

Chairman; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Day; Mr John Castrilli; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Grant Woodhams; Ms Sue Walker; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Paul Andrews; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan

Division 50: Education and Training, \$2 994 278 000 -

Mrs D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr M. McGowan, Minister for Education and Training.

Ms S.A. O'Neill, Acting Director General.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey, Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration.

Mr K.F. Newton, Acting Deputy Director General, Schools.

Ms C. Cook, Executive Director, Curriculum.

Mr K.A. O'Keefe, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning.

Mr M.J. Parr, Acting Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Mr R. Lindsay, Acting Executive Director, Human Resources.

Mr R. Player, Acting Deputy Director General, Training.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. This is the prime focus of the committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program, or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairman to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide, and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by 8 June 2007 so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and, accordingly, I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by 8 June 2007.

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

Members, I will allow a series of questions on a subject, so we will have one question at a time. We will start with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Not any more! Let us stick with member for Cottesloe, a humble position.

The CHAIRMAN: Sorry, member for Cottesloe.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Unless you know something I do not know, Madam Chairman!

The CHAIRMAN: Some say it is a work in progress!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I hope Hansard got that.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Before we move on to the staffing situation, will the minister advise us on the progress in the appointment of a permanent director general? Related to that, how many of the senior executive are in acting positions at present?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can start with the progress on the appointment of a permanent director general. As the member will know, the former director general left the employ of the department in about November last year and the acting director general, Ms O'Neill, is currently fulfilling that position. As I understand it, the

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application process has concluded and the Commissioner of Public Sector Standards has made a recommendation to the Premier. The Premier is currently considering that recommendation. When a decision is made, it will be a matter for cabinet to endorse that decision and an announcement on the substantive person filling the position of director general will be made. I expect that will not be far away.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When the minister says “not far away”, is he talking about weeks, months or a year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I would expect it is a matter of within the next four to six weeks. Three members of the executive are permanent and the rest are in acting positions. As the member will know, being a former Minister for Education for five years, when a position like director general is changed, it creates a reshuffle in a range of positions under that and a number of people go into acting positions. Three out of 12 are permanent.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Three out of 12 are permanent?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Three out of 12 are substantive appointments; they may be permanent in the department. I expect when the decision is made on a new director general, that person will be able to resolve a range of those issues.

[2.10 pm]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think everyone would agree that it is not a satisfactory situation for there to be only three out of 12 in substantive positions. What measures in the minister taking to get permanency within the senior executive level of the department?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Once the director general has been appointed, that will resolve most of these issues because that person will then have the capacity to resolve the issues to which the member refers. As he knows, under laws passed by his government, it is not my position, as minister, to interfere in who fills those positions throughout the bureaucracy; in fact, it would be unlawful for me to do so.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: In relation to primary education, and secondary education for that matter, have any schools been constructed in the past five years that make provision for six-by-six schooling; in other words, primary education finishing at the end of year 6 and students moving to the secondary school environment at the beginning of year 7?

The CHAIRMAN: I do not wish to interrupt the member, but can he refer to the budget papers?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am referring to services 1 and 2 on pages 917 and 918.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member asking me about primary school finishing at year 6 and high school starting at year 7 on the one site?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: No; I refer to when students complete their year 7 schooling on a secondary or middle-school site.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As the member will be aware, we have built a lot of schools in the past five years. I cannot provide the exact locations, but I defer to the director general.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: In the recent past, that has occurred at Ellenbrook and Atwell.

Mr M.J. Parr: Ellenbrook Secondary School, which opened this year, takes year 7 students, and it is planned that Atwell High School, which will open for the first time next year, will take year 7 students as well. As a result, the contributing primary schools then revert to K to 6 schools.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I do not have a problem with that, but how is that reconciled with what I understand is the general decision not to move year 7 students into the secondary school environment?

Mr M. McGOWAN: When I became minister, I was confronted with the issue of whether we have a blanket policy for students going into high school at an earlier year in their schooling, which is the position in New South Wales and Victoria. I had to decide whether we do that, bearing in mind it happens at some schools in the system, including, I think, some district high schools and the couple of schools just mentioned. I think in the vicinity of 18 schools have that arrangement already. I made the decision based on the advice of the department and a very comprehensive report that there was no educational benefit in a wholesale change throughout the system of year 7s becoming high school students. I accepted that there was no wholesale benefit. The cost of that proposal across the system was estimated at \$835 million. Why do something on a mass scale at a cost of \$835 million that, firstly, I do not think was supported by the community and, secondly, was not found to have any educational benefit, bearing in mind some schools might be doing it for historical reasons or in exceptional cases for a particular local reason? Ballajura Community College, for instance, has this system in place.

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Apparently, it works well and suits local circumstances. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will not do it in the future.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is that including new schools?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Unless they are in the planning process and there is a general understanding in the community and it is understood by the department that that is what will happen, I do not envisage doing it in the future, unless an exceptional circumstance is brought to my attention.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: If there is a general desire in the community following discussion and consultation, would it not make sense to consider it, particularly in view of the fact that, as I understand it, a lot of schools in the non-government sector are making that sort of change; therefore, the government schools might be at a mildly competitive disadvantage. Would it not be at least worth considering, even encouraging, where the community is supportive of the system being put in place for new schools in the future?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We would consider it if there were some exceptional circumstance and strong local demand. Personally, I do not think there is broad community support for it. I understand that the Catholic system is looking at it over a long period, and it has its own reasons for doing so. Unless the member for Darling Range can inform me otherwise, I would be very surprised if there was broad community support for it. Most of the anecdotal information I have received, along with the report outcome, indicates that it is of no definable educational benefit. People in the country in particular do not want it to happen. Country people who send their children to board do not want their children leaving for school a year earlier than they would have in the past, for obvious reasons.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I make the final point that the average starting age of students has increased by six months. Many year 7 students are therefore 13 by the time they have finished. I think a lot of parents would be supportive of a middle-school arrangement. I can understand what the minister is saying if it is the same classrooms and campus for students going to year 12 in a middle-school arrangement, which I think it is the case with Ballajura, for example. I understand that there is quite a bit of support for it.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there a question there, member?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I ask for a response to that comment.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know that I can say any more than I have said. Some schools have worked well; others have not. Some communities have supported middle schools and some have not. It has not been strongly supported in Eaton. We have made our decision and I do not intend to go back on it. I certainly do not intend to find \$835 million. If I had \$835 million to spend on education, we could spend it on many other things that would have greater educational outcomes than that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am not suggesting that necessarily, but it may be a different matter for new schools on greenfield sites, so to speak. I encourage the minister to at least keep an open mind on that.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I refer to works in progress on page 921 and the reference to Newton Moore Senior High School with a budget of \$9.5 million, which has been allocated since 2004-05. As the minister knows, the project control group has met about 14 times in 12 months since November 2005 and has been working with architects. The group was asked last year to scale back the project by \$1.5 million. Since tenders have come in, it has been asked to scale back by another \$1.4 million or \$1.5 million, so that is about a \$3 million deficit for the basic requirements that the control group has identified. Will the minister seek to secure that additional \$3 million ASAP so that the basic needs that the project control group has identified can be finished? Can the minister secure that funding now because the tenders are good for only two months?

[2.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for his question. I anticipated the member for Bunbury asking that question. To put some context around that question, as the member is aware, we are spending more than \$90 million on schools in his electorate, or closely located to his electorate, including Bunbury Senior High School, which will receive \$1.5 million; Newton Moore Senior High School, \$9.5 million, as indicated; Dalyellup Secondary College, \$25 million; and Manea College, \$17 million. I announced a new school at Kingston a few weeks ago, which is in close proximity to the member's electorate, that was built at a cost of about \$10 million. There is a range of other schools throughout the greater Bunbury area, including, as the member is aware, a \$4.5 million upgrade to TAFE.

I visited the Newton Moore Senior High School, maybe two weeks ago, and there is no doubt that it needs an upgrade. I had a wander around and looked at the state of the existing facilities. We have allocated \$9.5 million

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to that upgrade. From memory, the upgrade of that school includes a library, upgrades to some of the classrooms, additional toilet and change room facilities and a range of other improvements. We allocated an amount of money to do some core things, which will be delivered. Naturally some people would like to achieve more. Therefore, some groups are holding out hope that additional improvements will take place in the school, and the result is a blow-out in costs. My understanding is that it is a \$1.5 million blow-out in costs, but the member is saying that it is \$3 million. In any event, \$9.5 million is a lot of money. We will make sure that we can get the best we can for that \$9.5 million. I do not intend to allocate additional money to that school. All around the member sit colleagues who would like money spent on schools in their electorates. There is only so much money to go around. From memory, there is \$295 million in the capital works budget this year. Every time I take money from a project to put into the Newton Moore school, it is money that comes off another project. I know the school wants more, but it will get the core of what it has been allocated and whatever else we can do on top of that.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The only two schools in my electorate to which the minister referred are the Newton Moore Senior High School and Bunbury Senior High School. The minister is aware that the schools facilities audit recommended major upgrades at Newton Moore. I visited the school in winter and found water leaking from the ceilings and running down the walls near power points and collecting on the floor that was being used by children. It was a disgrace. It was a danger. I witnessed mould on the ceilings, rundown toilets and outdated facilities. The minister has been to that school and, obviously, identified the problems. The project control group said it needs the money that has been allocated to provide the basic requirements. The minister's response that additional money will not be allocated was obviously a definite answer. If the project control group has to take \$1.5 million off its budget, new drawings will need to be prepared and it will delay the project again. In addition, there will be a cost blow-out. Therefore, it will be a catch-22 situation. Is the minister aware of that situation? It will happen and there will be a further downgrading of facilities. Will the minister give me a similar answer for Bunbury Senior High School for which \$1.5 million has been sitting in the budget for three years and has not been increased? The minister should bear in mind that the budget indicates that by 30 June this year, \$7.961 million should have been spent on Newton Moore and \$496 000 on Bunbury Senior High School.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to Mr Parr in a minute to answer the member's specific question about the repair of leaks that result in water running down walls and mouldy ceilings. The member said that two of the schools I mentioned are in his electorate. That may be correct but other schools are being constructed around the member's electorate that children from his electorate will attend. We have to live within our means. I realise that people would like more, but we have a limited amount of money within which we have to operate. Frankly, in relation to education facilities, the greater Bunbury area is probably getting more attention than any other part of the state.

In response to the member's point about Bunbury Senior High School, I advise that it is a fact that there have been some delays in building projects. The member alluded to the fact that some delays are taking place. I get frustrated by that as well. The reason for the delays involve factors that are beyond our control. The member for Cottesloe will tell the member that the capital works division of the department is very experienced and is very good at creating facilities at new schools. However, they live in an environment of an overheated building market, particularly in Bunbury. The building environment is incredibly heated in that part of the world and that has delayed other projects. Certainly the construction of the Manea Senior Secondary College and Dalyellup Secondary College was delayed largely because of that. Sometimes it is because of other issues. The topography of the land at Manea may have had something to do with it. With Dalyellup, the acquisition of land might have created a problem. A commitment was made and land had to be acquired and that was not easy.

As the member's question was about issues of safety, I will defer to Mr Parr who might have the answer.

Mr M.J. Parr: The building condition assessment process that assesses the building condition of all school premises was completed in mid-2006. The assessment provided data from all schools and will form the basis of the maintenance program going forward. Newton Moore's maintenance needs will be considered.

The budget includes an allocation of \$1.5 million for Bunbury Senior High School. In addition, an amount of \$350 000 from the previous year was initially earmarked to upgrade the library resource centre before a decision was made to build a new library resource centre. The available funding for that school is \$1.85 million. Some of the delay has been caused by negotiation with the City of Bunbury in respect of the land across the road from the school on which this facility will be constructed.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The minister raised the point about Manea College. The allocation for that college started at \$14 million and went to \$17 million in the 2006-07 financial year. It is reported now that the amount is \$27.5 million.

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Mr M. McGOWAN: Where was that reported?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It was reported in the press. I will provide the minister with a copy later. I think it reflects the minister's comments. I cannot see where the additional \$10.4 million is allocated in this budget. That is in response to the minister's answer. Further to the other issue -

The CHAIRMAN: We will deal with that one first, member.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to Mr Parr.

Mr M.J. Parr: At the time of the initial announcement of Manea college, the proposition was to build on the South West Regional College of TAFE site, which would have been a cheaper solution. There were difficulties associated with finding an appropriate location on that site. Ultimately, a decision was made to locate on Edith Cowan University site. The negotiations with the Edith Cowan University have been very profitable in that regard. The topography of that site is challenging and the design solution is quite complex. As a result of that and general cost escalation in the building industry, the estimated total cost has increased substantially.

[2.30 pm]

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The reported total cost is 27.5 million. Where in the budget can I find the extra \$10.4 million to cover that cost?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to Mr Parr on that question.

Mr M.J. Parr: It is proposed that Treasury meet with the Department of Education and Training to address the matter of cost escalation across the program later this year as part of the mid-year review of the program.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Is the cost of the project now \$27.5 million, as reported? Also, did the department purchase that land from Edith Cowan University; and, if so, is that cost included in that amount?

Mr M.J. Parr: There is no cost as far as the land is concerned. The land was not purchased from Edith Cowan University.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: That is right. The land was given to the department gratis. It was endowment land that the council had given to the university. Is it correct that the total cost of the project is now \$27.5 million? I missed that answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The land has been allocated by Edith Cowan University. As the member would be aware, the site in question is on a hillside. It is a challenging, but interesting, site. I have released some plans for the building project. Those plans show that it will be an outstanding, interesting and quality set of buildings. Cost escalation - which is the matter the member is referring to - is something that we will look at in due course. I am unaware of that figure of \$27.5 million. However, I would not be surprised if the costs of this project are going up. It is the same for every project in this state. Any person who is building a house will tell the member that the cost is going up.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I have a further question. Hopefully, this is the last one.

The CHAIRMAN: It will need to be, member, because other members are on the list who have not asked even one question yet.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I think the figure of \$27.5 million that was reported in the press was attributed to the minister. I may be wrong. I will get a copy of that for the minister, just to make sure. The minister obviously intends to stick to his answer that he will not be applying cost escalation to other projects in my electorate, even though he is doing that for Manea College.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The difference between the Manea College project and Newton Moore is that we will be building a completely new school from scratch. As the member would be aware, the site in question is hilly, with some trees, and quite high bush, scrub and grass. Manea is a new college that will be built from scratch. It will be a high quality school. It is a natural outcome for this project, which was commenced some years ago now, that the costs have gone up. We will ensure that a high quality school is built on that site. In order to do that, some cost escalation will need to be met. The difference between that project and Newton Moore is that Newton Moore is an existing school.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It is 45 years old!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, with some facilities that will require improvement. We have committed to do certain things, and we will do those things. People are saying that they would like us to do more than we have

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committed to do. We will do what we have committed to do, and as much in addition to that as possible, within the budget.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The fourth dot point on page 912 refers to staffing in schools, and the problems that the department is experiencing with teacher shortages. An answer to a question on notice tells me that there were 222 vacancies at noon on 30 January. How many vacancies are there today? What is the minister's expectation for noon on 30 January next year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is correct. At the start of this year, three days before the beginning of the first semester, I was advised that there were 264 vacancies. That fell to the figure the member has just mentioned of 222, because naturally hundreds of people were coming into the market, perhaps because they had decided they wanted to go back to work, or because they had come back from overseas, or whatever. That figure also falls, naturally. It has fallen now to a shortage across the state of 28.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What is the minister's expectation for the same time next year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is difficult to predict. A number of predictions have been made. A prediction was made in the press some time ago that by 2012, there would be a shortage in this state of 3 000 teachers.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am asking about 2008.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot predict exactly what the shortage will be next year. We are doing everything we can to improve the situation. It is not unusual to have a shortage. As the member would be aware, and as the member for Cottesloe would also be aware, in 1999, I think it was, there was a shortage of 72 teachers at various points throughout that year. The figure goes up and down. That is a natural progression. In an area in which we have 21 000 employees, the equilibrium that we would hope to reach between supply and demand is not always there. We try to get there, but it is not always possible. Sometimes, we have an excess of teachers. Sometimes, we have too few teachers. We have 28 too few at the moment.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It has been put to me by a fairly senior member of staff in one of the high schools in the northern suburbs, who happens to be a constituent of mine, that on 1 July, a lot of people will decide to retire early because of the new superannuation laws. Does the minister have an opinion on that, or any evidence that that might be the case?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is a lot of speculation in the community about the superannuation changes. The initial speculation that I heard was that the superannuation changes would do exactly what the member has said; that is, encourage people to leave the system. That is what a number of people have said to me. The later advice that I have received, not only anecdotally, but also from the federal government's advertising campaign, is that the superannuation changes are designed to keep people in the workforce for longer, because they will reduce the tax payable on their superannuation should they continue to work beyond 1 July. Therefore, it would appear to me - although I would not want to be held to it - that the superannuation changes will make it easier to keep people in the workforce for longer. It would seem to me to be completely counterproductive, and completely against all the rhetoric of the commonwealth government, to make superannuation changes that would encourage people over the age of 55 to leave the workforce on 1 July. I think people need to take a proper look at the superannuation changes. I think those changes will help the situation rather than hinder it.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I was surprised to find that there is no major initiative for the coming financial year to address the problem of teacher shortages. In fact, I went straight to the budget papers to find out what they say on this matter, but I could not find anything. What initiatives will the government be taking, and how much money will the government be spending, to try to attract people into the teaching workforce?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I assume the member is still referring to the fourth dot point.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is related to the fourth dot point. I would have expected a major initiative on this matter, but there is none. Why is there not a major initiative on this matter, and what does the minister intend to do about that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: For the benefit of this process, I want to be sure about what the member is referring to. This is a long answer, and I will try to keep it as short as possible. As I have said, we are now 28 teachers down across the state. However, predictions have been made that the teacher shortage will become worse in future years. The department has worked very hard to get the number down, from the 200 or so that it was at the beginning of the year, to 28. As I have said, it is not unusual to have a teacher shortage throughout the year in some locations, because, as the member for Cottesloe would know, people go on maternity leave, family members pass away, people get a job offer in Britain, or people get sick. Any number of things can happen in a workforce of over 20 000 teachers. That means that there will always be ups and downs in various schools

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around the state. We need to plan for the long-term future and attempt to fix any problems, particularly in country areas. That is the reason I commissioned the Gerard Daniels report. I commissioned that report in January. The reason I commissioned that private sector agency for that report is that it has a lot of experience in dealing with mining companies throughout the state. Mining companies are also facing labour shortages - quite amazingly, people might say, considering the significant pay that they offer. That report was released today.

[2.40 pm]

It provides a fairly comprehensive indictment on the workforce planning and recruitment system within the department and it says that it is not good enough. It is antiquated, old, it does not plan properly for the future, it does not have modern technology and there is no senior figure in the department responsible for workforce planning and recruitment at a suitable level. There are about 30 recommendations. We will, over time, implement those recommendations, and we will start with the ones that will make a difference. In the meantime, we are recruiting overseas, including Britain, and there have been 150 expressions of interest. We are also working on a package to attract retirees back into the workforce. As the member knows, people often retire at an early age, and the report found that 46 per cent of early retirees are quite amenable to coming back to work. People come out of retirement to live in an Aboriginal community, a beachside community or somewhere in the desert, just to do something different for a couple of years before they fully retire. We will look at measures to make it more attractive for people coming out of retirement. We are also going into universities next month to recruit graduates. Historically, we always started recruiting amongst graduates in November, but we were always beaten to the punch by the private system. We are moving forward to June to recruit graduands. The unfortunate thing about recruiting graduands is that often they will accept a position and then something else will come along later in the year and they will take that instead. This is sometimes not discovered until school starts. I will let the director general go over some other initiatives we will undertake.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: I will outline some of the short-term measures. Members will be aware that we announced a \$2.5 million package for 11 schools as a way of retaining and acknowledging the work of people in those schools where there are a number of shortages. As the minister said, we have been recruiting nationally and internationally, and there have been 150 expressions of interest from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the eastern states. We are negotiating with graduates the prospect of looking at some sort of internship, which is done in other states and which we have done before. We are providing schools with additional support with timetabling to ensure they are maximising the staffing arrangements they already have in place. As the minister said, early offers to graduands are going out to the universities next month. We are looking at options for phased retirement and also options to attract and retain people who are close to retirement age, remembering that our average age is around 44. We are working with several recruitment companies that have networks in the eastern states, and they are providing some staff. We are certainly looking to streamline our processes. We have scholarship programs in place. We have the remote teaching service and the difficult-to-staff schools program. They are, by and large, working fairly well.

For the longer term, members will be aware that the minister has announced the Twomey task force. Several other recommendations that came out of the Gerard Daniels report point to the need for improvements in governance of the department and the department's structural arrangements and, more importantly, the development of a strong workforce plan and examination of our recruitment processes. As the minister said, the department's recruitment processes were reported as being not contemporary in terms of the kinds of graduates and others it is trying to recruit. That is an outline of the short-term measures that we are looking at. We have increased the staff in the staffing area. We have taken away some of the additional work staff in that area were doing so that they are entirely focussed on staffing in schools.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: My question relates to the tenth dot point on page 913. It refers to the percentage of apprenticeships that are being maintained in Western Australia compared to nationally. What modelling has been done for the future? There is currently a skills shortage. Will these people have employment within the next 10 years? If we continue with the aggressive marketing approach towards apprenticeships, will we end up leaving some of these people without a job as jobs fall off? What modelling has been done to make sure that does not happen?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is asking me what planning we are doing for jobs that might be out there in the future, and whether we are structuring apprenticeships to meet that demand. That is a very good question.

Ms S.E. WALKER: It was probably prepared.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can assure the member it was not. It is way too difficult!

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We have now 34 300 people in apprenticeships and traineeships around the state. That has increased from 18 000 or 19 000 when the government came to power. We have increased our rate of apprenticeships and traineeships by two-and-a-half times the national average. As the member will be aware, we have had to be much more flexible in the way we do it, by introducing school-based apprenticeships and reducing the qualification time on a range of apprenticeships to get people into the workforce in the areas in which we need them, particularly in parts of the building trade. We have actually created new apprenticeships in the building trade to address that. In relation to planning for the future, I will defer to Mr Player, who will be able to provide the member with advice.

Mr R. Player: There are a number of strategies in place at the moment. The department establishes the state training profile, which draws on information from various sources throughout the country and the state. However, we are more particularly looking to the future. I might mention that the State Training Board has commissioned a report entitled "Beyond the Boom" to find out, under various scenarios, what jobs will eventuate according to whether the resources boom continues, does not continue, or grows at a slower rate. That report is just about finalised. It has gone to the State Training Board and it will provide a very good blueprint for future jobs. The department has also worked closely with the State Training Board to undertake a study of the defence industry through the Defence Industry Skills Taskforce, which was established by the minister last year. That report has just been finalised and it indicates the types of programs that can be established and will be required into the future. There are also a series of studies in the regional areas being undertaken by the State Training Board in relation to regional needs. They all build up the state training profile. That work is being undertaken.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I refer to the fourth dot point, page 913, under "Major Achievements For 2006-07". It refers to the online teaching and learning system. What is the ambition of this particular program?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to the director general, and perhaps Ms Cook might be able to add something as well.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The online teaching and learning system is a tool that we encourage teachers to use as a repository for learning objects. Many thousands are available across Australia. It is a one-stop shop for teachers to access learning objects that they can drag straight down and build into their teaching and learning programs. It is a support mechanism for schools. In the future we certainly anticipate having assessment items that can also be online for teachers. Many of our teachers have laptops, of course, and so this availability of teaching and learning support materials will be very important.

[2.50 pm]

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Does the minister envisage this particular system being expanded in future?

Ms C. Cook: The expansion of that program at the moment is contingent on commonwealth funding. Notwithstanding that, there were 17 schools in 2006 and the number has expanded to 50 in 2007. It is not only teachers who can access that material - thousands and thousands of learning objects - but also administrators and parents can see it as a one-stop shop to get information about student performance. It is a comprehensive tool. At the moment we are evaluating that program and seeing the connect to other ICT tools. It would be contingent on that continued formative and summative evaluation.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Would it be the ambition of this system for students to eventually access the information on this particular program?

Ms C. Cook: Students can access this information. It is a comprehensive tool for all stakeholders to find out about curriculum materials. They are contemporary materials that look at videos and photographs and a wide variety of other information across the grid.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Does the minister envisage that the online teaching and learning system may solve some of the problems going forward with the absence of teaching staff?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have appointed Professor Lance Twomey, an ex-vice-chancellor of Curtin University, a renowned person in the state in education, to look at these issues. One of the things he is looking at is the use and assistance of technology in providing services to students, perhaps more than it does at the moment. Some students around the state already rely on technology very heavily. Obviously, if a student in a remote part of the state - attending a high school in Fitzroy Crossing, for instance - wanted to study Japanese, it may not be possible to have a Japanese teacher in the classroom. We already rely on the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education to assist those students. Professor Twomey is looking at the advanced assistance of technology to provide learning materials and teaching to students. I do not envisage that this will ever replace classroom teachers. They will always be paramount in a general sense, but we already rely upon technology and the

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assistance of SIDE to teach some courses to students around the state in various locations. In relation to the member's electorate of Greenough, Kalbarri District High School and those sorts of locations are involved. We always prefer to have a teacher and it is a last resort to rely upon these things. I do not know how long SIDE has been around, but people in some of the more distant areas of Western Australia have relied upon this service for many decades.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Is SIDE being used in regional centres such as Geraldton at the moment?

Mr G. WOODHAMS: SIDE is being used at Geraldton Senior College in the delivery of English.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I refer to the second dot point on page 913. In 2007, the first intake of academically talented year 8, 10 and 11 students from across Western Australia commenced secondary schooling at Perth Modern School as part of the re-establishment of the school as the state's only fully select school. That school is the only high school in my electorate. I wanted to raise two issues with the minister. Firstly, has a decision been made about the Graduate College of Dance? Secondly, when the year 8s started, they were all given a school blazer. How much did that cost? I think all the students at the school should have been given a blazer. I am told that students in one year were given a blazer, being the new intake. Is that correct? If so, why were all the other students not given a blazer?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know the answer to the question about blazers and I doubt whether anyone sitting around me knows the exact answer.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Who are the minister's advisers? One of them is the Director General of Education.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The education budget is somewhere near \$4 billion. If the member wants to ask me about the cost of blazers at a particular school when we have 800 of them, I know that I have some good staff but I do not know if they are quite that good. I have inquired, and the staff are unaware of the answer. If the member would like me to provide supplementary information, I can provide that about the provision of blazers to students at Perth Modern School and what they cost.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I am not really saying that there should be a sanction on providing these children with blazers. I am interested in the cost. If that is correct, why were the other children not supplied with blazers?

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to clarify whether the member for Nedlands wants the supplementary information.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister was trying to reiterate that for the record.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am happy to provide that supplementary information. The question was: why were blazers provided to the year 8 class at Perth Modern School this year and what was the cost?

[Supplementary Information No B25.]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Madam Chair, you can console yourself with the knowledge that we are one hour in and we have only six hours to go.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It must be a strain for you. The detail in the estimates is inadequate for education.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I think you were midway through a response.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I expect the answer to the blazer question is that the year 8s at Perth Modern School are the inaugural year 8s. Therefore, the students in the inaugural class have had something given to them that reflects the fact that they are the first intake. From memory, they were selected from 768 applicants. A total of 160 year 8s were selected from around the state. The other students in years 9 to 12 were not select students. That is probably where the difference arises. I will get the exact answer.

The second part of the question related to Perth Modern School being the only high school in the member's electorate. From memory, there are roughly four other high schools in proximity that students in her electorate can attend. There is Mt Lawley, Balcatta, Churchlands -

Ms S.E. WALKER: I am not criticising the fact that there is only one; I am just mentioning it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was just explaining. Naturally, when my predecessor created a select school, Perth Modern School was an obvious one because it was removed from select status in the early 1960s. It was an obvious one to go back to that if we wanted to create a public school of absolute excellence in Western Australia. It was the natural one to do that. I think it was a good decision. In fact, I would like to create another one in due course, perhaps in the southern suburbs of Perth.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Rockingham.

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Mr M. McGOWAN: I doubt it. It would be a good thing to create another school to provide more opportunities for that sort of schooling. New South Wales does it and it has been amazingly successful. In fact, New South Wales kept it when other states went away from it. I think it has been a good thing.

In relation to the question about the Graduate College of Dance, Hon Richard Court came to see me. I had a chat with him about it for about an hour. Parents of the students in the graduate college and parents who would like to have students in the graduate college have come to see me. There are a range of issues, as I have already explained to the member once in the house. Having a select academic school is incompatible with having students from the Graduate College of Dance who do not meet the academic select standards. We are looking for an alternative option for those 15 students. A range of issues surround that, in particular the fact that the Graduate College of Dance is out of contract and has not won any tenders.

[3.00 pm]

Ms S.E. WALKER: Sorry, did the minister say, “not one out of something”?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We would have to re-tender the contract for the provision of that service under the state tender guidelines. That answers the first question. Secondly, as I said, it is incompatible with what is being done at Perth Modern School. Thirdly, we will look at alternative options to meet the requests of the various people involved, including Hon Richard Court. I cannot provide the member with details today on exactly what we will do, but we will look at alternative options for those people. Mr Hilditch knows that we are working very hard to make an alternative arrangement.

We had originally planned to build a residential college at the Perth Modern School site, which was, from memory, up to a \$15 million commitment. We have moved away from that now. The students from the country who attend Perth Modern School will remain living at the accommodation at City Beach rather than at Perth Modern. I have seen the current accommodation at City Beach and it is nothing short of spectacular. It is the type of accommodation that would fit into a four or five-star resort. The students are incredibly happy there. The students whom I have met are very happy to be located in an off-site location where they can get away from the school for a while. Although the accommodation is located in the city, it is more of a rural-type of location than would be the case if the students were located on the Perth Modern site, which is, in effect, in the centre of Perth. We will persist with the current accommodation arrangements for the students who are selected from country to go to Perth Modern School.

[Dr S.C. Thomas took the chair.]

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: I refer to the new senior school engagement programs, which is located at the second dot point under “Major Achievements For 2006-07” on page 912 of the *Budget Statements*. Obviously those programs are designed to keep year 11 students at school. Will the minister provide me with more information on precisely what those programs are and how the retention rate is measured?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to the acting director general to answer the specifics of the question.

Ms S.A. O’Neill: The member is aware that legislation was passed in 2005 to raise the school leaving age to 16 in 2006. We have provided a range of programs across all schools. Some schools have been provided with additional staff. We are asking schools and TAFEs to participate in this because this is about students being engaged in school, training or employment. Funding has been allocated to provide quite different programs for some students. The member is aware that some of the students would rather not be in school. The programs are about engagement and participation. Additional staff and funding has been provided. There are 54 participation coordinators who are designated staff who work with young people to ensure that good programs are in place for them. The coordinators also ensure that the students are working on a program that is appropriate to the students’ aspirations and skills. We have made good progress thus far on retention rates with 573 more students in year 11 in 2007, which is a more than five per cent increase on the previous years. From our perspective on the leaving age, solid participation and good engagement is occurring. More work must be done for those young people who are disinclined to be at school or at a TAFE college. More innovative and contemporary programs are required for those people.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: Are the 54 participation officers based in the schools or the district offices, and do they have a caseload? How do they work?

Ms S.A. O’Neill: By and large, those people are based in district offices, although they do not spend much time in those places. They attend the schools if the young people are in a school, and they take a case-management approach. As the member can appreciate, some of the young people have issues other than education to deal with in their lives. A holistic approach is taken to the young people. More often than not, the participation

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officers attend either a school or a TAFE college to help each individual look for an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: Is a similar retention rate expected in the near future? To what extent is the good employment market resulting in 16 and 17-year-olds going straight into jobs?

Ms S.A. O'Neill: By 2008, students who turn 17 by the end of the school year must remain in school. The apparent retention rate is measured from year 8. In that case, the retention rate is from year 8 to year 12. A retention rate is measured also for years 8 to 11 and 10 to 11. As a result of the legislation and the programs and services we are putting in place, we anticipate that the retention rate will increase. Retention is about school. It is a school-based measure. We are trying to achieve participation under a broader definition that includes school, training and employment. We must look at the measures. Certainly, the low level of unemployment and job availability does impact on that. However, in our view, it is a positive impact because that is one of the things we are trying to achieve. It is okay to be in school, in training and in employment. That is the policy position and it has been working well.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have a general question about the presentation of the estimates. Although I have no qualms with the financial preparation, why is there such limited information provided for an agency that is asking for an allocation of some \$3 billion? For example, services to primary education has just three brief paragraphs.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Where is the member referring to?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Page 917 of the *Budget Statements*. Secondary education has four brief paragraphs and a table. I seek an explanation for why such a major agency is providing such little information about what it is doing, what it intends to do and about its performance.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for Cottesloe for his general question. We might look at past budgets of the 1990s and compare the level of information that is provided in them with this budget. If that is possible during this estimates committee, I will ensure that is done and we can compare the information. The member knows that a range of agencies are available for questioning here; it is not only the Department of Education and Training, but also the Department of Education Services, the Curriculum Council and the Country High Schools Hostels Authority. If the member goes through each of those agencies, he will see that there is a wealth of information.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am talking about the Department of Education and Training.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member looks through the Curriculum Council's budget, he will find all sorts of information about primary and secondary school education. Although it is a nice try to say that this is the only place it is located, it is not.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is clearly inadequate.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is also contained in a range of other budget documents.

[3.10 pm]

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: I refer the minister to the toilet replacement program on page 923 of the *Budget Statements*. The estimated expenditure in 2006-07 was \$1.44 million. However, on page 922, the estimated expenditure on the toilet replacement program in 2007-08 is \$1.4 million. It is a similar amount of money but certainly not a huge increase. Will the minister give us some indication as to the progress of the toilet replacement program and, in particular, is there money in the budget for the toilets at Kent Street Senior High School?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: And Floreat Park Primary School.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. Funnily enough, toilets are a very important issue in schools. I have had roughly five members of Parliament from all sides ask me about toilet blocks at particular schools in their electorates. Some members are particularly fixated about toilet blocks, I might add.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: The member for Churchlands and I would be appropriately fixated on this issue.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Our schools are all old and are crumbling.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Some members might, in fact, be a little bit constipated about toilet blocks. We have increased the amount of money. If the member for Southern River looks at page 925, he will see an increase in the amount of money for the toilet replacement program from \$1.5 million to \$3 million. We will be able to increase the amount of money to be spent on replacement and hopefully meet the demands of many people for

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improvements. The members for Churchlands and Maylands and a number of others, including a member of the upper house, have raised important toilet issues with me. I accept that having hygienic and attractive toilets is an important part of schooling.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Is there money in this budget for Kent Street Senior High School?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is one that has been raised with me. We have not actually allocated a program as yet. We allocate a global amount and at some point in time the department's capital works section will bring forward the priority areas and we will look at that and allocate which schools are to receive toilet replacements. I have certainly heard the message from a range of members in relation to toilets in their electorates.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chairman is also on the list.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I have two questions relating to the capital works program on page 920 and thereafter. The first relates to the amount of maintenance that is necessary in government schools. In 2000, from memory, there was \$64 million worth of maintenance necessary in government schools. After the opposition applied a lot of pressure over about two years, the government suddenly found the money not long before the last election and said that the entire \$64 million backlog would be dealt with. Indeed, a whole lot of public relations signs were put up outside government schools during the 2005 election campaign in effect saying how wonderful the government was in dealing with that problem.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: They had to cover some of them because the schools were polling booths. It was totally inappropriate behaviour.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Indeed, they should not have gone up during the election campaign. How much of that \$64 million has been expended so far? Secondly, what is the current value of maintenance needed in government schools?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Mr Parr to give greater detail, but my recollection is it is \$300 million on maintenance over the four years of this term. The \$65 million was additional to fix certain issues that had been identified. I would be very surprised, while I acknowledge there were signs about capital works, if they were erected during the election period.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I can assure the minister they were. The Premier was the education minister at that time and he would know all about it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My recollection is that they were erected before the election, but if there were one or two schools -

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is highly improper behaviour.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is not unusual for capital works to have signs around them.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: On polling booths four weeks out from an election? As crooked as they come and an embarrassment to the department.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does the member think that during the eight years of the last government there were no signs detailing capital works around the place?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Not on polling booths.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will bet the member that if we had a look, there were signs at schools detailing capital works. The previous government had a capital works program, as we do - admittedly it was half the size of ours -

Mr J.H.D. DAY: They were not put up during election campaigns.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There would have been signs up detailing those capital works.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: There would be staff in the minister's department, and I dare say in this chamber right now, who would have been very embarrassed by the action. It was a political action by the government. I am not blaming the minister personally; he was not the Minister for Education and Training at the time. I am trying to find out the current amount of maintenance needed.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Darling Range had a swing to him in his seat at the last election so if what he is saying did happen, I cannot imagine that it did much good in his electorate. I will ask Mr Parr about his specific question and the \$65 million.

Mr M.J. Parr: The \$65 million program over four years is commonly referred to as "Fixing our Schools" and the planned expenditure in 2007-08 is roundly \$16 million, which will fully commit the \$65 million.

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: Will that complete it? What is the current estimate of the amount of maintenance that is needed in schools?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Are you asking for the estimate of how much maintenance there is in schools?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: How much is necessary now, given that something might be fixed but more maintenance will be necessary down the track?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Parr answer that.

Mr M.J. Parr: The Fixing our Schools program was based on data collected in 2003. This was the building condition assessment process. It was against that data that the \$65 million was allocated.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That must have been collected before 2003.

Mr M.J. Parr: I understand it was 2003.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Okay, my apologies.

Mr M.J. Parr: That process is run every 18 to 24 months. In fact, it was run again in 2006; an assessment was made of the maintenance condition of all school premises across the state. The total cost of the identified maintenance, priority items 1 to 7 - that is, excluding the very low priority - was calculated to be \$77.2 million at July 2006. When one takes into account the expenditure that is occurring in 2006-07 under Fixing our Schools and the \$16 million referred to that is scheduled for 2007-08, the outstanding maintenance is anticipated to be about \$42 million at June next year; that is, at the end of the Fixing our Schools program.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Thank you for that. The second aspect of the capital works program relates specifically to Governor Stirling Senior High School. The minister may be aware that it is an old and fairly run-down school. There has been quite a lot of discussion about what might be done to replace or rebuild Governor Stirling Senior High School, including the possibility of a senior campus at the Midland railway workshops site and a middle school campus elsewhere on the former railway workshops site. The Midland hospital is now being built on the site. What plans does the department have for replacing or redeveloping Governor Stirling Senior High School?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is no allocation in the forward estimates at this stage. I am aware of the issue. The member is not the only member of Parliament to raise this with me. I know there was an alternative plan for a high school site where the hospital is proposed to be constructed. The government decided that it would build the hospital at a cost of \$200 million or thereabouts for the Midland region. I personally think that is probably the right decision for that site; the member might disagree. There are other options around for replacing Governor Stirling Senior High School that involve the Midland railway workshops and so forth that are very expensive. We are aware that there is an issue with the age of Governor Stirling Senior High School, but it is a matter of prioritising and whether, in due course, we replace the school or fix it. We are considering all those options. I am sure the member would like to see a new school listed under capital works but, again, it is a matter of priorities. We are building most new high schools in outer urban or growth regional centres where there is no school, whereas, in the area you are referring to there is a school.

[3.20 pm]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is pretty run-down. What options are you considering?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is nothing in the forward estimates. There are options of either replacement or repair that we will look at.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is a local area education planning process going on?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not at present.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to page 920, and particularly to "Major Additions and Improvements" and "Other School Facilities". I preface my questions by saying that I understand the pressure on the capital works budget and the need to build new schools, but that is not a lot of comfort to people living in the western suburbs or the lower part of the northern suburbs on the coast, in particular. I know that the minister is aware of the pressure on Churchlands Senior High School, which has 500 more students than it has physical plant to house them in. I understand that a review was at least started last year on the provision of secondary schooling in the western suburbs, taking in the catchment area for Churchlands Senior High School. Has that review been completed? If so, is the information available?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will be going to Churchlands Senior High School with the member for Churchlands next month. Although I have not visited the school, I have been shown an aerial photograph of the school, which shows the current configuration of the buildings and so forth. As the member said, it is overpopulated and has

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been incredibly successful, as has Shenton College. It gets good results, as we would expect in an area such as that. Various plans are around that include additions to the site. As far as I am aware, there is nothing in the budget.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I was not asking specifically about Churchlands Senior High School now; I was asking about the review of the provision of secondary schooling in the western suburbs. Both Shenton College and Churchlands Senior High School are pushed beyond the limit. I was wondering whether that review had been completed.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: As the member is aware, a working party report on Churchlands has just been tabled. The department is examining the recommendations. We have been casting across all our secondary schools, examining their enrolments and what they are offering in light of changes in education with the leaving age. It was not just about the suburbs the member for Churchlands was referring to; it was more general. We are looking at the schools the member has mentioned, such as Shenton and Churchlands, with a view to asking what alleviation could be provided for them, in concert with those schools around, so that duplication does not occur across those schools and to maintain the uniqueness of what those schools deliver. That report has not been finalised to date. Several internal working groups have been looking at the different schools and issues that have been raised in them. It is a work in progress.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Your visit will be very timely.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will look at the toilets very carefully.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have had four ministers on the run about this!

Mr M. McGOWAN: In the toilets - on the run!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Let us hope we can fix the whole thing - on the run! There is a very serious issue in old schools. My question is: does the department have a strategic plan to bring the old schools - I am talking about Floreat Park Primary School, which is more than 55 years old - to a standard that is reasonably comparable with that of new schools? I do not mean that old buildings should be rebuilt, because very good education can be provided in old buildings. I am talking about providing comparable facilities to those in the new schools. If the department does not have that long-term strategic plan, we will be putzing around forever trying to fix up the old schools. The time has come to know what are the problems and make sure those schools are brought up to a reasonable standard.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a very good question, and I support the sentiment about old schools.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It relates to what I asked about Governor Stirling, for example.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes. This state has the second highest population of growth of all the states. The difference between Western Australia and Queensland, which has a higher population growth rate than WA, is that more young people are coming to Western Australia than are going to Queensland. An older age demographic is heading there. As a result, we have greater pressure placed on our public schooling system and new facilities than exists in Queensland. The pressure we face, unlike, say, Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and even Queensland, is the demand for new schools.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a question about that; I am not arguing about that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get to your question. That is the demand. In the new capital works there is \$400 million or thereabouts over four years for new schools, \$300 million for maintenance and \$300 million for improvements to existing schools. I agree that there is a ring of schools that need attention, not so much in the inner urban areas but more in the growth suburbs of the 1960s and 1970s, which is the bigger problem. I refer to areas around Balga, for instance.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Wembley Downs Primary School is a prime example of a school that should be looked at, and it is from the era you are talking about.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have not been to Wembley Downs, but I have been to North Perth Primary School, which was built 100 years ago. It is quite an attractive school. Intuitively, it is my view that those very old schools are not as bad - they are quaint and well built and so forth - but it is those built 50 to 30 years ago that have the bigger problems.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will give the minister an example of the sort of issues schools are facing. Wembley Downs Primary School has an off-site kindergarten, which has been forced on site without any apparent discussion with parents. In order to do this, the first swing at it was to say that the school will lose its music room; a kindergarten is to be put in there. As it turns out, I do not think that is now going to happen. Parents

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had to fight that. A new primary school would have a dedicated music room. Wembley Downs school is an old school that happens to have a couple of spare rooms; it has a lovely music room that feeds the music program at Churchlands Senior High School. Of course parents get upset when these things happen, and ask why they should not have a music room, as does a new primary school. That is the sort of thing I am talking about. I am asking that you consider a long-term or medium-term strategic plan so that, systematically, those schools know what to expect. As far as I can see, from watching this for 15 years, there is nothing systematic being done about providing older schools with new libraries. Schools must beg year after year until they get what they want. I am asking for it to be strategic and sensible.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I agree with the general sentiment of your comments about older schools. It is almost like an archaeological dig. There are the very old at the bottom, and as we move through the years, we get to the very new and modern and the various stages in between. My personal view is that schools built between, say, 60 and 30 years ago are more problematic than the very old schools, which often have been upgraded and were mostly very well built. An architect came here in the 60s and built all those flat-roofed schools we see in the ring of suburbs I referred to - there are even some in my electorate - that are not particularly architecturally stunning these days.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: They were probably solid classrooms that teachers could teach in, but not particularly attractive.

[3.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: They have high maintenance requirements these days. I agree that we need to refocus more effort on those schools, and perhaps some more planning in that regard would be a good thing. The issue often is that whilst some of these schools were built for 700 or 800 students, now only 80 or 90 students attend them. There are issues surrounding that and they will be progressively dealt with. In some suburbs of Perth there is a primary school on almost every second block. These schools were built in the 1960s or 1970s when there were lots of kids in those suburbs. Now the demographics of those suburbs has changed.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is not hard to deal with.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ministers have found throughout the years that it is not particularly easy, but there is a progression towards these things. The public must be educated, and local area education planning is about educating the public to deal with those things. One of my priorities is to progressively focus on capital works to ensure that those students who are at some of the schools the member referred to, as well as some schools in the country, get good facilities like those provided at brand-new schools.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I refer to the sixth dot point from the bottom of page 914 under major initiatives. It states -

Support teachers to create more culturally inclusive classrooms . . .

Will the minister put some substance around this particular initiative that the government is developing and explain what is meant by “culturally inclusive classrooms”?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to Mr O’Keefe who might be able to provide the answer. He will give a more educated response than I.

Mr K.A. O’Keefe: The “culturally appropriate” referred to is more specifically to do with what is more culturally appropriate for Aboriginal students. The belief is that some of the poor performance of Aboriginal students and their lack of engagement has to do with, in part, that they do not feel at home in schools that do not reflect their culture. The department has a range of initiatives to make Aboriginal students feel far more at home in the school environment. One of the challenges we found is that teachers who are very keen to make schools more culturally appropriate do not always know where to go to find resources for day-to-day teaching to assist them to do that. This year we launched an initiative that was aimed at providing a range of materials, rather like the early version of online teaching and learning, that teachers could easily access via the web. The initiative will enable them to integrate those materials into their classroom planning and also share with others and build on it over time. The feedback is that it is getting a terrific number of hits from teachers. Our intention is to build it up over time so that it will provide a range of resources that teachers across the learning areas can use. Aboriginal students, regardless of what class they are in, will feel that there is some element of the classroom content that is familiar to their culture.

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Mr G. WOODHAMS: What is “culturally appropriate”? How is that particular definition achieved? What is culturally appropriate in one school with an Indigenous population might be different from what is culturally appropriate in another school with an Indigenous population.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr O’Keefe elaborate, but in general, as Mr O’Keefe said, providing a classroom that Aboriginal students feel is suitable to assist them in learning is a good thing to do. I do not know whether the member is disputing that.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I do not disagree. It is the old jargon. With respect, one size fits all. We would have to develop a range of different programs to make this initiative, which I support, work. We cannot have a template that we would drop over the top of any school that has an Indigenous population.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have gone to a lot of effort, as did the government in the 1990s, to address this issue to ensure that Aboriginal students feel that the school environment relates to them and that they can learn in that environment. Perhaps the more traditional environment did not suit Aboriginal kids because of reasons that are well known and go back thousands of years. We are attempting to make sure that we have suitable programs; for example, a specific literacy program for Aboriginal children, which traditionally has not been as good as we would like.

The member’s question is what is “culturally appropriate”? He is saying that it could be different things in different places.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: The Nyoongah and Yamatji are different people.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr O’Keefe answer that specific question.

Mr K.A. O’Keefe: The member has quite rightly identified the realisation that Aboriginal culture is a very diverse culture across this country and sometimes people tend to think of it as being a bit monolithic. Therefore, we have been very careful in developing this resource and in ensuring that it is district based. In the first instance, the materials came from local Aboriginal education teams as well as local Aboriginal communities and elders. A person would be able to go to a website from a particular school. It would contain information on the cultural elements of that community, which would distinguish it from Nyoongah and Yamatji. There is a strong sense that this is not a one-size-fits-all approach. There is a very clear sense that there will be some very important stories that are specific to a particular area; however, if more information is required, the local contacts for local elders with whom one could speak will be available.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I appreciate the information I have been provided with. With this particular program, will it be possible that students will be able to access some of this material? I note the initiative is directed at support teachers. I wonder if there is the potential, albeit that most Aboriginal communities and people with an Indigenous background in Western Australia do not have access to the web at home, at some stage for Indigenous people to access some of this information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Again, I will let Mr O’Keefe answer the specifics of the question.

Mr K.A. O’Keefe: This is not being developed independent of the online teaching learning system. We want all the elements that apply to that, including access by students, to also apply to this program.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Would the minister provide me with information on how the Aboriginal school at Midvale is operating?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr O’Keefe may be able to give the member specific information on how that school is operating.

Mr K.A. O’Keefe: I do not have standardised data with me that I can provide the member. The anecdotal information I have is for not only Moorditj Noongar Community College, which is the name of this school, but also Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School, which is a Nyoongah school in the Bunbury area. There is a substantial sense of ownership by parents in those schools; a sense that they value education and, therefore, the students also do. I do not have the standardised data, but the feedback I get from the people at that school is it was a wise decision to provide that choice for Nyoongah students. Both those schools are highly culturally appropriate. In fact, Djidi Djidi and its principal have won some national awards. Our sense is that the same sort of dynamics at Djidi Djidi are also operating at the school in Midvale. It is one of those schools that we want to closely monitor to ascertain not only whether the primary school initiative is successful, but also whether we should investigate an addition to it.

[3.40 pm]

Chairman; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Day; Mr John Castrilli; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Grant Woodhams; Ms Sue Walker; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Paul Andrews; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: I refer to page 914. Dot point eight under “Major Initiatives For 1007-08” refers to the implementation of the community service program. That is a great program. Can the minister provide more information about the practical difficulties of implementing such a program? In the schools in which that program has been implemented, have there been any problems with insurance? I understood initially that some of the community groups that wanted to participate in that program were somewhat concerned that they might be required to undertake some level of supervision over the students. How is that program working in practice, and how will it be evaluated?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As the member would know, former Premier Geoff Gallop was very keen on this idea. I understand that this program has now been copied in other states. The aim of this program is to ensure that all students in year 12 - which all students will now be required to do - undertake some form of community service. I think that requirement also forms part of the International Baccalaureate curriculum. That is now also becoming part of our curriculum. I will ask the acting director general to provide some information about the specifics of the member’s question.

Ms S.A. O’Neill: As the member may be aware, a pilot was conducted in 10 schools last year. An evaluation is forthcoming on that pilot to inform the work that is being done this year. It is now a requirement that all students in years 11 and 12 in all schools undertake 20 hours of community service in order to graduate. To answer the member’s question about what the emerging issues seem to be, at this point, from the piloting that has been done in schools generally, one issue is duty of care as students move from their school to other organisations, and the sheer logistics of enabling students to do that. Another issue is what counts as community service and what does not count. Another issue from the point of view of the community organisations is coordination. Certainly, as the member has indicated, the program has been well received. Community members and organisations want to participate in this program. Those are issues that we will continue to look at as the program is implemented.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: Would it be possible to give me a list of those 10 schools so that I can see what is happening in and around my electorate?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sure. I will provide that information outside of the supplementary information process.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: That is fine.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refer to page 911. Dot point two under “Significant Issues and Trends” refers to parental involvement in children’s education. We would all hope that takes place. What is the total expenditure this year on the grants scheme for the parents of students in years 11 and 12? When were parents paid that money? What is the objective of that payment? I am particularly interested in the view of the schools executive as to how effective that payment is in assisting secondary education.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. I think what the member is referring to is the It Pays to Learn Allowance, which is paid to the parents of students in years 11 and 12, and students doing TAFE courses who are of the same age as students in years 11 and 12. The program kicked in last year, from memory. It involves a \$200 payment to the parents of children in years 11 and 12 if they are at high school, and a \$400 payment to the parents of children attending TAFE in the equivalent years. The payment is designed to assist with the costs of education in what were formerly the post-compulsory years of schooling. As the member would be aware, we have introduced a compulsory school uniform policy. A cost is associated with that. Obviously for students in years 11 and 12, certain costs are associated with the enhanced levels of activity that those students might undertake as part of their studies. We want to make it easier for parents to cope with that cost.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What does the minister mean by “enhanced activity”?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member has been to school, as I have. Students in years 11 and 12 are working harder, they might need to acquire more support materials, they might need to buy books, or they might take more advanced excursions as part of their curriculum, and additional costs might be associated with that. Also, we have made years 11 and 12 compulsory, when they were previously not compulsory. Additional costs might also be incurred by students at TAFE if they are doing a trade course, or whatever, and are required to purchase equipment and so forth. We wanted to make it easier for parents. The cost of raising children is quite high. Any assistance that governments can provide to parents is, therefore, a good thing.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Would it not be better to pay that money direct to schools, given that the income of schools from contributions by parents has decreased substantially, and schools are finding it a lot more difficult to get the funds they need to provide courses?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: I think schools have been reimbursed by the taxpayers for that. The member is a parent, so I am sure he would be aware that parents are required to meet a lot of the costs of schooling. Not all parents are as well paid as we are. With regard to the exact amounts that have been allocated, which is the member's question, I will ask Mr McCaffrey to provide that information.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I have, by calendar year, details of what has been paid out over the past couple of years. In 2005, there were 46 955 recipients. That included government schools, private schools, and students in the TAFE training sector. The cost was \$9.4 million. In 2006, the number of recipients increased to 47 830, at a cost of \$9.566 million. As of yesterday, we have made payments to 42 688 recipients, at a cost so far of about \$8.5 million. We will continue to make payments up until 30 June. We find that some late applications are made in July and August. Basically, the payments are made throughout the year, but the majority of the applications hit us before 30 June.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I take it that this is part of the education department budget.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Yes, it is. It is a specific allocation that was provided as part of the learning guarantee that was announced by the government in 2005-06. Funds were provided to the department to enable it to make these payments, along with other elements of this program, which includes the mentors, as we have discussed today, and the extra program funding for schools, which we have also discussed today.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The other part of my question was: does the senior executive of the schools regard that as an effective use of education funds? My other question was: why are parents receiving their cheques now, mid year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It would not be appropriate for members of the executive to provide their opinions on government policy. However, I can answer for the government. I believe it is a valid expenditure. As the member has heard, the allowance has been taken up well. The reason some parents have received their cheques late is that, from memory, it is by application. Some people have not applied. Some people do not get around to these things, as the member would know. I think it depends on when people get around to applying for it. When people get around to applying for it, we provide the money.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is not the case. To give the minister an example, in our house - it is money I really do not want - my wife received the cheque two weeks ago.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is by application. If the member did not want it, he did not need to apply for it.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I applied months ago.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member did not want it, he did not need to apply for it. The member obviously did want it; otherwise, he would not have applied.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a disgraceful system!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Hold on! We are providing assistance to the parents of children in years 11 and 12. That is a very expensive time in children's lives. It is also a time that is extremely stressful for parents. Look at the commonwealth government! It is sending out a \$500 cheque, for no reason!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not excuse its wastage! I hate to see wastage of Western Australian money!

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are providing assistance to parents for their children's education.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The same argument applies for years 1 to 10. It would be much better if the government adopted the Liberal policy at the last election and paid that money direct to the schools. Under that policy, an amount of \$40 for each primary school student, and \$135 for each secondary school student, would be paid to all schools. All the fees for the standard subjects would also be paid. That would mean that the money would go to the schools, and it would be guaranteed to be used for education. Primary schools are very unhappy about the current situation.

The CHAIRMAN: There needs to be a question somewhere in this process.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Schools need money and it has been squandered in an ineffective program. The minister is preventing the executive from saying the obvious - it is ineffective.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am quite happy to inform all the parents around the state whose children are in years 11 and 12 that the Liberal Party does not think they should receive these payments. I note that as part of this budget, the increase in expenditure on education, vis-à-vis the last year of the previous government, amounted to a 30 per cent real increase. When the member says that we should pay more money to schools, we are.

Chairman; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Day; Mr John Castrilli; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Grant Woodhams; Ms Sue Walker; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Paul Andrews; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan

The CHAIRMAN: Members, it is now 3.50 pm. We will have a break at 6.00 pm but if members require a short comfort stop mid-term, I suspect that now is probably an appropriate time to take it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am happy to keep going but if members want to stop now, that is okay.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I need to deal with the budget of the Water Corporation in the other chamber. I will be back after that is dealt with. It is not because I am not interested in education.

Meeting suspended from 3.50 to 4.05 pm

[Mrs J. Hughes took the chair.]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I refer to page 920, under "Other School Facilities". Do new school buildings have inbuilt air conditioning when they are built?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not as a matter of course. It depends upon where in the state the school is located. It is not a matter of course, particularly in the cooler parts of the state. We have an air conditioning program. I will have this verified, but from memory it has a budget of \$7 million a year. It is mainly in place for the hotter parts of the state. It has been argued that air conditioning should be installed in every new school, but that would exacerbate the problem referred to by the member for Churchlands; namely, that new schools get everything and the older schools do not.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I did not say that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That was the general gist. I am sorry if I misrepresented the member. My personal view is that new schools are generally outstanding, and older schools often do not have as many quality facilities. We are installing air conditioning around the state on the basis of need, through a rolling program, particularly in the warmer parts of Western Australia. If the member would like, I will ask Mr Parr to give him the exact details of how much the air conditioning program costs and so forth. It might be \$6.8 million.

Mr M.J. Parr: The department's policy with respect to the provision of air conditioning is based on data from the Bureau of Meteorology. In broad terms, it encompasses regions including the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the goldfields, part of the mid-west, the wheatbelt and the eastern portion of the metropolitan area. It is a zone that has particularly distressing comfort conditions during periods of high temperature, and it is referred to as our air cooling zone. All schools within that zone have now been air cooled. In addition, all transportable and demountable classrooms across the state are also air cooled.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Has any thought been given to the feasibility or possibility of the establishment of a fund for schools to which the very valuable parents and citizens associations might wish to contribute for the air conditioning of school classrooms? This has happened in a few schools in my electorate. The fund could be borrowed from and paid back. The initial sum for air conditioning is too great, and P&Cs are forever chasing their tails. However, if they were able to borrow from such a fund for air conditioning and then pay it back, perhaps interest-free, over a period of time, I think it would be far better. The smaller schools would then be able to provide air conditioners for their schools. Currently it is beyond them to find \$40 000 or \$50 000. I wonder if the minister had given any thought to that type of proposal.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a reasonable suggestion. Many parents and citizens associations have already air-conditioned their schools. A few months ago I visited a school in Koondoola, which is not an affluent area, and saw that the P&C had air-conditioned the entire school from the funds that it had raised. Some schools have been successful in obtaining the funds by fundraising. They can get money also from the commonwealth government's Investing in Our Schools Programme, which formally had a funding limit of up to \$150 000 but which is less than that now. Funding from a combination of that program and fundraising through a P&C can often raise enough money for air conditioning. I am not an electrical expert, but often the transformer or the capacity of a school's system to take on the load of an air conditioner means that the whole school's system must be upgraded, which adds to the expense. The member's idea of an interest-free loan scheme or a loan scheme of some sort has merit. We have not investigated that option thus far because we have been concentrating on those schools that experience 35 degree heat even in the middle of winter. The member can understand where the priority has laid in the past. It does not get that hot in winter in Collie does it?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I will write to the minister.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to the twelfth dot point on page 913 of the *Budget Statements*, which states -

Football Academies to support Indigenous students to stay on at schools were established in Bunbury and Kununurra.

I have a number of short, sharp questions. How many of these academies are there now, and where are they?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: From memory, there are eight. As the member said, there is one in Bunbury, Kununurra, Albany, Broome, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Yule Brook. They are amazingly successful.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: How many students are involved in the football academies?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Of the 300 Indigenous male students enrolled in year 12, 64 were enrolled in these football academy schools. I do not have the exact figure of the number of students. I can get that information for the member.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: From what year do they start?

Mr M. McGOWAN: From years 8 to 12.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What is the total cost of running the academies?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Gerard Neesham came up with the idea and had some very good people who worked with him, including Craig Bridie, a fellow called Mark Skehan, who runs the academy in Bunbury, and the business planner is a man called Ross Kelly. They received \$4.7 million of state funding over four years but have also been successful in securing private sector sponsorship for the program. I cannot say what amount of private sector sponsorship they have received, but it has been quite successful.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Are any girls involved in the program?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ricky Grace runs a basketball program. The success of the football academy has been predicated upon football. The program would not be as successful with other sports because football has an incredibly high status in Aboriginal communities. If we tried to imitate the program for boys using athletics or basketball, it would not work. Similarly, if a program were established in Queensland, it would have to be centred around rugby league.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am not questioning that right now. What similar activities are being provided for Indigenous girls? A lot of money is being put into the program for Indigenous boys. There is no question that if it helps and is successful, it should be done. I do not have any reason to not support that. However, the same amount of money should be spent on specific programs to keep Indigenous girls at school through to year 12.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. The Ricky Grace academy operates in Clontarf and the John Willcock College has a netball program. Also, we are looking at putting in place another netball program in Broome. I will ask Kevin to comment on this. Traditionally, Aboriginal girls have been more successful than Aboriginal boys at education. I agree that more should be done for girls but the greater educational issues for Aboriginal young people concern boys rather than girls, even though there are significant issues concerning girls also. I will ask Kevin to provide advice on the programs.

Mr K.A. O'Keefe: I do not have much to add to what the minister said. The program started with boys because the lack of engagement of Aboriginal males in education was a major problem. As the minister said, we have begun some sporting academies but we are very conscious of Aboriginal girls because we do not want to stereotype the program as simply a sporting program.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I agree with that. I was not saying that it should be.

Mr K.A. O'Keefe: In the sense of them morphing into a more established formal program that is run by the department, the department provides funding to those schools to run the programs. We have not established other formal programs in the same way that we have established formal football academies.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: How many Indigenous students have completed year 12?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There has been a very significant increase in the past few years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What was the figure for last year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Approximately 300 Indigenous males enrolled in Western Australia in year 12, and 64 of those students, or 21 per cent, were enrolled in the football academies.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Does the minister have the figures for girls?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr O'Keefe whether he can answer the member's direct question about the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in year 12.

Mr K.A. O'Keefe: The number of Aboriginal students in year 12 this year is 640.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: My question was for the last school year. How many completed year 12?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: I can provide that as supplementary information.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can it be broken down by gender?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will provide supplementary information for the number of Aboriginal students by gender who finished year 12 last year and for the three years before that, too. I am not afraid of those statistics because I think they tell a good story.

[Supplementary Information No B26.]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Has systematic research been done on the effectiveness of the academies? I am not concerned only with the children who stay on at school, which is good in itself. I want to know about their academic success, including whether they went to university or into a trade or whatever. Has that been studied in depth?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will seek some advice on that. I have met Mr Neesham and Mr Kelly and have visited the academy in Bunbury. My impression from the anecdotal evidence, including the fact that the federal government is trying to copy this program interstate, is that it has been amazingly successful at keeping Aboriginal boys engaged in education. It is an innovative model relying on football and on the fact that the boys will have a male role model who empathises with and perhaps sympathises with the boys and what they love doing. I will ask the director general to answer the question on whether an academic study has been undertaken.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: At the end of last year and this year an evaluation was run at the football academies drawing information, as the member suggested, on retention, completion, participation and attendance rates. It has focused on that type of data. Additionally, it has focused on anecdotal information on best practice or successful practice in running such programs, co-locating the schools, and working alongside and shoulder to shoulder with schools and drawing on the kinds of lessons that we might learn from that information.

[4.20 pm]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is all very well, but the big issue that I suppose I am skirting around is numeracy and literacy in Indigenous children. I do not think anecdotal evidence is good enough anymore if we are going to tackle this problem. I want to get down to the nitty-gritty and find out if these programs assist learning. If one looks at last year's Western Australian literacy and numeracy assessment results for children in the 43 remote schools - I think that is what they are called - one sees that the results went down. We all want this to improve, and I am trying to see if there is any evidence of a particular program giving Indigenous kids that leg-up.

Mr M. McGOWAN: An evaluation was done, and I can get the member a copy of that. It is no problem. I will ask the acting director general to get that to the member. I think the member will be impressed. A major part of the problem with Aboriginal boys is that, historically, for every 30 who started year 7 or year 8, only one or two finished year 12. This program is lifting that rate very significantly and, in fact, keeping virtually all the boys at school until the end, and keeping them engaged in education. The aim is not to create AFL footballers, although the program has had some success in doing that; 12 have completed the course and are now members of AFL clubs. That is a pretty amazing figure. The aim is to keep them engaged in education and going to classes, which they are doing. It is not a punishment-style arrangement; therefore, they are not operating on the basis of "If you do not show up at class, we will stop you playing football". I am advised that a lot of kids go through that scenario throughout their lives. What the school is trying to do is get the kids who are not engaging and misbehaving to play more football to improve their attitude and get them more engaged with the male role models they have, and after that get them back into the classroom. I think what Gerard Neesham has come up with here is revolutionary, and I think that he and Ross Kelly deserve a lot of recognition for what they have done. I will get that evaluation for the member.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we continue, minister, will you be giving that information by way of supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will give it directly to the member for Churchlands.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In that research or other research that might have been done, is there any follow-up over a number of years to see what has happened to those kids in that program?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It has been operating for only a couple of years. As they explained to me, the aim of the program after the boys finish year 12 - they have engaged, studied and worked and had male role models and played football - is to keep them engaged with the individuals who run the course. Those individuals - I have mentioned two of their names - still have a role in providing mentoring and assistance to those boys after school.

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If they finish school and lose that support network, they could fall into bad habits again. There is ongoing individual case management after school.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is interesting. I am interested to know whether these kids go on to do trades as well as play football. Do they go on to university? Is that being followed through?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There has been a lot of success, but we will get the evaluation for the member.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: On page 911, under “Significant Issues and Trends”, the fourth dot point starts with the words “Significant changes”. I direct the minister to two words embedded in that sentence, “behaviour management”. I then direct the minister to page 913 and the “Major Achievements For 2006-07”. The fifth dot point from the bottom says -

Additional resources were provided under the Behaviour Management and Discipline Strategy . . .

What were those additional resources?

Mr M. McGOWAN: From memory, and I will have this confirmed by the acting director general, around 220 or 230 additional staff members were engaged in this, with an allocation of \$36.5 million over four years. We have employed 1 300 additional teachers since we came to office, and this is one of the major areas into which those teachers have gone. In addition to that, we have reduced class sizes and tried to get the right literacy and numeracy teachers, amongst others. As to the exact details of how it has worked, I will hand over to the acting director general.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The behaviour management and discipline strategy was launched in 2001 with an original allocation of \$28 million over four years. Forty-four secondary schools were involved in that program. It was expanded in 2004-05 and now includes a total of 277 primary and secondary schools at a cost, as the minister said, of \$36.5 million over four years. With that funding, schools have been able to reduce class sizes. There are also allocations to identified schools for specific programs, given that the issues can be quite different from one school to another, as the member will appreciate. There is professional learning on management skills, which is a very useful and well regarded program. The schools have been required to set targets on a school-by-school basis. This is a program that runs very well in schools and is much needed, and we are seeing some good results on a school-by-school basis.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Minister, did you identify 154 staff, a number similar to -

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is 277 primary and secondary staff. I said 220, but I underestimated.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: In the minister’s initial response he identified a certain number of staff who had been allocated to what I presume were behaviour management and discipline strategies. I am curious to know what areas they are working on. Are they dedicated teachers as such or are they counsellors?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is hard to tie down the exact figure; we have employed between 1 300 and 1 765 additional staff since we came to office. Some of them are in the classrooms because we reduced class sizes in years 1 to 3 and in some schools in years 8 and 9. When class sizes are reduced, the natural consequence is that more teachers are needed.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Is there a tie-in with the information that the minister and his advisers have provided and the two dot points at the top of page 915, which refer to implementing the graduate teacher professional learning and collegial support programs and finalising and implementing the misconduct management framework? To my way of thinking, behavioural management and discipline are tied in with the development of new recruits. There would also seem to be a relationship between behavioural management and discipline and misconduct management.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, there is not.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: No relationship at all?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The dot point to which the member referred relates to misconduct of staff. Behaviour management and discipline relates to students.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I thank the minister for clarifying that. What is the relationship between the previous dot point referring to implementing the graduate teacher professional learning and the additional resources that I referred to previously?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask the acting director general to answer.

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Ms S.A. O'Neill: As part of the graduate teacher professional learning and collegial support program, graduates receive professional learning on behaviour management and discipline and classroom management skills training. As part of the graduate induction and professional learning, they would be provided with or could access some of the professional learning in classroom management.

[4.30 pm]

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Based on the information that the acting director general has provided, I presume that the additional 1 200 to 1 300 staff brought into the system have been through the process just described by the acting director general?

Mr M. McGOWAN: By additional staff, I meant staff in many areas not just in behaviour management and discipline. There are 277 schools with, as I said, behaviour management discipline programs. The 1 300 to 1 700 additional teachers we have employed are not just all doing behaviour management discipline. Is the member asking how many of the new teachers have gone through this program?

Mr G. WOODHAMS: The minister can answer that, yes.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: As I said, the graduates in their graduate induction program "professional learning" would be able to access and would be strongly encouraged through their school to apprise themselves of professional learning under BMD funding. I also point out that of the 277 primary and secondary schools involved in this program, some receive FTEs, some receive funding and some receive both. Out of that funding, rather than us talking about the number of individuals, each individual school itself can put on staff out of that funding or undertake the professional learning. That decision is made on a school-by-school basis.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I refer to significant issues and trends on page 911 under the fourth dot point. I am presuming this is a conclusion reached after some consultation with communities, schools and society and that that significant issue and trend emerged. Is it not an unreasonable expectation, given that behavioural management is identified as a significant issue and trend, that new teacher recruits, whether or not they are directly involved in behaviour management issues, should have a necessary background in behavioural management?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I understand it, education courses at university have this as a component of their study. The teachers do prac, in which they get direct experience of that. The member is right; behaviour management and discipline is a very significant issue in classrooms around the state in all sectors of schools. Based on what teachers say, it is one of the areas that affect their attitude to teaching probably more than anything else, so we are doing something about it. Over time, I would like to do more about it and we are working on the sorts of things we can potentially do. If a student behaves very badly in the classroom, there is often a reason for that, and the student is often not benefiting from education. He is affecting the education of all his classmates and the attitude of the teacher to teaching. Those students around the state who cause these issues are affecting the whole system and public education in general. As the member knows, we have a requirement under the School Education Act to provide education to all students in Western Australia who would like one. Some students elect to go to a private school. The government does not have the luxury of allowing people to opt out; it provides an education to everyone. That means we must often manage some students who are difficult.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: I refer to literacy among Indigenous students. I refer to the last dot point on page 192 that states -

The Aboriginal Literacy Strategy provided support to Remote Teaching Service schools to improve the literacy outcomes of Aboriginal students.

It refers here to remote schools. How is the Aboriginal literacy strategy being applied in metropolitan schools?

Mr K.A. O'Keefe: We are approaching literacy among Aboriginal students, essentially, through ensuring that the mainstream programs are tailored to suit their needs. In targeted areas, we run additional specific programs for Aboriginal students. The Aboriginal literacy strategy has been specifically tailored to students in remote communities. The focus is based on the fact that those students go to school speaking another language. They are not natural English speakers, so a large part of the program focuses on, not just quality literacy teaching but also the need for teachers to understand the ESL needs of the students. In a sense, that is a very specific strategy focused on the remote schools. We have received requests from other schools in the state to be part of the program because they often deal with many of the same issues. We will want to expand the program once we are comfortable that it is achieving what we want it to achieve. It is in its second year. In the first instance, the major change has been in participation rates. As I think a previous member observed, in remote areas the outcomes went down, but it is largely due to the fact that the participation rate and the testing program has gone

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up. Therefore, in the first instance, the results are poorer. However, many more students are now engaged in a focused literacy program for two hours everyday with a set of activities focussed on the best literacy teaching we can do.

The major program we run in the metropolitan area to actually promote literacy for students who need it most is the Getting it Right program, which is a mainstream program. Many of the professional learning teachers who are in the Getting it Right program have done work specifically focused on the particular language needs of Aboriginal students. It is a mainstream program, but the Getting it Right program is, by and large, focused in schools that have Aboriginal students in them.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: I refer to Indigenous students attending school in the south east metropolitan area where my electorate is. If I see a child at the shopping centre when I am shopping, being an ex-school teacher I ask what school the child goes to. Those children always have an answer. I suspect that a large number of Indigenous students, and perhaps to a lesser extent, non-Indigenous students, have slipped through the system and are not attending school. I am sure those who have been to school are being picked up at some stage. I believe there are probably a number of students who simply do not go to school. What program is in place to make sure we track students who for one week live in Midland, the next week in Gosnells and the next week in Armadale?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Truancy among all students is a big issue, particularly among Aboriginal students, as the member has identified. I will let the acting director general go over the innovative measures in place.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: Firstly, I will talk about the attendance audit we introduced last year. Every public school conducts an attendance audit so that it can target students - probably some of the students you have seen down at the shopping centre - when they should be at school. As you will appreciate, it varies greatly from student to student. That has sharpened the focus of schools on attendance. Student attendance in Western Australia compares favourably with that in other states. As the member rightly pointed out, there is continuing work to be done with our Indigenous students. We have already touched on some strategies. Attendance and participation at the football academy is travelling well. I talked earlier about different programs to engage students of leaving age. There is also a very successful Follow the Dream program for students in which we partner with industry groups. Again, similar to the football academies, it is a much more wraparound case management approach with students to get them into areas of education and training. We are having success with Aboriginal school-based traineeships. We have 524 students across education and training involved in that program. It is about participation in education, training and employment. Our focus on the audit has been on the individual levels. As was mentioned earlier, we are picking up students through school for training and a mentorship into that training program.

[4.40 pm]

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Can I be confident that the audit picks up students who perhaps have not been to school at all? They might not have turned up at year 1 and were not on a roll and could not be followed up later?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member asking whether the audit is picking up kids who were never enrolled?

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Yes.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: Obviously, we are auditing only the children we know about. The Aboriginal education and training area is involved in various programs. One of those programs is the examination of the homelands movement. A number of students, particularly in the Kimberley and goldfields areas, may not have attended school. There is an outreach program in those schools, particularly when they are mobile and go from area to area. There is further work to be done.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I refer to "New Secondary Schools" at page 920.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member does not want another one, does he?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: As many as I can. I would like them finished on time. The *Budget Statements* state that -

Construction will continue at Cape Naturaliste College (Vasse) and Atwell High School (to open in 2008), and Dalyellup Secondary College and the new Manea College on the Edith Cowan University site in Bunbury (to open in 2009).

Bearing in mind the budget allocations as at 30 June, some of the physical work has not even started on these schools. We are considering the 2007-08 budget, and it is a statement of fact. How realistic are the statements in the budget and how confident is the minister that those schools will be open in those years?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a fair question. We expect that that is when they will be open. What happens and has happened from time immemorial is that a school is due to be completed in January or before the commencement of the school year. Often it will open at that time, even though landscaping and final hook-up of computers might be going on throughout the first semester. On occasions a school might be due to open at the beginning of the school year, but the work is not completed and it is too dangerous for the students to be on-site; therefore, the students are accommodated at another location and move in when the school is completed. I suspect that the schools the member mentioned will be finished on the dates we have committed to. Often there might be issues with construction, to which I referred previously. I visited a new school in the northern suburbs that was recently opened at Tapping. The grass was being rolled out while I was on the playground throwing a ball with the kids. I suspect they will be occupied at the times that have been allocated.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I do not have a problem with the lawn still being rolled out.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Some people try to make a big issue of it.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I am realistic and I am trying to be serious about getting schools open. This budget is the latest statement of fact. If I know that \$8 million is expected to be expended as at 30 June, only five weeks away, and no physical work has been done, why would the budget not be adjusted to reflect that? For example, the estimated expenditure should be \$10.5 million, instead of \$1.4 million. Why is the budget not adjusted to reflect exactly when that work was supposed to occur? Maybe that is how it has always been done. Technically that is what will happen, so why is it not reflected in the budget?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The member is right, it is part of the process that we go through. The budget process starts in November each year. As part of that process we have a regular update on the capital works program, which is what applies to all our programs, to make sure that we are reflecting the most accurate costs. When we get to the budget process, and this is what has occurred for a number of years, there is a cut-off point. At that point, we use the best information we have available at the time. That would probably explain the reason that we have not updated these figures. We update our capital works program when we get the tender results. There may be occasions on which we put out to tender and there are no tenderers. It gives us a bit of flexibility throughout the year to rearrange some of those allocations. It is an ongoing budget process and we update it every year.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I know and the minister knows that tenders for Newton Moore Senior High School were not put out until January 2007. Surely it was known in November, when tenders had not been called, that it would not happen. Therefore, why would it not be readjusted?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I cannot explain the exact reason in this particular case because I am not aware of it. Each year when we present the budget program to Treasury we have to provide the strategic asset management plan. I mentioned that it goes forward in November. At times there might be a slight hiccup with the timing. We have the opportunity during the year to update the figures and we try to do that on a regular basis.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a question related to page 917, service 1, and page 918, service 2. I am interested in the dropout rate of teachers. For every teacher who is employed in one year, how many are still there two, three, four or five years later? I am referring to the number of teachers in the department and how long they stay. I will explain why I am asking the question: I asked a question on notice about the students who received scholarships, which was mentioned earlier. In 2006, 20 received scholarships and only 16 were still teaching this year. In 2005, 37 received scholarships and only 23 were still teaching this year. I am interested to know the early dropout rate of new teachers. For every 100, how many are still there after one, two, three, four, five years of service? There may be a difference between primary and secondary education, and that is also of importance.

[4.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Good question! The member for Churchlands has been asking some very good questions on notice!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the minister. A gold star and an elephant stamp, I think!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member either has a very good research officer, or she is doing the work herself. They are very good questions!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Excuse me?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I said they are very good questions!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: They are all my own work, I promise!

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Mr M. McGOWAN: They are great!

The CHAIRMAN: I think the minister has been misunderstood.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I said the member either has a very good research officer, or she is very good at asking questions.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do it all myself.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I fail to see why that is offensive.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I have a very good research officer, but these are all my own work!

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is great!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Now that we have cleared that up, may I have an answer?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are various reasons for the dropout of teachers. As the member would be aware, in any profession there are various reasons for dropout. A lot of people probably go into teaching not expecting it to be what it is. Historically, at the time when my mother became a teacher, people had one career during their lives. Now the expectation is that most people will have between five and 10 different occupations or careers in their lifetime.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Does that apply to members of Parliament?

Mr M. McGOWAN: To some, no! To some, it should apply! The world has changed, and teaching has changed with it. People are now much more mobile in their careers, particularly in this buoyant economy, which provides lots of opportunities for people to do other things. We estimate, as I may have said earlier, that 25 per cent of the teaching graduates in Western Australia who stay in this state are doing something other than teaching. An enormous number of young people are leaving Western Australia to live in Britain. I think on the statistics the number of young people leaving the state is higher in Western Australia than in any other state. That obviously pulls a huge number of young people away from the system. Those young people do that either at the conclusion of their university studies, or after they have worked for two or three years and have raised a bit of money. I am happy to provide the exact figures that the member has asked for. We do not have those figures at this time. I will provide as supplementary information the number of teachers -

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The percentage dropout is really what I am after.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will provide as supplementary information the percentage of new graduates who leave the system in the first five years of teaching, in each year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That would be very useful. I thank the minister.

[*Supplementary Information No B27.*]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The minister has been giving some very good answers. However, what the minister left out of his last answer is that the salaries that are paid to teachers are probably not high enough to attract a lot of young people, given the competing industries in Western Australia at this time. That draws me to a specific example that someone emailed me about yesterday. This person was quite angry about this. It was about a teacher in a school in my electorate who had sought to take two months' leave without pay at the end of this year. It was a male teacher in a primary school. We all know that there is a shortage of male teachers in primary schools. This teacher was told that if he wanted to take two months' leave without pay, he would need to resign from the department. I draw that to the minister's attention, not to go any further with it, but because these are the sorts of policies that do not work well in this modern day. Perhaps that is the sort of thing the minister needs to look at if we are to retain and nurture teachers. In my view, a teacher who had travelled for two months would come back with a broader view of the world and would probably be a better teacher.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are looking at those sorts of issues. I have heard those anecdotal stories as well. Often, when we get to the bottom of these stories, there are factors that we were unaware of when we heard the broad statement by the individual concerned.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It was not the teacher who emailed me, by the way. It was the P & C. It was very angry about that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Right. Sometimes we hear stories that are not entirely accurate. I have heard those stories as well. That is the sort of thing we will be looking at as part of the workforce planning initiative that I released today. We will be looking at all those sorts of policies that may be in place. My understanding is that, generally, the department tries to accommodate people as best it can, because it is aware of the issues that we face in retaining teachers. Only one in 10 teachers in primary schools is male. We want to keep as many males

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in the system, in primary schools in particular, as we can. The member has raised a good point, and that is an issue that we are aware of.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refer to the first dot point under “Major Achievements For 2006-07”. It states in part that public schooling was provided to 252 029 students. I refer particularly to the number of student enrolments in secondary education. What is the department’s interpretation of the trend? That is, what percentage of secondary students in Western Australia are currently in the state government system? How does that compare with the situation five years ago and 10 years ago? What is the projection of the department for the next five and 10 years?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There has been a long-term trend in this country since the late 1980s of a decline in the proportion of students at public schools - particularly secondary - vis-a-vis private schools. The actual global figures have not changed a great deal for public school students. In fact, they are roughly static. There may have been a slight increase in the number of students at public schools, but proportionately, compared with private schools, there has been a decline. In overall terms, 68 per cent of students are in public schools, and 32 per cent are in private schools. The balance between high schools is roughly similar these days. However, there is a heavy preponderance of students at public primary schools versus high schools. The balance between public and private in years 11 and 12 is roughly similar these days. It may even be slightly more in private schools in years 11 and 12 than in public schools. That trend has been ongoing, as the member would know. For the exact figures, I will defer to the director general.

Ms S.A. O’Neill: The figures that I have for the member are massed up primary and secondary, although we know from 9 February 2007, our census period, that there are 23 052 secondary students. We do not have the comparative data for 2006. However, it would be fair to say overall, as the minister has indicated, that the trend for secondary students over the past few years is that there has been some loss in each year. Sorry, I was talking about the number of schools. The number of secondary students for 2007 is 83 561. That is made up, of course, of senior high schools, senior colleges, student studying through SIDE, agricultural colleges, and education support centres.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What is the projection for the future?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not have that information at hand.

Ms S.A. O’Neill: I do not have those figures with me. With the introduction of the new school leaving age in 2006, an additional 1 000 year 11 students came into the system. In 2008, for the year 12s, up to 3 000 additional students will come into the system. Those students are in the secondary patch, and they will be coming in as part of that figure.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: As a follow-up question, we would expect a bit of an upwards blip in enrolments, with the compulsory years 11 and 12 in government schools. However, the trend has been a decline. From my knowledge, the decline has probably been a bit more rapid in recent years. However, if I can make this observation - this leads to my question - we would expect, if we looked at it at first glance, that the change would be most dramatic in higher-income areas. That is, we would expect that people would use their higher income to opt for a private education for their children. However, Shenton College, Churchlands Senior High School, Rossmoyne Senior High School and some of the other government schools in the higher-income areas are bursting at the seams. Government schooling is more than holding its own in the higher-income areas. Therefore, if there is a drift away from government schooling, it is happening in the lower-income areas. That concerns me. It should also concern the department, because these are the kids whom we need to target. What strategies has the department put in place to raise the standards - if that is what is required - in other government schools so that they will match those in schools like Shenton, Churchlands and Rossmoyne? That is where the problems lies. We would expect to be losing kids in higher-income areas. However, we are not. We are losing them in the lower-income areas. That is what concerns me.

[5.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I want to see public education remain strong and viable into the future. I think that was probably the member for Cottesloe’s ambition as minister. I do not necessarily think it is everyone’s ambition. I do not think it is the Prime Minister’s ambition. I do not think it is the federal minister’s ambition. The attacks on public education have been nothing short of shameful. The member for Cottesloe raised a good point. At first glance we would expect that proportionally there would be more kids in private schools in the areas of Shenton Park, Churchlands, Nedlands and Subiaco.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There absolutely is but the trend is not there.

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Mr M. McGOWAN: However, with the socioeconomic cohort that those schools naturally have, as the member would no doubt be aware, they attract the sons and daughters of judges, doctors, engineers and so forth. A very high proportion of those sorts of people with those sorts of backgrounds live in those areas and they can send their kids to public schools knowing that they will be surrounded by like kids. What is more, they are new schools. Shenton College is a new school. That would make a difference. In the outer urban areas, not so much the country - this would have been the same when the member for Cottesloe was the minister, though it has probably accelerated a bit - there are many more low-fee private schools. In my area a new one has opened called Living Waters Lutheran College. It opened about 10 years ago. These schools have grown like Topsy. There is one called Tranby College. There is a new one opening in Kwinana.

The low-fee private schools have had some success in the outer urban areas by pulling a lot of students away from public schools. My view is that public schools have to be able to compete. We need to make sure that public schooling is an excellent choice. I am sick of people running down the system, as some people do, and thinking that public schools are a second-rate choice. I will defend the system and try to make it better. The changes we made this year and will continue to make to some of the curriculum issues have been dedicated to trying to make the system better, even though a lot of the changes relate to only public schools. We think we have arrested some of the criticism of public schooling. Changes will also be made to things such as uniforms, canteen food and community service. We hope that the massive amounts we are spending on capital works will make some sort of difference. I understand the member's point about some of the more affluent areas. I think I have identified the reason. If parents live in those affluent areas, they can send their kids to one of those schools knowing that they will largely be surrounded by other students with similar aspirations whose parents, in turn, have similar aspirations.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think the minister needs to reactivate the local area planning for some of those schools that he referred to earlier, maybe those that are 10 or 15 kilometres out of the city. There are a lot of 40 or 50-year-old secondary schools with poor facilities and unviable enrolment numbers - schools with 400, 500 or 600 students.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which ones is the member referring to?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The minister referred to them earlier - schools that were probably built in the 1960s and 1970s in the growth area of Perth at the time. A number of schools in the northern suburbs are old, not up to scratch and probably have less than desirable student numbers in them to offer viability. Probably the best example is what was done in the south-east corridor. I think that needs to be done in the northern and eastern suburbs of Perth.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member raised a fair point - I was mainly referring to primary schools, not high schools - about some of the high schools around the place having low student numbers, not as many as the primary schools. The issue of public education in primary schools is not as great.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Parents are happy with government primary schools. They are not convinced about government secondary schools.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is what we have to turn around. I have said right from the start that I do not object to people having a choice. If they want to send their children to a private school, I have no objection whatsoever. What I have to do and what all state education ministers should do is make sure that the public system gives parents a choice. Parents need to feel that they have an excellent choice and do not get second-rate opportunities. The figures given to me show that students who finish year 12 in public schools do better at university. The issue for a lot of parents is making sure that their children get to university. We have done things at Perth Modern School and aim to provide another of those schools. I will not be the minister then, but I have little doubt that when this cohort of year 8s hit year 12, it will be the number one school in the state.

[Mr P.B. Watson took the chair.]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Where will you be in five years?

Mr M. McGOWAN: When public schools are in the top schools in the state, that will help arrest -

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Sitting on the back bench in opposition, idling away the time, thinking about the glory days.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I suspect I will be ambassador to central Europe at that point. I will watch from afar; from Vienna. I will watch with interest to see Perth Modern School become the best school in the state.

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Mr G. WOODHAMS: I refer to the last paragraph on page 920 under “Other School Facilities”. It says that \$2.9 million will be allocated to various schools. Can the minister identify those schools to which that \$2.9 million will be allocated?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think it is a global figure and a list of schools is decided upon during the year according to need. I will defer to Mr Parr. If he has anything further to add, he can do so.

Mr M.J. Parr: The \$2.9 million is a combination of four or five single line items. The power supply upgrade program in large part follows the 100 schools program to ensure that there is sufficient power supply in schools to drive the computing hardware. As far as communications is concerned, telephone systems are upgraded as required and priorities are sought from district offices. As to fire compliance, very often when major upgrades are undertaken at schools, it is found that the fire compliance is not consistent with current codes. We continue to install security alarm systems on an annual basis, particularly in those areas that experience high rates of vandal damage. As to sewer connections, every endeavour is made to follow behind the Water Corporation in its expansion of the sewerage connection program across the metropolitan area. We follow that in large part. In answer to the member’s question, at this stage the actual schools for 2007-08 are not identified.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: How is that process negotiated? It would not take much to convince me that \$2.9 million would not enable all schools that require upgrades to be upgraded. How are schools prioritised and what is the process in determining that?

Mr M.J. Parr: What I said initially should give the member some idea. With power supply, there is an intent to follow the 100 schools program. With telecommunications, clearly there are older schools with older systems where the telecommunications system is about to fall over, so there is a response there. I spoke of fire compliance. For security alarm systems, the program is targeted specifically at those schools that incur a high rate of high vandal damage. That is sourced from our internal security systems. Sewer connections, in large part, follow the activities of the Water Corporation.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: On the advice that I have, I am presuming that there is a list of several hundred schools, by the sounds of it, and there must surely be some way that they are prioritised in doling out \$2.9 million over the next financial year. I am trying to find out how those schools are chosen.

[5.10 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The department has a capital works section and a maintenance section to deal with these issues. The schools submit what they would like to be done in the district and the district offices have some input into what is a priority in the area. Naturally, a good principal will try to acquire as much as he can for the school, just as a good member of Parliament does for his constituents. It is a competitive process. The department must allocate a list of priorities for what must be done on a needs basis throughout the state. This issue applies to not only this matter, but also a range of other maintenance projects throughout the state.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Does the minister have an active involvement in this process?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have not been involved in it thus far. The member for Cottesloe was a Minister for Education for five years. He might be able to tell members about his involvement. Obviously, if someone brings to my attention a matter concerning the toilet block at the Floreat Park Primary School - it is a similar process for toilets - I might have some input and say that I have seen the toilet block at Floreat Park Primary School or Kent Street Senior High School or John Forrest Senior High School and say that it is an area of interest. I do not think it is inappropriate for a minister to do that.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Embedded in the aforementioned sentence are the words “fire compliance”. Does it concern the minister that perhaps some schools in Western Australia are not compliant with the necessary fire department regulations or legislation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We make sure that all our schools are made compliant. Would it concern me if they were not? Yes. That is why money is allocated. Fire equipment dates. Every fire extinguisher must be replaced after a time because they have a use-by date, even if they have not been used. An ongoing program follows up all of those matters. We put a lot of effort into that. A school in the member for Churchlands’ electorate caught fire some years ago.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The Churchlands Senior High School had a major fire.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Churchlands Senior High School had a major fire and there was a major fire at another school recently. There are ongoing issues to ensure that appropriate security and fire compliance measures are in place. One of my predecessors instituted the program to put fences around schools. It was a

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quite controversial measure but the proof is that it has substantially decreased the vandalism bills for the schools that have built a fence.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: I refer to other school facilities under the capital works program on page 920 of the *Budget Statements*. An allocation of money has been made to improve traffic management and parking around schools. This is a big issue. It is an annoying issue because it is an issue for twice a day for only a short time. In my electorate of Maylands, the Inglewood Primary School has put in place what seems to be a successful program called the Walking School Bus program. The parents supervise the children who walk to school. I “drove” the bus on one occasion, which means that I walked at the head of the line.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does the member have the appropriate licence?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: I had all that checked out. The program seemed to work very well and I was very impressed. In some communities in which children live near a school and there are a large number of children, a small group of parents could be rostered on the program. I suspect that the Walking School Bus program at this school was started by an interested parent. Does the department play a role in the Walking School Bus program, and will any more of them be established?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to the acting director general. I have not heard of it.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The Walking School Bus program is used by a number of schools when parents choose to be involved in the program because it relies on the involvement of parents. The department encourages the program because it is a physical activity and also for the reasons the member suggested. The department is very encouraging of that program. Perhaps Mr Parr can provide more details.

Mr M.J. Parr: A number of schools have adopted programs, of which the Walking School Bus program is one. Many schools have a RoadWise committee, which is supported by the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Road Safety Council, and they promote safe routes to schools. As the acting director general has mentioned, the Walking School Bus links with the objectives of the physical activities task force. The funding allocation to which the member referred has been in place for a number of years and has been highly successful. The moneys, in the main, are used 50-50 with the relevant local authority to provide minor road engineering modifications in the vicinity of schools. The \$500 000 allocated during 2007-08 will probably deliver improvements worth twice that amount when local government is also involved. By and large, local governments have been very cooperative.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: Is the issue of parking and traffic congestion mainly concerned with primary schools? Do most high schools have buses that pick up the children and take them home or that are located near public transport?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Each school is different. We all have schools in our electorates. Some years ago I took up the cause of parking traffic management at Charthouse Primary School in my electorate when some changes were made. There are far more primary schools than there are high schools. Therefore, by definition, more issues concern primary schools than high schools.

Mr M.J. Parr: The minister’s observation is correct. A far greater number of primary school children than secondary students are delivered to school in a vehicle driven by a parent. That trend has increased over the years. Our experience is that it is primarily a problem at the end of the school day rather than at the beginning of the school day. Typically youngsters are dropped off over a period of about 45 minutes before the commencement of lessons, whereas the activity at the end of the school day is very concentrated during a five or 10 minute period as people exit the site. Strategies that encourage alternative modes of transport not only assist managing the traffic and congestion, but also have other benefits regarding physical activity.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: My question relates to service 1 on page 917 and service 2 on page 918 of the *Budget Statements*. I am concerned in particular about the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education. The minister recently provided me with a wonderful answer that consists of many pages to a question I asked. My question was about the number of children enrolled in schools who are doing at least one subject through SIDE. I was quite surprised to learn that there were 2 943 students enrolled in public schools - that is, primary, district high schools and senior high schools - who were accessing at least one subject through SIDE. Is that a dramatic increase from the 2006 school year to this year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask an advisor to answer whether it is an increase. As I said earlier, SIDE has been around for a long time and provides services to students in the country. It provides services also to some students in the metropolitan area in subjects for which there is not a specific teacher at the school. I recollect that a school in the member for Darling Range’s electorate -

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: Some 180 schools receive that support. What concerned me is the Geraldton Senior College has 109 students and it was accessing SIDE to provide English classes at the time the answer was given. My question is related to teacher shortages. I heard someone from the department - I do not know who it was - say on the radio that we must accept that using SIDE in regular schools is the way of the future, which really concerned me. I want to see where Schools of Isolated and Distance Education is going, and whether there has been an increase in the number of students and full-time equivalents over the past year or so. I have another question that relates to this.

[5.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to the acting director general to provide the exact figures and whether they have increased or decreased.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: SIDE, as the member knows, is a well-recognised quality provider of schooling to Schools of the Air. However, the service is used by not only Schools of the Air, but also many students who are ill, travelling or who may be the only student studying a particular subject at an isolated school. Distance education uses that mechanism. SIDE does a range of things as part of the department. Some of them are more innovative in practice - for example, the flexible learning in schools project, which is being piloted in Port Hedland and Newman. There is also a link with some schools in the metropolitan area, including Melville and Willetton, as a means of supporting graduate teachers, particularly those studying in TEE subjects. That is a complementary, very positive program. Perhaps the member is asking whether we see it as a long-term solution to replace teachers. We certainly see high-level technology use as complementary to the teaching process. It is obviously preferred in most schools to have a face-to-face teacher; however, we are not able to do that in some places - for example, the Schools of the Air. We have other services for those students. It would be true to say that at the start of this year we had an addition to the number of students studying through SIDE. In some cases and for a range of reasons, it is one subject here and another subject there. However, every effort is being made to ensure that an appropriate teacher is put into those classes. By and large, the increase relates to situations in which individual students are studying a subject by themselves and there are not enough students to make up a class. As I said, through the pilot program, there are a couple of schools in the north west and some to the east that are making greater use of SIDE subjects as an interim solution than would normally be the case.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I ask the question again so that I can get an answer through supplementary information. I would like to know the number of students enrolled in SIDE last year compared with first term of this year, and whether there has been an increase in the number of full-time equivalents at SIDE.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will provide the answer by way of supplementary information. The exact question asked was about the number of students studying with the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education this year compared with last year. What was the second part of the question?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I wish to know the number of full-time equivalents at SIDE.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is the number of teachers involved this year compared with last year.

[*Supplementary Information No B28.*]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the minister. Someone showed me an invoice they had received from SIDE. This was someone who had a child enrolled in a regular school but was studying a subject with SIDE. They were sent a bill for \$50 because their child was enrolled in SIDE. I want to know whether that happens to all of the 2 943 students enrolled with SIDE. Are they actually charged for services when they are enrolled in a regular school?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I ask Mr McCaffrey to answer the question.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I think it is a resource fee to cover postage and the type of thing one would ordinarily be charged by a school. There are costs involved for teachers to periodically travel to the school's area to work one-on-one with students. I do not have the actual fee structure with me, and I have not looked at it for some time, but I would not have thought that the \$50 invoice would be anything more than some of those additional costs.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can we look at this in a bit more detail, minister? This is a situation in which students are enrolled in a regular school and through no fault of the parents the school has, for whatever reason, enrolled the students in SIDE, to study English at Geraldton, for example, or science at another school. An example I have been given refers to 100-odd students studying science. Why are they being charged an extra fee?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can look at that. This is the first I have heard of it. However, the member's question is quite detailed. She can put the question to me on notice and I can provide an exact answer.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: Can I not ask the minister the question now and have the answer provided through supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is hard to work out what the question is.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Firstly, are people being charged a fee? I have seen an invoice for a \$50 fee. If a parent has a child enrolled in a regular school and because of circumstances outside the parent's control - there is, for example, no teacher available for a subject in first term - the school has enrolled the child in SIDE, does the minister think it is reasonable for them to be charged a fee, whether it is for postage or whatever? I think it would be much more reasonable for the department, through the budget, to carry that extra cost.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There may be a range of factors to explain why a charge has been applied to a certain course as opposed to others. Some courses have charges applied for particular travel, additional software or particular art equipment. It is difficult to give the minister an exact answer. To the general question asked by the member about whether, in the public school system, most costs should be met by the state, the answer is yes. However, in her supplementary question the member seeks information as to why a charge is being applied to students enrolled in SIDE. I can provide the member an answer to the question by way of supplementary information.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am asking more than that. Why is the charge being applied - if indeed it is - to a student who is enrolled, for example, at Geraldton College and who has been enrolled in SIDE by the school because it does not have an English teacher? Why are they being charged?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know whether they are.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is what I am asking.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is alleging that they are. I do not know if they are.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If they are, is it reasonable?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a hypothetical question. The member says that someone has brought forward an invoice for a subject. I do not know what it is and I do not know where they are.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am asking whether we can clarify it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is asking me to clarify a situation involving someone I do not know and circumstances I have no knowledge of. Why does the member not get a specific set of questions together? I have been as helpful as I can to the member during the estimates committee. Why does the member not provide a set of questions? I cannot work out exactly what the member wants, and I have to answer specific questions.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: If I can have the answer as supplementary information, the first question is: will parents in the circumstances I have described, with a child enrolled in a regular school and who have, through no act of their own, had their child enrolled in a subject with SIDE, be charged by SIDE for their child to study that subject? If so, what is the fee?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The circumstances the member has outlined seem, on the face of it, to be reasonable. However, as I have said, some subjects actually have charges associated with them because of additional course materials, such as photographic equipment. A school in my electorate runs a maritime subject which involves diving components; students learn how to dive. There are charges associated with that. That is reasonable. I am trying to get to the bottom of how to structure supplementary information for the question the member is asking.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will ask the minister a really good question on notice.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am really trying to be helpful. If the member would do that, I will give her -

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Another gold star? Okay!

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I refer to the third sentence from the top of page 921 that reads -

The \$22 million seatbelts in school buses program will commence.

That is presumably for 2007-08. Will the minister please elaborate?

[5.30 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member understands the background to that program and the crash that took place in Rockingham. I will ask Mr McCaffrey to elaborate on where it is at.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The member will probably be aware that this program is due to be completed by 2015. A lot of work has already been done across the department to find out what types of buses we have, what

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contractual arrangements are associated with them, and how many school buses are owned directly by schools. The cost of a seatbelt-compliant bus can range from \$120 000 to \$400 000. It will take some time to work through this program. A number of working parties have been established through the Public Transport Authority and are undertaking a leading role in this. The department is participating actively in it, and we have been allocated a small amount of money in 2007-08 to commence the work. That increases greatly in 2008-09 and then it is funded over the next four or five years.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Can the minister provide information about the types or makes of buses that have been approved for the fitting of seatbelts?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr McCaffrey to answer that.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: We have done an audit of the schools, and it varies greatly from school to school. Some schools have three buses, some have smaller buses. We have to deal with about 182. I am not 100 per cent sure of the information the member is looking for.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Mr McCaffrey will be aware that many buses that are currently school buses would not be acceptable for the installation of seatbelts. There is a range of buses that would be rejected. As Mr McCaffrey correctly pointed out, there are a number of buses of different sizes and ages in schools already, and many of them are privately owned by school bus operators. There is some angst, as everyone will be aware, among school bus operators about the circumstances in which they will have to renew their buses and what type of bus they can buy and whether it will be eligible for the seatbelt program.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member referring to the private contract buses?

Mr G. WOODHAMS: That is part of what I am referring to.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot answer that question because it does not relate to my budget; it is part of the planning and infrastructure budget. In relation to the buses that we run, I will let Mr McCaffrey answer the question.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Basically the school buses are the responsibility of the schools. Schools raise funds for buses for a variety of reasons and use their own resources to get a bus for a purpose. They are also expected to put aside in a reserve account sufficient funds to help them replace the bus when it reaches its use-by date. As part of our survey work, we have identified how many dollars are held by each school to replace its buses. The allocations I was talking about were to supplement those schools over time as the buses come up for replacement and assist the schools in being compliant.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Does the department attempt to identify an appropriate make or model of bus? Does it make those sorts of recommendations?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: It is probably more of a school-based decision about what it needs, based on where the school has to transport its students and for what programs and conditions. The size of the buses varies greatly. The decision is taken at the school level, and we would assist in that process. For argument's sake, if a school wanted to lease a bus, we would assist with the process of evaluating leases and the purchase and financing side of it, but only in a support role. They have to be compliant when they replace a bus now.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Some brand-new buses would not be eligible for the seatbelt program because of the nature of the bus. The make and model of the bus will not be compliant. The information I am seeking is whether there are instructions or assistance from the department to a school that wants to buy a new bus and become part of this program. I understand the process thoroughly now, and I thank the minister for that earlier explanation. Does the department provide any assistance to a school that wants to buy a new bus that is not eligible for the seatbelt program? Does the department say it has to be a Toyota or a Nissan, or whatever? Does the department go into that detail?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I need to clarify the point. The Public Transport Authority is taking the lead on this. It sets the policy and we would amend any internal policies to reflect what the schools need to do. Schools are expected to comply with the new policy and if they need advice, support or recommendations, I think the Public Transport Authority would be the most appropriate place for them to get that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: My questions relate generally to primary and secondary education and in particular to the difficulty of attracting teachers to remote areas. I refer to pages 917 and 918 of the *Budget Statements*. Recently the minister made a statement that \$4 200 would be provided as an incentive for teachers who complete the school year in certain difficult-to-staff remote areas. Does the minister intend to extend that into 2008 and beyond? Secondly, what other plans are being put in place to try to attract teachers to the difficult-to-staff areas?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: It is an important issue. It was identified in a number of documents issued by the department some years ago that providing a workforce is the most important role of the department. As I said earlier, when the member may not have been here, we now have a shortage around the state of 28 teachers out of 21 000. It is written up as a crisis, but it needs to be kept in perspective. Particular issues are faced largely in country areas. Sometimes teachers go to the Pilbara and they get poached immediately by a mining company. We send another teacher and that teacher also gets poached. We face an ongoing issue, and it is difficult to resolve because we will never be able to pay some of the rates that some mining companies pay, and members will know that some of the conditions are somewhat different. The \$4 200 payment was discussed and worked out between the department and the State School Teachers' Union as an incentive, as the member said, or an acknowledgement payment for the more arduous conditions teachers face in some schools in rural areas where there are a range of conditions surrounding a particular school. At the moment, 11 schools are receiving that payment. The estimated budget is \$2.5 million. It will not be carried on next year; it was specific to this year. What I would like to do as part of our next round of EBA negotiations is to concentrate our effort specifically on country schools. We have to make sure we make it more attractive than it is at present for teachers to go to those locations. We want all teachers to receive a pay rise as part of the next pay round, but we must address the differential between those very difficult-to-staff schools and the schools in, for instance, the member for Darling Range's electorate, the member for Cottesloe's electorate or my electorate. I mentioned today that we must look at a range of things. The Gerard Daniels report released today recommends a range of things the department must do for workforce planning and recruitment practices. For instance, I have heard that every new graduate must fill in five or six different forms just to apply for a teaching position. Things like that must be fixed. We must deal with those things. I indicated today that we must look at other incentives, apart from money, to get teachers out to some of the difficult locations. Attracting teachers to difficult locations is not always about money. Often, teachers will have children of their own starting high school, for instance, or going into years 11 and 12. Those teachers are happy to go to a country location for a certain period but then want some assurance that they can get back to the city. At the moment, I understand that there is little assurance that they can get back to the metropolitan area. We must look at that issue. As the member knows, in 1997 the issue of country service was done away with in broad terms. We must make sure that if teachers who are agreeable to going to a difficult-to-staff location want some assurance to get back to a location of their choice in due course, it can be given. We must start looking at those sorts of attractions for teachers to go to those areas.

[5.40 pm]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: One problem has been the delay new teaching graduates or entrants into the profession in Western Australia face with registration. Is action being taken to speed up that process?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am not sure of your question, but we are starting recruiting next month.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am referring to the delay in getting teachers registered with the Western Australian College of Teaching.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As you know, under its act, the College of Teaching is independent from us.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I know, but it impacts on teachers going to government schools.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I understand it, the College of Teaching is reasonably quick at progressing most applications, as long as the applicant provides all the information. The college has a role in doing some criminal assessment of the person in question. Some applicants do not provide all the information that is required for that, and that has slowed things down. Other information has slowed things down. I understand that it has been relatively quick. There has been a problem with the College of Teaching, of course, due to the drafting issue surrounding the regulations. With our own employment screening in the department through CrimTrac, if people provide all the information, there are no issues getting approval within two days. Some things have improved; it is just that there are sometimes issues with some people. Often, people say something different from the real issue. Some people say that although they are available to teach, they have not been given a job. However, the truth is that they are available to teach in only one location where we do not need a teacher. We need teachers to go to the difficult-to-staff locations, not to schools in nice, leafy suburbs.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Perhaps I can deal with this under major achievements, significant issues and trends, major initiatives and so on. It is about a hobbyhorse of mine. Every decade or so the department launches a campaign to encourage schools to get into teaching foreign languages and then it tends to drift off. Are more students studying foreign languages now than there were 10 years ago? What is the trend? Are any special initiatives being taken to encourage the teaching of Asian languages in school?

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Ms C. Cook: As the member rightly pointed out, there have been various programs to increase the number of students participating in languages. Obviously, a syllabus is being developed to allow teachers to access the very best practical resources. It also outlines the essential content to be taught in those areas. I do not have the statistics.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Would the member for Southern River like me to get the statistics for him?

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Is the trend an increasing number, the same number or a decrease?

Ms C. Cook: It is an increasing number because of the requirement that students must participate in languages. This is mandatory from year 3. There is an increasing number of students from a decade ago for that reason.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Is there a difficulty getting appropriate teachers for foreign languages?

Ms C. Cook: There has been an increasing trend in that regard. That will be addressed in some instances through scholarship programs that the department has been offering for the past four years. They have been targeted for various subject areas, such as physical sciences, maths and some languages.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I refer to the last dot point on page 912, which refers to the Aboriginal literacy strategy providing a report to remote teaching service schools to improve the literacy outcomes of Aboriginal students. What is the funding for that strategy for the current financial year and the estimate for the next financial year?

Ms C. Cook: The funding for the Aboriginal literacy strategy is drawn from a range of commonwealth funds, which includes the Indigenous tutorial assistance scheme. It ranges from \$650 000. There is \$490 000 from ITAS and there is also the Aboriginal education specialist teacher program, which comes to some \$450 000.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: You said \$450 000 in the current year, is that the answer?

Ms C. Cook: In the current year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What will it be next year?

Ms C. Cook: For the Aboriginal education specialist teacher program it will be the same amount, and the same amount from another commonwealth fund of \$650 000. The exact amount for the Indigenous tutorial assistance scheme has not been identified.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am sorry, minister; I am lost with the answer. I thought the total amount was \$450 000, but I heard other numbers. If the information is not available, I am very happy to receive it as supplementary information.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I understand that there is a commonwealth component of \$1.4 million.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: To save time, can I have the total amount as supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sure.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am asking for the amount of money spent on the Aboriginal literacy strategy to support the 43 remote teaching service schools for the current financial year and for the next financial year.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Commonwealth and state?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Yes.

[*Supplementary information No B29.*]

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The reason I raised this matter is obvious. I have followed the figures for those 43 remote schools over the past few years and we have not seen much, if any, increase in literacy and numeracy levels among those students. I understand that there has been a decrease more recently. It is a bit hard to follow them through because often only a small number of children do the tests. This is a plea rather than a question.

[5.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a statement. I think we have the exact figures. There is a whole range of variables involved in this. The member must remember that when these tests are undertaken on any one day, that it is a snapshot on that day. Often the attendance on that date might be different from a past year. We also know that it is a long-term project to improve these results. I have the results for all Aboriginal students. Over the past three years, for year 3, reading has declined, writing has improved and spelling has remained roughly the same; for year 5, reading has declined, writing has remained static and spelling has remained static; and for year 7, reading has remained static, writing has improved substantially and spelling has remained static. These figures apply to 42 remote schools.

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is what I was asking.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The minister is right; in some areas they have gone down and in some areas they have gone up.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No matter what, they are systematically developed tests and should be given in a standardised way. It gives a snapshot of the deplorable state of numeracy and literacy in those schools. My plea is: what can we do to improve it? This is not a criticism. I know how difficult it is. Perhaps we are not spending enough money or do not have the expertise to do the job. We should be looking at it all over again to try to improve it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This program commenced in 2005. Therefore, something is being done. We all agree that it is an issue. I understand we have fully staffed remote schools. We have gone to a lot of effort to attract teachers to those schools so that those students get the best opportunity available. We have had an improvement in attendance. When that happens, the likelihood is that there might be a decline in results. With relatively poor attendance in early years, the students attending are perhaps more academic. With higher attendance in subsequent years, there is a larger cohort of students and the result is probably that fewer academic students are attending and taking the test. The paradoxical result is that with a higher attendance figure we might get worse results in these tests. That does not mean that we should not try to get a higher attendance - of course we should. The member has asked extensive questions. Organisations such as Clontarf Aboriginal College achieves remarkable changes, and it is addressing the issue by providing programs that students, particularly boys, are interested in.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We are talking about remote schools.

Mr M. McGOWAN: A lot of kids from those communities are also getting involved in that program.

The CHAIRMAN: Member, there are children from remote areas in the Albany program.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am aware of that. However, it does not take away from the fact that this is a serious problem. I get really annoyed when probably \$1 billion will be spent on a stadium and some Aboriginal children cannot read or write.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It has been a serious problem for 200 years.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I know and we have an opportunity to do something about it. That is what we are here for.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Like the member, I regard it as very important. We are working on a range of fronts; not just this one. Even the new courses of study in senior school are designed to make sure that senior school appeals to all students, including Aboriginal students. The new courses of study also provide for trades at senior schools so Aboriginal children will have the opportunity to do a trade. The Minister for State Development works with major companies in remote communities. There has been major success in getting those companies to provide apprenticeships, and often that has been state driven. Would the member like further comment?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, I am making a plea. I am pleased with the minister's comment. We have to keep hacking away at it to try to get somewhere.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to second dot point under "Major Achievements For 2006-07" at page 912 that refers to the year 11 retention rate and the fact that it was 91.7 per cent in 2006. Given that remaining in the education system became compulsory in 2006, 91.7 per cent is a fair way from 100 per cent. Can we have an explanation for that and what is being done to further increase that percentage, given it is now compulsory under the legislation that this Parliament agreed to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: On the face of it the question is reasonable. While we have 91.7 per cent at school, another six, seven or eight per cent are in TAFE.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Does that figure not include those at TAFE?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, it is not included in this figure because it is for public and private schools and not those at TAFE or in employment. Part of the arrangements that were put in place do not include those in structured and viable employment. From memory, if we include those it takes it to about 98 per cent.

Mr K.F. Newton: The participation rate in 2006 for 16-year-olds, which takes into account those students who are at school, in training or approved employment, was 97.04 per cent. They already fall into the school leaving age compulsory years. It was in the second semester 2006.

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: It leaves almost three per cent who are not in the system as they should be. Presumably some students have been given an exemption for a reason. Is a figure for the number of children who have an exemption available? Also, what is the explanation for the reason that 2.96 per cent were not in the system in 2006 when they should have been?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are still working on some students. Over the past two years the increase in participation has been enormous. Obviously there will be students in some families who are difficult to deal with. We have 54 participation coordinators who are working with those families and students to try to get them into schooling.

Mr K.F. Newton: Part of the issue is identifying those students in that cohort. In previous years we have not been able to identify those students who were not in employment or training because they were not in compulsory years. If they were not in school, we did not know who they were or where they were. In 2006 a lot of effort was put into establishing where they are and who they are. There would be some discrepancy in the statistics because of the identification process. We anticipate this year, because we have a better record of where students are, that that figure will change upwards. We know the return to school rate has increased significantly; that is, the difference between those students leaving in year 10 and returning in year 11. It has gone up significantly from 2005 to 2006 and it has gone up again from 2006 to 2007. More students are staying in school than before. We believe it involves those students who previously elected not to do anything, but who are now returning to school. I expect that figure to rise again.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is unrealistic to think that every student, even though it is compulsory, will attend school. We want to get every one of them.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That was pointed out in the debate on the legislation, particularly in remote areas where students in primary school or years 8 and 9 are not attending school when they should be.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is no doubt that the situation has improved out of sight.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is year 11 available at every secondary school in the state?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, because some schools are middle schools.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am thinking of country towns in which there are district high schools that previously went up to year 10. Is year 11 now available at those schools?

Ms S.A. O'Neill: I think the member is referring to district high schools in rural locations where traditionally they were K-10 or 1 to 10. By and large there is already existing in some of those schools students who have, for whatever reason, chosen not to go into a larger regional centre. Many do. Some students come to Perth for that purpose. In some of those locations we have had to provide additional resources.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee will have to adjourn. The acting director general can continue at 7.00 pm.

Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

[Mrs D.J. Guise took the chair.]

The CHAIRMAN: I think the member for Darling Range was in the middle of a question.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The acting director general was responding. We were getting some information about the provision of year 11 in district high schools, if I remember correctly.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the acting director general was halfway through an answer on that question.

Mr J.N. HYDE: What page are we on, Madam Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: Good question.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It was the second dot point under "Major Achievements For 2006-07" on page 912.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: The question and answer that we were part way through was about district high schools and the provision of years 11 and 12 with the raised leaving age. District high schools in the country are generally K-10, and it is not our intention to extend provision in those schools to provide for years 11 and 12. However, it is true on a case-by-case basis in a few areas where students cannot for some reason go anywhere else to complete their studies. Some schools receive a small amount of funding to provide for those students and the courses they are taking. Some of that is done through the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education, as we discussed earlier. As a general principle, district high schools are K-10, and it is not our intention to introduce years 8 to 12 to turn them into senior high schools.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Did the acting director general say that is not the intention?

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Ms S.A. O'Neill: It is not our intention to turn every district high school into a school with years 8 to 12.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: How will the government provide for years 11 and 12 in places such as Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Mt Magnet and so on?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think from memory Fitzroy Crossing District High School does go to year 12. Is the member asking where students in those communities in the compulsory years 11 and 12 will go?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Yes.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: As I said, in those locations some courses will be done through SIDE on a school-by-school basis. Some curriculum access funding is given for additional teaching staff for that purpose. A number of those students would be involved in training because the increase in the leaving age means that a person could be in school, in training or in employment; they would be pursuing other-than-school options. Some students go into major regional centres and some of them travel to Perth for residential purposes.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I refer to page 920, "Capital Works Program", "Other School Facilities". The second last paragraph on the page states that \$2 million will be allocated to provide early childhood education facilities and improvements for rural integration classes in schools. Can the minister describe what rural integration classes are?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to the acting director general.

Ms S.A. O'Neill: In some rural locations the rural integration program is a combination of years 1 and 2, and sometimes years 1 to 3, in the same class. The combination can be different but it is a combination of year levels in one class in a small school where enrolments are such that there might be two students in each year level.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I have a further question. In essence, it is like what is sometimes referred to as a MAG - multi-age group. Is this a purpose-built classroom for that younger cohort?

Ms S.A. O'Neill: It is not necessarily purpose-built. It is the same as the member referred to, a MAG. It has existed for longer, I suppose. The rural integration program is more common in small rural towns, but it is based on the same principles as multi-age grouping.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: I have a further question. I presume that because it is under the capital works program, there must be some allocation of funding for construction purposes to accommodate rural integration classes?

Ms S.A. O'Neill: If they involve kindergarten or preprimary, which have different configurations and equipment - closed-in wet areas, for example - they might require some work to be done on a case-by-case basis to provide for that multi-age grouping.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to page 915, and the total cost of services line item, and I want to talk about international education. The state makes an investment to attract international students to Western Australia. At times I have raised with the minister and his predecessors the issue of WA being more targeted. I think South Australia has had an increase of 13 per cent in its international students. At one stage we were trying to attract students from Siberia and the foothills of Mt Kilimanjaro. I wonder, perhaps with the advent of Emirates airline now making two or three flights a day to Perth, whether the minister has had any thought about concentrating on hubs such as the United Arab Emirates. Clearly, students from places such as Singapore and Malaysia would be great for value-adding to our international education services.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We were one of the first states to enter the marketplace for international students in the 1980s; we were ahead of the other states. Following the success of Western Australia, it was followed closely by Victoria, and I think New South Wales also followed. As the member alluded to, South Australia and other states have also put in some effort. We cannot spread our effort too widely. We have to have a targeted strategy. The section of the department that deals with that is Education and Training International, which has a program of marketing WA in various countries of interest and in the various diaspora of conferences that deal with international students and governments that allocate students to various countries. We send people to many of those events and market ourselves in those places. The member is right in that the areas we target particularly are some of the rapidly developing parts of Asia, in addition to Singapore, Malaysia and China. The member is right that there are two flights a day from Dubai in the Middle East to Perth. We are particularly active in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. We are examining Saudi Arabia. Dubai and Abu Dhabi each have a local population in the hundreds of thousands and probably a combined population of a couple of million; whereas Saudi Arabia has a much larger population of up to 20 million. Those places have a lot of money to spend and we are very active in those places in attempting to attract students to WA. In fact, we have people in some of those locations who are engaged in assisting and running some of the educational institutions there, which helps us as well. I think the bigger opportunities can be found in the Eurasian region. I refer to China, Singapore and Malaysia in particular,

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but not so much to Japan, because it has a very mature education system. I will ask Mr Player to provide an additional response that is particularly focused on technical and further education colleges.

[7.10 pm]

Mr R. Player: The member is right. There was a broad strategy but, as the minister said, it has been narrowed over the years. The areas that are being targeted, particularly in the TAFE area, are the Middle East, Asia, India and China. I do not have exact figure with me, but we are starting to make significant penetration both onshore and offshore in terms of international education. The comparative growth of the state in the vocational education and training and TAFE sectors is better than most other states because of that targeted approach.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Originally Indonesia was our largest market, but the economic downturn in the country meant that numbers started to drop off. Has there been a bounce back in Indonesian numbers, or is the department targeting China and India?

Mr M. McGOWAN: My advice is that we have not had particular success in Indonesia of late. Often a determining factor is the incomes of people in the locations in question and whether they can afford the cost of living in Western Australia and can pay the fees.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: My question relates to the role of levels in determining student grades from years 8 to 10 and from years 11 to 12. It could be argued that this issue related to the Curriculum Council division.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member refer to somewhere in the *Budget Statements*?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I refer to service 1, primary education, and service 2, secondary education.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a long bow.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is directly relevant. What role do levels play in the determination of grades through all levels of school, particularly given the debate about an outcomes-based approach to education? What changes have been made and what reliance is placed on the use of levels?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member referred to years 8 to 10. As the member would be aware, over the past few years there has been considerable disquiet in various parts of the education community about some of the aspects of assessment and the use of levels and the levelling process in particular. On the other hand, there is a group of people who are committed to the use of levels. The member who was previously sitting next to the member for Darling Range, the member for Cottesloe, introduced that system in 1997 throughout both senior and junior schools. The major area of disquiet came from the senior schools - I thought it was verified - because it argued that the use of levels to provide fine-grain assessment for high stakes, or university entry, was sufficiently inaccurate. As the member knows, in January we changed the system to allow for more traditional forms of marking. In relation to the junior years, it became apparent to me some months ago after reading a report that was little support among teachers for levelling as an assessment technique on every piece of student work. Teachers thought that levelling provided an excessive workload with little educational outcome. That was the result of a survey titled the "Evaluation of the Curriculum Improvement Program, Phase 2", which analysed all sorts of documents. I changed the system a few months ago in recognition of that to allow teachers to use the method of marking with which they feel comfortable. There are four traditional techniques. Levelling has been included because some teachers quite like that system. At the end of the process, teachers are required to come up with the ordinary grades - A, B, C, D and E - and that is what is reported to parents. All these arguments have been largely put to bed. We have traditional grades. Teachers can use the form of marking with which they feel comfortable. We have standards behind the system because levels or the curriculum framework sit behind all that - even though they are not necessarily used in marking - so that we have one framework across the state. If a child in Kununurra is given a B, that B is the same as a B that is given to a child in Perth. An A grading that is awarded in Swanbourne is the same as an A grading that is awarded in Kalgoorlie. That applies to each year of schooling. We wanted to provide consistency and standards across the state. Some people have tried to twist that in various ways. However, having a standard across the state is a good thing. If after receiving straight As at one school a child starts to receive straight Ds after he or she moves to another school, one would wonder why. We have tried to avoid that from happening.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is the minister saying that teachers have a choice of four different methods of grading students?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Teachers can use a range of traditional and valid methods of assessment, including grades, percentages, marks, levels and portfolios. The problem with the levelling system as it existed to year 10 was that it was interpreted by many teachers to mean that they had to level every single piece of student work for all their students. A year 9 teacher might have to be across all his classes with 150 students. If he interpreted levelling to mean that every single piece of work had to be levelled, that would place an enormous burden on him.

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That is no longer the case. If teachers want to do it that way they can. However, we discovered that only 17 per cent of teachers were happy with that arrangement. If that 17 per cent want to continue with that method, they can do so.

The other big issue that we addressed was the reintroduction of a syllabus. My predecessor, Hon Ljiljana Ravlich, started this process. There was a trend to allow teachers to -

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Is the minister suggesting that the education department did not have a syllabus? I know that the minister wants to make a political point; however, that statement undermines public schooling in this state and is unproductive.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can produce a press release that was issued by the member for Cottesloe when he was the education minister about the syllabus being removed in 1998. I was not going to make that point.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is damaging for the minister to suggest to parents that government schools do not have a syllabus. The minister complains about Julie Bishop - he should not do the same.

[7.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know why your side removed it.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Ask your syllabus expert. Do government schools not have a syllabus? Of course they do.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Government schools have a curriculum framework. What the teachers do not have is a syllabus that they can work to day by day. I can quote Hon Peter Collier, who has made some statements. I will quote him from 13 October 2005 -

I particularly applaud the move away from strict syllabus-style teaching, with rigid objectives and goals, teaching to textbooks and, in particular, teaching to exams, which I find totally unproductive.

I disagree with him. I think we should have a syllabus and I think we need exams.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I agree.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member and I are on the same team for now but Hon Peter Collier is not.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Just to conclude on the issue of levels, in year 12 English, as I understand it, there is quite a degree of concern about three possible methods of assessment or three possible methods of reporting student achievement. Obviously, it is the year in which students do the TEE. Is the minister aware of that concern, and what action is he taking to try to rectify the problem?

Mr M. McGOWAN: When we changed the system back in January to remove levels from assessment in year 12 in particular - I will not go into the details, but levels do not give us a fine enough grade - that was talked about at length. However, I do not know whether it was understood publicly that it is, in effect, the majority of the so-called outcomes-based education debate. We moved away from that, and we are now going to more traditional forms of marking. Of course, the new English course was already introduced and some students had finished year 11 and were halfway through those years and teachers had prepared themselves on the now "old" system. After much debate, involving the Curriculum Council, the department and the chair of the Curriculum Council, we elected to remain with the existing system until those students who were currently in the years 11 and 12 finished year 12. I can get someone to explain to the member the exact form of marking for the English exam and how it will work. Would the member like me to get someone to do that?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Briefly if the minister likes, but is he confident that there will be a fair assessment process for students in year 12 English this year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Chris Cook to provide the member with advice on how English will work. I am confident from all the advice I have had that it will be totally fair on the students involved. There is no way we would allow anything that is unfair.

Ms C. Cook: There was a decision by the Curriculum Council, which was to make sure that those students would not be disadvantaged going through year 12. The teachers were prepared to mark in a way that was decided last year. Those teachers were well briefed and had professional development in relation to those marking mechanisms. They have been working towards that for all of last year and this year. Those students will be given levels in relation to the outcomes described in the courses. Teachers will have to give judgements in relation to each of the outcomes in those units that related to that particular stage in the course. As I said, they have had five days of professional learning to become very familiar with what that entails.

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: If it is said that the levels do not provide enough fine-grain assessment, how will that work for year 12 English this year?

Ms C. Cook: The council has provided look-up tables, which give a particular relationship to a mark out of 100. Those look-up tables will offer the required fine-grain information for university entrance. It will not disadvantage students as they go through this year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to the dot point under significant issues and trends at page 912 that refers to staff shortages at TAFE colleges and the increasing debate about alternative methods of staffing and service delivery. In my role as chair of the Defence Industry Skills Advisory Board I have become aware that Challenger TAFE is using some innovative approaches with some members of the defence industry. What sort of alternative methods are being considered? Does it involve people from industry coming in to provide training to students in the TAFE system?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Mr Player to assist with that, and I do acknowledge that the member has a role with the defence industries skilling project that we are working on to ensure that we meet the skills needs of the growing defence industry in the state. Mr Player will answer the specific question the member raised.

Mr R. Player: It is pretty typical across the board in TAFE colleges and the vocational system at the moment that there is a paradigm shift going on and a moving away from classroom-based instruction to assimilation into the workplace. There is more of a focus on workforce development, which means that much of the training and assessment is being carried out on the job. It is much more of a holistic way of training and assessing. It requires new paradigms in relation to teachers and lecturers in the way they undertake their tasks and in adapting to the cultures of different industries. That is very evident in some of the actions taking place at Challenger TAFE in what it calls "moving to the fourth paradigm".

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I understand that another member has asked questions about retention rates. I want to ask some specific questions on this that relate to page 913. I refer to the point about football academies supporting Indigenous students to stay on at school being established in Bunbury and Kununurra. I am particularly interested in the greater Bunbury area. I presume the program has been put in place because there is an ongoing problem with retention rates for Aboriginal children. Am I able to be given an indication of what years are involved or the extent of the problem in the area?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We had some extensive discussion before the member arrived about the football academies. As I said before, the one at Newton Moore Senior High School is run by a fellow by the name of Mark Skehan. It would have about 20 students.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The line of questioning the minister had before is not the one I am heading down. I want to know where the underlying problem is. What years does it involve? I will cut to the chase: is there a problem with children moving from primary to high school?

Mr M. McGOWAN: With retention rates, the significant issue is primarily with Aboriginal boys. It is much more prevalent in high school than in primary school. It is progressively getting worse as the years go by. I will get Mr O'Keefe to give the member the exact figures; however, he may not have the exact figures for Bunbury.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: If the figures are not available, I would appreciate them as supplementary information. I am keen to see whether we have got to the stage in which children are leaving the Djidi Djidi primary school and whether we are able to assess whether 100 per cent of them are staying on through high school or whether they are dropping out.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr O'Keefe will provide that information.

Mr K.A. O'Keefe: I do not have the exact figures, and each of the high schools in Bunbury deals differently with the transition arrangements for students from Djidi Djidi. Australind's process is quite different from Newton Moore's. It is certainly the case that one of the dilemmas that Aboriginal students have in the high schools is that not enough of them are going to high schools at this stage with the literacy and numeracy skills that enable them to access the curriculum appropriately. Of course, because of the structure of high school timetables, there is more opportunity for them to opt out. For Djidi Djidi, we are pretty optimistic. I do not have the figures for students who have exited year 7 to see how they have gone through high school. However, I know that the figures for Djidi Djidi are quite strong. The students who are leaving that school have good literacy and numeracy skills and good resilience skills. Although I do not have the details, I have a good understanding that those students are progressing through those schools pretty well.

[7.30 pm]

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Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Can I obtain the retention rates by way of supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: What was the member's question?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I asked about children leaving Djidi Djidi, and their retention rates through the high school years.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am happy to provide information on that. The question is about students graduating from Djidi Djidi at the end of year 7. Are they going to high school, and what are their retention rates?

[Supplementary Information No B30.]

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to the heading "New Buildings and Additions at TAFE Colleges". The second item on the list is the \$13.1 million redevelopment of the Central Metropolitan College of TAFE in Northbridge. Can the minister break that down into a couple of chunks? I am aware of a couple of areas where that money might be being spent, and I was wondering whether it would be possible to get more of an overview of what the \$13.1 million is being used for.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As the member is aware, we are doing a lot of work on TAFE colleges around the state, and central TAFE is obviously a beneficiary of that. I will ask Mr Parr to outline what the \$13.1 million will be spent on.

Mr M.J. Parr: The project to which the member is referring is a key piece of the development of the Central Metropolitan College of TAFE, to be constructed on lot 402 William St. It will provide enhanced learning opportunities in the TAFE sector.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Is there an amphitheatre involved in that site? My understanding is that the William St frontage is on top of the Northbridge tunnel. Is that correct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Mr Parr to answer the question, but I must say that I am impressed that he knows the actual address. The member has amphitheatres everywhere in his electorate. It is the most amphitheatre-rich place outside of Italy, I think.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I opened the last one in my electorate, so if there is an opening going, I can sub for the minister!

Mr M.J. Parr: If I understand the question correctly, the proposed building is immediately adjacent to the tunnel, and that imposes some building limitations. It also imposes some building design guideline requirements in terms of vibration from the tunnel. As to the question in relation to the amphitheatre, in the centre of this campus it is proposed that there will be an attractive open courtyard area that will provide for those opportunities.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I refer to the line item on page 911 headed "Item 96 Net amount appropriated to deliver services". I want to know whether the minister would be prepared to use some of that money to support the police in the use of sniffer dogs in government schools as a deterrent against the use and transportation of illicit drugs.

The CHAIRMAN: That is probably a bit of a stretch from the budget.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: It requires money.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As Minister for Education and Training, my role is to spend money on education. The Western Australia Police had something like a nine per cent budget increase this year. If they would like to spend their budget on getting sniffer dogs into schools where there is a problem, that is a matter for them.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: So the minister would have no problems with sniffer dogs going through government schools to determine whether there is a problem? That is the whole idea; the dogs can be taken through while the kids are in class, and no-one even needs to know that they have gone through if there is no problem.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We do not live in a police state, where the police wander around with sniffer dogs sniffing people's bags the way they do at the airport. If the police have a reasonable cause to think there is an issue in a location, they may well undertake that, but I do not want them wandering around schools with dogs willy-nilly. If they have a reasonable cause, and the law allows them to do that, that is a matter for the police to exercise their proper authority under the law. It is not the role of the Department of Education and Training to pay for that.

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Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: If I can clarify: if there are concerns of drug use in schools, the minister will support the use of sniffer dogs, but he would not support the random use of sniffer dogs as a deterrent to kids bringing drugs to school?

Mr M. McGOWAN: My view is that the law is the law, and the law that allows the use of those sorts of search techniques involves a reasonable cause of suspicion that an offence may have been or maybe being committed. If the police have that information, and wish to use sniffer dogs in that way, that is a matter for them. In a general sense, having the police standing at the gate of schools while children are walking in, sniffing their bags would not be productive at all or solve any problems.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to pages 920 and 921 of the *Budget Statements*. Earlier in the year a report about intergenerational disadvantage entitled "Dropping off the edge" was published by the Jesuits. Disadvantage in Kwinana was noted in the report, and the government received some criticism in the media about lack of funding, particularly for education, in Kwinana. I note that expenditure is going on in Kwinana. Can the minister outline what is being done there to address some of this disadvantage?

The CHAIRMAN: That is a bit of a stretch also, member, but I will allow it since I allowed the other one.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My predecessor as Minister for Education and Training, the present Premier, had a look at Kwinana Senior High School two or three years ago and determined that it had reached its use-by date, and a decent facility was needed in that community. We are currently in the process of building Gilmore College, which is due to open next year. It is a \$35 million new high school in Kwinana on the existing high school site. It will be a state-of-the-art high school as good as any in the country - perhaps any in the world. It will have attached to it an automotive skills centre which will cost something like \$2.8 million. That is a very significant total expenditure on that school. I hope that, with the new school, the new name and the new ethos, educational outcomes in Kwinana will be improved. Capital works are no doubt important but a range of other things are important as well, such as good quality teachers, parents interested in education and a suitable curriculum. Integrating a TAFE centre, particularly an automotive skills training centre, as part of a new college will also make a difference, particularly in a community that has traditionally provided a lot of the workforce for the Kwinana industrial strip. I hope it continues to do so. The report about Kwinana, and the media reports in which people are saying - as they always do - that the government has not done enough for this or that community have patently proved to be incorrect.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: How many school-based nurses are employed by the Department of Education and Training?

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure there is a budget line in there somewhere, member.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: Yes, there is. I do not see it under "Major Initiatives For 2007-08", which is why I am asking the question.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a bit of a stretch.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As far as I am aware, the department does not employ any school-based nurses; they are employed by the Department of Health. We do not have information to hand as to how many nurses there are in schools, but if the member wishes I will get it for him as supplementary information.

Mr P.W. ANDREWS: It would be useful.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The next supplementary information is the number of school nurses in public schools around Western Australia.

[*Supplementary Information No B31.*]

[7.40 pm]

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I refer to the current liabilities listed in the balance sheet on page 928. Can the minister explain why the figure for accrued salaries changes in the way that it does? It is \$6.7 million in 2006-07, \$14 million in this financial year and \$22 million, \$31 million and nil in the forward estimates.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask Mr McCaffrey to assist with that.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: That is a good pick up. We did not transfer the funds out of employee entitlements in time to get it into last year's budget. We did not pick it up until after the budget figures were finalised. The actual figure that should be there is \$41.067 million, but it is included in another line item within our budget under employee entitlements.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Why is it budgeted under another line item and is not in this line item?

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Mr P.J. McCaffrey: It was an oversight.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: What difference would it make to the bottom line if it were added in?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: The estimate is just over \$41 million.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Is that instead of \$14 million?

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: No. The accrual is \$31.022 million and in the next column it should be \$41 million for 2010-11. We accrue one day extra a year, so that when the twenty-seventh pay occurs in the tenth year, we have sufficient funds. We do a transfer every year. Unfortunately, in the last year we did not effect that transfer.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Damn! So it was not for the minister's Bali fund!

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: No!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Interesting.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I refer to service 2, "Secondary Education", on page 918. The table provides the figures for the cost of the service less income. At the risk of it seeming like groundhog day again, what is the latest situation with the revenue from school fees? I presume that the department still keeps a tally of all the schools and the proportion of school fees that are being paid in each school?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Mr McCaffrey to answer that question.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: I have the end-of-year figures for 2006 compared with those for 2005. The total collection, including voluntary contributions and charges and fees that schools collected, rose from \$55 million to \$58 million at the end of 2006. As a general comment, the balance of funds held in school bank accounts increased from \$108 million in 2005 to \$138 million in 2006. However, that figure needs to be treated with caution because a significant amount of money - I think it was just under \$25 million - was provided by the federal government directly to schools under the Investing in Our Schools program, which was received late in the year and the schools were unable to acquit that prior to the end of the calendar year. There has been a slight increase over a couple of years.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Could I have by way of supplementary information a table with a breakdown of that information for all schools?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We do not have it in that format. If the member wants further information, I suggest that he put a question on notice. We have global information.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: What format would it be in?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr McCaffrey has given the member the global figure. That is the format it is in.

Mr P.J. McCaffrey: Is the member interested in -

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Sorry to interrupt, but I would like information from my neck of the woods; for example, a breakdown of the fee collections and so on for Australind Senior High School and the proportion of parents who are paying. However, it would be nice to have that information on the entire education system to see how the current policy is not working - or is working, as the case may be.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member has asked for very extensive information on 800 schools across the state.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I am surprised that the minister does not have it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If he wants information on his particular school, I will give him information on the Australind school, but to do it for 800 schools on a whim -

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Perhaps I might make it easier if I asked for information just on high schools. As the member for Cottesloe has said, I am really interested in high schools because those schools have the compulsory fee component. Would that be easier to do?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why does the member not put a question on notice so that we can get it properly examined? I will not commit to doing it.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Okay. I preface my second question by saying that I find it amazing that the minister does not have a list of that information, because it really shows that he does not give a damn what is happening at a local school level with the revenue from fees. The minister should have a list of every high school in this state and the alarm bells should be ringing when there is a big gap between their potential fee collection and their actual fee collection; in other words, in low socioeconomic areas where parents may not be able to afford to pay the fees. I am amazed that the minister does not have that list, and that leads to my second

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question. It is a very simple question. One of the minister's predecessors, who happens to be the Premier now, at one stage gave a commitment that he would plug the gap; that is, there was a clear commitment that when schools missed out on fees, the gap would be plugged. Is there provision in the budget for the schools that are missing out on fees because parents cannot afford to pay them or are not paying them to have their revenue topped up?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We top up the student allowances that are not received by low socioeconomic schools. When the member says that we do not give a damn, that is not true.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: That is not in relation to school fees. It is not just schools in low socioeconomic areas. Is the minister topping up the revenue of schools that do not get their full amount of compulsory fee revenue? I know the answer; I just want the minister to confirm that the answer is no.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member can identify a school that is suffering from a lack of fee collection, he should bring it to our attention and we will have a look at it.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I have just asked the minister for that information and he said that he did not have it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is -

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: How am I meant to have it? I do not have access to school records, but the minister does.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As he does traditionally, the member is creating hypothetical situations.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: No, I am not; I am asking the minister for information because I want to know the answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Can the member tell us the school in which this has happened?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Will the minister provide by way of supplementary information the fee situation in the high schools in the greater Bunbury area? That should be easy enough.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot guarantee that, because I do not know whether that information will be easily collected. If the member puts that question on notice, we will have a look at it.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: It must be collected. Every school would have that information. The minister is implying that his schools do not account for the money they receive. That is a terrible thing for the minister to say about his schools.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Leschenault have a further question?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Everything was pleasant before the member for Leschenault started asking questions. He should put a question on notice.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: That is the only way members get an answer.

The appropriation was recommended.

[7.50 pm]