact on respective agencies. You can imagine, in a school setting, that it will be a significant change for therapists to come in and out of schools when they were not necessarily coming in and out before. There may be different people, so we have to work through all those issues. I will take your question on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B12.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Just to follow up on what Hon Alison Xamon asked, there are two things. With respect to the working group on the NDIS that the minister referred to, who sits on that working group from the Department of Education? Does the acting director general sit on it?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: How often does it meet?

Ms McGrath: I have been to one meeting, I think; yes, one meeting.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: To assist—I might direct a question on notice to some other—is it being run through the Minister for Disability Services or is it Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is Minister Dawson who has responsibility for it. If you want me to answer the question as to how many times it has met, I will take it on notice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Could you? I think that would be useful; thank you very much.

[Supplementary Information No B13.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I have two quick questions that really follow on from the earlier discussion about whether there is the capability to provide retrospective data reporting.

Hon SUE ELLERY: In respect to working with children checks?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes; this will definitely have to be taken on notice. During the reporting period, what was the maximum and minimum number of Department of Education employees in child-related work who did not have a valid working with children check?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will take that on notice. Would we not have to pick a point in time?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes, during the 12 months, on any given day over the 365 days, there will be a different level, presumably, of staff who are working but do not have a working with —

Hon SUE ELLERY: What was the highest and what was the lowest?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes. Obviously, the ideal would be zero every day.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Okay; if we are able to provide that, I will.

[Supplementary Information No B14.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: My last question is a follow-on from that. During the reporting period, what was the maximum and minimum number of Department of Education employees in child-related work who did not have a valid working with children check or an application in process?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If we are able to, I will.

The CHAIR: We will take that as part of the previous question, which was B14. Thanks, member, and thanks to all members.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Can I just clarify, Chair, that that is two different questions?

The CHAIR: They are two different questions, but they will have the same number; that is all.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence, which highlights any questions taken on notice, and any additional questions that members may have after Monday, 26 November 2018. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. If you are unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have unasked questions, I ask you to submit these via the electronic lodgement system on the POWAnet site by five o'clock on Wednesday, 21 November. Once again, thank you for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 2.44 pm