

Chairman; Mr John Day; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr John McGrath;  
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Martin Whitely; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr John Bowler

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**Division 50: Education and Training, \$3 326 235 —**

Mrs D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr M. McGowan, Minister for Education and Training.

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

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

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

Mr J. Serich, Acting Executive Director, Human Resources.

Mrs N. Jeffery, Acting Executive Director, Policy Planning and Accountability.

Mr R. Player, Deputy Director General, Training.

Mr D.G. Axworthy, Executive Director, School Support Programs.

**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. Although 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 6 June 2008, 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 6 June 2008. It will also greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to programs, statements, volumes or consolidated account estimates, members give the page number and item program amount in preface to their question. I will allow further questioning if questions are asked in such a manner as to allow others to ask questions.

The member for Darling Range.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** My initial question relates to service 1, "Primary Education", and service 2, "Secondary Education", on pages 859 and 860 respectively of the *Budget Statements*. An issue has received a fair bit of attention recently, and with good reason: I refer to the teaching workforce supply situation and what the situation is likely to be in the future. The minister commissioned an inquiry under Professor Lance Twomey that, I understand, concluded its deliberations last year. When was the minister presented with a report from that inquiry, has he read it, and why has he not taken it to cabinet yet?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I thank the member for Darling Range. In February 2007 I announced that the government would undertake a study into the long-term future of the teaching workforce. A few months after that, as I recall, we commissioned Lance Twomey, a former vice-chancellor of Curtin University, to undertake that study. He proceeded to take submissions from around the state and to meet with teachers, schools, parent bodies and so on, to prepare a study into this matter. I would like to provide members with the terms of reference of the Twomey task force. I will read them out.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** We can do that, but can the minister tell us what was recommended in the report? That is the natural conclusion of the terms of reference he is about to read out.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It was a broad report, examining the future of the workforce. It was to look at a range of alternative delivery strategies, the capacity to respond to teacher shortages, the standing of the profession, a

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framework to inform future workforce planning, workforce supply and so on. There are a range of other terms of reference. Professor Twomey has come back with a report that the government received just before Christmas 2007. Once it has been fully considered by cabinet, it will be released. The issue is that it is not only about the education and training portfolios; it is also about other portfolios and commonwealth government issues.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which other portfolios?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member did not want me to read out the terms of reference, but the terms of reference reveal that the issue is broader than just education and training. It also involves other levels of government. Obviously we need to develop a response that takes into account other levels of government and other portfolios.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Has it gone to cabinet as yet?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It has been introduced to cabinet, yes.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** When was that?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I could not give the member an exact date.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What does the minister mean by “introduced” to cabinet? Has it been taken to cabinet and not emerged from the other end?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It has been on the agenda of a cabinet committee.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which cabinet committee?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I cannot remember, but it was one of the cabinet committees; it is a cabinet document. The member need not worry—once we have a response, it will be released. The instant I release it without a response, the member will be the first to ask, “Where’s your response?”

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** When was the minister presented with the report?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I said, just before Christmas 2007.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is now six months later and the minister still does not have a response. Surely he can at least let people know what is in the report so we can all be informed. That is often the case with reports. The government can then go away and present a response within three months. Why can the minister not do that?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Once the government has developed a response, we will release it. If I were to release it without a response, the member would call on me to release a response.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** How long does the minister need to prepare a response?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** How long is a piece of string? As I said to the member, other levels of government and other portfolios are involved. Once we have all the necessary information, we will present a response.

[3.10 pm]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which other portfolios does the Minister for Education and Training need to involve?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Does the member want me to read out the terms of reference?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, just tell us the other portfolios that need to be involved.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It crosses issues to do with not only education, but also housing and those sorts of issues relating to teachers in country areas. Therefore, once we have a response to those sorts of issues, I will release the Twomey report.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** When does the minister think that might be?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I said to the member for Darling Range just a moment ago, how long is a piece of string? I am sure it will not be that long, but I cannot provide an exact answer at this stage.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is six months after the report was presented to the minister and we still do not have any outcome. It is quite amazing.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I ask a related question. Can the Minister for Education and Training tell us how many recommendations are in the Twomey report?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not have the report to hand and I cannot provide the member for Churchlands with that information. Once I release the report —

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Could we have that as supplementary information?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No; once I release the report, I will have released the report.

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**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is there an amount of funding in the budget to cover implementation of those recommendations?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The budget has all sorts of initiatives in it that cover all sorts of areas, some of which I expect will be relevant to parts of the report. Once we release the report, that will become obvious.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** When does the minister expect the report to be released?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I just answered the member for Darling Range, I do not have an exact time frame on that.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** When does the minister hope the report will be released?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I expect that it will be later this year, but once the report is released, members will be aware of it.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Okay.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Will the report be released before the state election?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** My question relates to the third dot point under “Significant Issues and Trends” on page 853 of the *Budget Statements*, which states —

The completion of Year 12 or its equivalent is now regarded by many as the minimum standard for entry to employment, training or further education, and involves the attainment of high levels of literacy and numeracy as well as competencies that are recognised in the workplace.

Is the Minister for Education and Training satisfied that enough resources—human and financial—are supplied to rural Western Australia to ensure that this education can be delivered? Will the minister continue to support the excellent role that district high schools play in delivering year 11 and 12 programs?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We recently announced additional staffing allocations for some district high schools. From memory, these include Bullsbrook District High School, Kununurra District High School and another district high school. I recently met with the district high school principals’ association to discuss its issues. As the member will be aware, some district high schools around Western Australia have been upgraded, including Donnybrook District High School, which had an administration upgrade, and I announced its much sought-after toilet block upgrade earlier this year.

The member for Wagin’s second question was about whether I am satisfied with the resources going to country schools. Schools are better resourced than ever before and in terms of additional staff, that probably applies more to country schools than city schools. I could provide the member with a list of additional capital works, but I think he is aware that the list of capital works, new schools, upgrades, and the reduction in the number of country schools closed has been enormous. If the member wants a list of capital works in country schools, I am —

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** No, that is okay. Further to my second question about the role that district high schools play in delivering year 11 and 12 programs, is the minister aware of concern that some of our district high schools may be scaled back in what they deliver to meet requirements for the rise in the school leaving age? Is that a concern for the minister? Is the minister aware of the great work that district high schools in places such as Kojonup and Gnowangerup are delivering to meet the rise in the school leaving age?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am not aware of the great work of Kojonup District High School, but I will take the member for Wagin’s word for it because that school does great work. I will defer to the Director General of Education on the rise in the school leaving age and district high schools.

**Ms S.A. O’Neill:** District high schools obviously play a key role in the provision of primarily K-10 education in regional areas. When the school leaving age was raised, of course, some year 11 and 12 students—not great in number—stayed in district high schools, and there is provision for that. Other students chose to go to schools in regional areas, so there has been some above-staffing provision in district high schools. As the member is aware, we will look at those schools on a case-by-case basis. It is not the plan to expand district high schools—they are primarily K-10. However, when students choose to stay at those schools and a program is needed, they will continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Do some of the expansions that those district high schools are doing in years 11 and 12 cause the Department of Education and Training some concern in that these schools are going beyond what they are meant to do?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will defer to the Director General of Education.

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**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** District high schools are established for K-10 provision. In some cases students are studying year 11 and 12 and in some cases that has grown probably more than originally anticipated. As I said, we will look at those schools on a case-by-case basis. As the minister has already said, there are some district high schools for which we have provided additional resources because the scale of that has become larger than normal. Therefore, we will look at those schools on a case-by-case basis as they arise.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Thank you.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** My question relates to the fourteenth dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 855 of the *Budget Statements*. How much money has been budgeted for each recruitment campaign for local, interstate and overseas markets and how much has already been spent?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Good question.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I only give the minister good questions!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have spoken about our strategies to recruit teachers from interstate and overseas quite a bit in question time, as the member for South Perth would be aware. Those strategies have involved recruitment campaigns. The information I have is that in the 2008-09 financial year, \$1.9 million will be spent on those sorts of recruitment programs that we are running. We had people in Britain throughout the course of this year where we are running expos to recruit teachers. We had considerable success in getting interest in teaching in Western Australia and in converting that interest into teaching staff.

As I said before, we ran campaigns in Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to recruit teachers from those states. We have had considerable success, although it is less easy to measure because some teachers just arrive from those places and we do not realise that they have come on the basis of our advertising. However, we meet these teachers around the place. That \$1.9 million is the effort for 2008-09.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I have a further question. To give us an idea of the success rate of these recruitment programs, we note that about 50 interviews were conducted in the United Kingdom in February, with another 100 interviews in May and June. Of the 50 interviews conducted in February, how many resulted in the employment of teachers for Western Australian schools?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The best figures I have are that the total number of teachers from overseas—United Kingdom, New Zealand and Ireland, but the overwhelming bulk of the teachers are from the UK—who started teaching in Western Australia was 22. In July another 23 teachers from overseas will commence teaching in Western Australia. For the start of 2009, we have 189 expressions of interest, of which 21 teachers have signed up and the remaining 168 people have expressed an interest and may convert.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I refer to that same dot point on page 855. I notice that the department has been using outside recruitment agencies that are paid a finder’s fee of 15 per cent of the teacher’s gross annual salary; that is, between \$7 500 and \$10 500 for every teacher they manage to get into the system. How many teachers have been employed through outside recruitment agencies? How much money has been budgeted to pay the finder’s fee that is paid to those recruitment agencies? Why are outside agencies needed for this role, given the number of staff that the department has at its disposal in the recruitment section?

[3.20 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** There are about three questions there.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I appreciate that question. My advisers are trying to dig up the figures at the moment. In broad terms, we do not rely upon just one tool. If we can use the expertise of the private sector and it can generate interest in areas that the department could not, I have no difficulty whatsoever with that as a principle.

Although we have people who have certain strengths in recruitment—going out into the marketplace to meet people and participating in expos—there may well be other potential recruits who have no idea about those activities and might only check websites or look in newspapers or publications run by private sector recruitment agencies, because that is just what they do. If that means that those people are recruited and we pay a fee, I do not have any problem with that whatsoever. I do not mean to be disagreeable, member for South Perth, but I would have thought that the use of the private sector to do things would have been something the member would have supported. The figure we have is that fewer than 21 have been recruited in this manner since the beginning of 2008.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to page 857 under the heading “Major Initiatives For 2008-09”. The second-last dot point states, “Commence intensive reviews of identified schools to improve school performance.” Is the minister able to tell us whether that review has commenced; and, if so, has there been any feedback on the outcomes?

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I thank the member for Peel for the question. It was in July last year or thereabouts that I announced the establishment of what we call the expert review group. That was to be a group of senior, respected educators who would examine schools that might be having difficulties or that we might have some concerns about in relation to performance issues. The examination was to be based upon an analysis of the results of the area in question against how well those schools were performing. We selected two schools to do the initial review; namely, Carnarvon Senior High School and Armadale Senior High School. We appointed a group of senior educators—Peter Holcz, Janine Milton, Rod Lowther and Pauline Coghlan—as the expert review group. They formed a group of senior educators who could analyse the schools, tell us where there might be difficulties and give us a prescription on how to make sure that the schools might perform better in the future.

The group examined both Carnarvon and Armadale Senior High Schools and they presented reports in relation to each school. The reports show that there are some problems at each of those schools and that their performance in some areas could be better. The reports also show that there are some dramatic improvements in some areas in those schools and that there has been some good performance in parts of what those schools are doing.

I am going to release those reports by tabling them right now so that they are available for perusal. The reports were forwarded to each of the schools this morning, so they are aware of the contents of each of the reports. This is an innovative and new way of dealing with the issue of schools and how they might improve. It is certainly a very public way of dealing with it, although I want to make it quite clear that I do not want it to be seen as a criticism of the staff, the students or the administrations in each of those schools, but merely an acknowledgement that in public education we have to do better at times and identify our strengths, but also identify our weaknesses.

I am happy to table those reports. The executive summary is going up on the website so that people can see that. I will table those reports today so that they are available for people to have a look at.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I have a follow-up question. Does the minister intend replicating this elsewhere; and, if so, what is the criterion for determining at which schools?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We do intend to replicate this elsewhere, and there will be further examinations of different schools. The sorts of criteria involve nomination by the local director of schools and examining the data surrounding each of the schools, and where the school sits in the socioeconomic index vis-a-vis its performance. That is obviously a way that we can identify a school that might not be doing as well as we had hoped.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Minister, during estimates hearings information may be provided by way of supplementary information; there is not the ability to table per se. The information can be provided either at a later date or as supplementary information.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will provide it as supplementary information, if that is possible.

*[Supplementary Information No B5.]*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The expert review group can examine schools that might be doing very, very well to identify what it is they are doing well at and work out how that sort of performance is achieved. It is not just looking at schools to examine how they might improve.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Can a school initiate a review if it wants it, seeing a review as a tool potentially to assist it?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** This is an internally generated process. If schools ask the Department for Education and Training for a review, that is something that we can consider. We cannot do too many at any one point in time. It involves the team of expert educators going in to the school for a period of five days, interviewing literally dozens of people, examining the school's results, and writing a report. The Department of Education and Training therefore cannot do a lot of reviews at any one point in time. It is a process that has not been in place in the public education system before; it is critical analysis to work out what we are doing well and what we can do better.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Minister, for the purposes of our recording and Hansard, exactly what is to be supplied as supplementary information B5?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will provide the expert review group's reports into Armadale Senior High School and Carnarvon Senior High School.

We expect to do roughly 20 reports per annum.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** My question relates to page 857 under the heading "Major Policy Decisions". It details four areas in which major policy decisions have impacted on the agency's income statement since the publication of the last budget; namely, 2007-08. There are four items there and I am curious to know, firstly, whether those decisions were made and, secondly, whether funds were expended in 2007-08 for each of those.

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will give a broad answer to that and then I will defer to Mr McCaffrey to give more detailed information. The Premier announced two or three months ago that the government would be establishing the Clontarf East Kimberley Football Academy in Halls Creek with an annex in Kununurra, as I recall.

The mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, as members will recall, was a decision made by cabinet when it met in Bunbury last year. We are extending that more broadly into a number of other agencies rather than just the Department of Education and Training.

The teacher recruitment and retention initiatives were in response to the Gerard Daniels report, which was published in mid-2007. We will get the exact time frames for the member. I will get Mr McCaffrey to answer. He will be able to give the exact —

[3.30 pm]

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I do not need a lot of detail now about the timing, because the minister has given most of that. I am interested in how much money was spent on initiatives in 2007-08. Teacher recruitment and retention must have had something spent on it in the past financial year.

**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** On the training initiatives, \$5 585 000; on the teacher recruitment and retention initiatives, \$12 227 000; on mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, \$487 000; and on the other one, which was Clontarf, I do not have the figure but I think it was around \$75 000.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Related to that last line item of teacher recruitment and retention initiatives, I am assuming that the survey was on retirement intentions. Can the minister give us some information about what teachers have indicated about their retirement intentions, covering the next two or three years, because an important part of retaining people is that if it is known that they intend to retire early, something can be put in place to persuade them to stay on in the teaching force?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** This one, as I understand it, was in response to the Gerard Daniels' report, which I released last year. Gerard Daniels is a private recruitment agency that examined our recruitment processes. It was not about retirement intentions. However, if the member would like me to, I could outline the initiatives that were put in place in relation to those issues.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am taking it one step further now. I understand what the minister has just explained. One related aspect is retirement intentions.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Does the member wish to know about initiatives or intentions?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I want to know what the situation is about retirement intentions and whether a growing number of people are retiring at an earlier age.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am happy to give the member the "WA teacher demand and supply projections" report, which indicates retirement intentions from 2003 to 2007. It shows an increase in the number of teachers retiring. We know that this year thus far 182 teachers have retired.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is it an increase on the same period last year or the year before?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** For the whole of last year there were 337, so it is difficult to tell.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** The minister cannot tell, but I am interested to know what the future projections are and if people wishing to retire are creating an ever-increasing problem for the department.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the best thing we can give the member is the demand and supply projections report.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I would like to see it.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The second aspect, which is under recognised, is the transition to retirement initiative that we announced late last year or earlier this year, which basically means that teachers over 55 years of age, because of the changes to the law made by the former federal government, can access their superannuation. The advice I recall is that it means a pay rise of between \$5 000 and \$10 000 if teachers wish to access their superannuation and/or they can tailor their working lives to suit them. They might work three days a week. We have responded to that by being flexible in our employment arrangements. Teachers are taking that up but not as rapidly as we would hope.

**The CHAIRMAN:** May I just clarify, for the purpose of Hansard: is the minister agreeing to privately provide the member for Churchlands with a copy of that report or is he indicating to the committee that he will provide the information that is in the report as supplementary information?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is it possible to just table it now?

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**The CHAIRMAN:** No, it is not.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Could I advise that it is on the Parliamentary Library website.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Would the member for Churchlands like me to just give her a copy?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I would love the minister to give me a copy.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Okay.

**The CHAIRMAN:** A copy will be given to the member for Churchlands.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We might get a copy photocopied and given to the member.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Would it be possible to have information about the number of people over the age of 55 years taking up that new way of structuring their working lives by working part time and accessing their superannuation?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I understand it, the Government Employees Superannuation Board controls that information.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** The minister must know how many people are now working part time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There may be issues. I will just refer to Mr McCaffrey. We announced a scheme earlier this year or late last year. At present 142 DET employees have accessed the scheme.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Working part time now?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Not necessarily; they might be working part time but they might also be working full time and just getting a top up in their pay. It is quite an interesting scheme. Maybe Mr McCaffrey —

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I understand the scheme. I am interested in the numbers taking it up.

**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** It is my personal information that the arrangements people have with GESB about what they do is something that they can advise us, but we find out about it through a number of sources. One of the parts of the scheme, as the member is probably aware, is the ability to salary package a larger part of their salary back into superannuation.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I understand all that. What number of those 142 employees are working full time and what number are working part time?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not have that figure but I assume the vast majority of teachers. It has certainly climbed from what I understood it to be, so it might be kicking in a little more than it had. I would certainly like it to kick in more. I have advised the department to advertise it more widely among the teaching workforce.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** The fourth dot point of significant issues and trends on page 854 refers to community expectations of standards of staff conduct and probity in public education and training continuing to rise, with a demand for high levels of risk management and close monitoring and management of misconduct. How is the government managing complaints of misconduct against teachers, particularly those teachers who are found unfit for the profession?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The professional standards and conduct division was set up to oversee complaints management. Members will recall the events of late 2006, which were very unfortunate and sad and caused a great deal of concern due to the Corruption and Crime Commission report about the department. The new professional standards and conduct division was run very ably by a senior police officer, Mr Trevor Porter. He has now handed over, but it was run very ably and has achieved a great deal. One of the changes that the director general has put in place is that we now actually enforce suspension without pay for some staff. If we become aware of issues to deal with a staff member, when that staff member has committed a serious breach of discipline, we can suspend him or her without pay, and we have. Historically, the arrangement was that virtually irrespective of what the person was alleged to have done or was believed to have done, the person was suspended on pay. We have now implemented a new approach of suspending without pay. Four teachers have been suspended without pay and two additional teachers were advised that that may happen and, as I understand it, they resigned from the department. One of the teachers whom we suspended without pay has gone to prison. In effect, it is a tougher approach to management issues based upon the outcome of the Corruption and Crime Commission report in late 2006. It means that we are dealing more firmly with some of the people who are alleged or believed to have committed serious breaches of discipline.

[3.40 pm]

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**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I refer the minister to page 853. I have been advised by Treasury that the key item is item 92, "Net amount appropriated to deliver services". I refer the minister to the questions I asked in March about each of the primary and high schools in my area. I refer first to Ardross Primary School. I asked what date the building condition assessment was conducted; what items are outstanding; when the department plans on completing those items; and when the next building condition assessment would be conducted at the school. In his response the minister said —

The information sought by the Member would involve dedicating an unreasonable amount of public service time and resources to providing answers. I refer the Member to the many public sources of information such as the Annual State Budget papers, annual reports and the Schools Online website.

I have checked the schools' online website and the annual reports. Treasury advised me to ask, under this item of the budget, these questions that I have already asked about Ardross Primary School, Attadale Primary School, Bicton Primary School, Booragoon Primary School, Melville Senior High School, Mt Pleasant Primary School, Palmyra Primary School, Applecross Senior High School and Applecross Primary School. I am again asking the minister about the date. Before the minister answers, I will let him know that I have in front of me a printout that was provided by a previous Minister for Education and Training dated 27 May 2004. It is headed, "Program files: building condition assessment reports by category by portfolios". I know it is a case of pushing the button to get this information from a database. As the minister has said, I can ask him for this information in relation to the budget papers during the estimates hearings. Will the minister now provide me with the information I sought about the building condition assessment and the items outlined for each of my schools?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** So that the member knows, the amount of capital works undertaken on schools in her electorate was \$16.5 million during the past seven years. The member has asked me 53 questions, which comprised 570 individual questions. The question the member asked me in relation to Applecross Primary School —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I started with Ardross Primary School, but I need the same question answered for each of the schools in my electorate.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The question the member asked me about Ardross Primary School contained 26 parts and required the figures for every single dollar for each financial —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I am referring to question on notice 3229.

**The CHAIRMAN:** This is not a debate, member.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The question contained 26 parts —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** That is not true, minister.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have it here.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** Madam Chairman, the minister is misleading the chamber.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is not a debate.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It was a 26-part question on each primary school involving every single financial year seeking the amount of capital works fully funded by the Department of Education and Training, followed by the capital works partly funded by the Department of Education and Training, followed by the contributions for various other programs, and so on and so forth, for each of these projects. My view was that, to answer this question in addition to another, as I said, 570 separate questions, was an unreasonable ask of the department and it would have involved unreasonable amounts of time and effort to prepare that amount of information for the member.

In answer to the member's question about building condition assessments, they are being conducted at the moment. My department does not do them.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I asked the minister, as I have asked previous ministers, which of those items that were identified are still waiting to be repaired and what cost was involved. I have the costing of those items but I would like the minister to provide the information so that I know that he is aware of the state of schools in my electorate. My schools have threadbare carpet; roofs that, according to a government report, were meant to be replaced within six months in 2004; and walls and gutters that are falling down. The information I sought was within four points in question on notice 3229, and I asked the same question about each school. I again ask the minister: will he give me the date the last building condition assessment was undertaken; what items are outstanding from the building condition assessment; when he plans on completing those items; and when the next assessment will be done?

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The building condition assessment is being undertaken at the moment. I do not have it; my agency does not undertake that work. Broadly, in relation to her questions—the member said that other ministers might have answered her questions—my view is that a 26-part question with —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** It is a four-part question; I refer to question 3229.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member asked 570 separate questions of the department on the same day, which would have involved numerous people being taken away from their ordinary tasks to answer what amounts to historic issues of 10 years' duration, on her whim. I did not think it was an appropriate use of public sector time to do that. I can demonstrate that other ministers in previous governments have adopted exactly the same approach because these people have to get on with real jobs.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** This is a cover-up; the minister is an incompetent minister.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I call to order the member for Alfred Cover for the first time. The same rules of debate apply during estimates hearings as apply for the rest of the time.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to the fourth dot point under significant issues and trends on page 853 of the *Budget Statements* that states —

Significant changes in demographic and social structures are creating the need for a greater emphasis in public schools on behaviour management, values education, pastoral care and citizenship.

The raising of the school leaving age to 17 years has put considerable pressure on school resources, particularly in remote and regional WA. Can the minister outline the success of his initiatives to attract and retain additional teachers; will he acknowledge the need for additional incentives to encourage teachers to relocate from the metropolitan area to rural and remote schools; and is the old points transfer system being considered as part of that? In asking that question, I acknowledge the changes the minister made recently to the transfer system to try to reduce the number of acting positions in country WA, but I wonder whether we can go further than that.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the member asked me a three or four-part question.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I am sorry about that.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In relation to the relocation of teachers to the country, when I became minister I identified that as one of the most significant issues. We did the GDA report—this is probably wrong—but it is certainly indicative that only three per cent of graduates were prepared to go to the country. I find that hard to believe, but that was what the survey results discovered. I thought that was a bit extreme because, personally, I think living in the country is good and that a lot of people would like to live in the country. However, it is indicative that a lot of people, particularly generation Y, are not so attracted to that lifestyle any more. As part of the enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations we offered an increase in the number of schools that receive additional allowances in the country and an increase in the allowance of \$4 000 for existing schools, plus some additional incentives in some areas to try to attract people to the country. We did that on our own initiative, and we also put in place the scholarship scheme—probably the biggest scholarship scheme in memory in this state, valued at about \$18.5 million—to which hundreds of people have signed up. This will mean that we will get a lot more graduates out to country schools. Those two initiatives were taken during the past year, and they were pretty solid initiatives. Unfortunately, the EBA offer has not been accepted. It would have meant an immediate \$4 000 increase at the start of this year, on top of pay rises for teachers in those 260 schools throughout Western Australia.

[3.50 pm]

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** When those schools were identified, were criteria applied to them?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** A range of criteria were applied to make it more scientific than last time. I can obtain those details about the criteria for the member, if he wants.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I think I already have them.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It was knocked back by the workforce. I was disappointed by that, because I went to Meekatharra, Jigalong and some of the other schools in difficult locations, sat in the staff rooms and talked to those teachers. I really resolved that that was one thing I wanted to address. It makes it difficult when those sorts of offers are knocked back, and it was voted down in those schools as well by the workforce. However, we really tried to do something significant, even to the extent, in some of those remote schools—this may interest the member—of offering satellite dishes for their houses, so that they would be able to access Foxtel and the like to provide something more in their lives. Those are the two initiatives we have taken. I will hand over to the director general to answer the part of the member's question on the points system.

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**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I will just clarify that for the minister. We recognise that the government's initiatives to change the method of the appointment of principals was a good move. I have heard comments that the big issue is that a teacher going to the country needs to know whether he or she can get back. It has been put to me and other members of Parliament that maybe a points system similar to the one that used to operate will be a better way to go. I just wondered whether the minister was considering that.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the expert on that matter is the member for Cottesloe, who is sitting to the member's right. Everybody recalls some of the arrangements that were historically in place. Is the member talking about teachers or principals?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I think it mainly relates to principals, but it might just be general staff. I am not a schoolteacher myself, and I have not been one.

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

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Under the new system, as the member is aware, the appointment of principals will be done locally. The issue of transfer has been raised, obviously. Principals do not currently have a transfer system, and they have not had one for some time. We are working with the Office of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner regarding the transfer standard that exists under the Public Sector Management Act. We are in discussions about the kinds of issues the member is talking about.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** One of the things the government did was to take staff from district offices. Has that created a problem with the delivery of professional development, and is that something the minister is looking to address?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not think so. We often leave resources in place so that those services can be bought. I am not at all afraid to take people out of offices and put them back in classrooms if we need people in classrooms. We have to run a service that educates children, so we are not at all worried about that. To return to the member's point about principals, I met with some members of the National Party—they may have included the ubiquitous member for Greenough—who raised that issue with me. It was a pretty solid piece of work to realise the initiative that provides for local say in the employment of principals. It was a pretty big move away from what we have done historically. The real impetus behind it was that we had found in country areas—I found anecdotally—that many people were taking up positions that they did not necessarily want to be in; they were just jumping points to get to someone else. We want people to go to a location because they want to be there, and to stay there because they want to. Having that local say over selection, we think will mean that those people in the community who are long-term residents and are liked by the school will be able to stay.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** That is a good initiative.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will go back to the teaching workforce issue and ask a few additional questions about it, specifically on a document to which the minister referred earlier entitled "WA teacher demand and supply projections", which was put out by the department earlier this year. I will refer to a couple of comments in that document. Amongst other things, the document states that it is anticipated that teacher shortages in Western Australia will increase beyond 2011. Later it states that teacher retirements will peak towards the middle or the second half of the next decade. Later on it says that a shortage of primary, including early childhood education, teachers is anticipated in 2010 due to the impact of the return to a full primary student establishment. I will again refer to the inquiry chaired by Professor Lance Twomey and ask what recommendations from the report produced by that group deal with this issue of ensuring that enough people are attracted into the teaching profession over the next decade or so and of ensuring that those people are retained. What recommendations from that report impact upon this substantial issue, and which of those recommendations is the government likely to support?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** This is a significant problem. I released this report about a month ago. For the first time there is a division in the department devoted to long-term workforce planning, which prepared this report. It shows that with the change to the school starting age, which was announced in 1996 and introduced in 2001, when the students who are affected by this measure hit high school in 2010, we will have a problem in that the number of high school students will decline substantially over one year, while the number of primary school students will increase substantially over one year. This means that we therefore have too many high school teachers in that year, and too few primary school teachers, which is a reversal of the current situation. People ask us why we did not fix that or plan for that. In the first place, we put this report out because we are planning for it. People seem to be saying that we should have fixed it four years ago, but that would have meant having 1 500 primary school teachers sitting around not doing anything while waiting for this moment to arrive. As I alluded to a moment ago, we have made a unilateral increase in graduate pay to try to attract more people into teaching. We also announced a scholarship initiative to attract more people into teaching.

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Have those measures been successful?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Yes, absolutely. The department engaged in a huge recruitment of graduates last year based upon a unilateral \$4 000 or \$5 000 pay rise, not requested by the union, plus the scholarships, which, at the upper end, will secure a graduate \$60 000 over two years—\$30 000 in the final year at university and \$30 000 when the time at the school is completed. From that, 287 people signed up for 2008. We also have a conversion program for teaching aides and Indigenous education officers to become primary school teachers, with a shortened training period of two years. This has been enormously taken up. There is no doubt that we will have to do more before 2010.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What more does the government plan to do, and what did the Twomey report recommend in this area? I am not asking for the whole report; I know the minister is trying to sit on that for the moment.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will release the Twomey report in due course. I cannot say that this issue hits me in the middle of my mind as being significant, but it is identified as a significant issue by this report.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is not really a report; it is rather an analysis of the figures.

[4.00 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** What I can say is that there is more —

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It is not really a report; it is an analysis of what —

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is right. However, we will be doing more to return teachers to the classroom and ensuring that teachers are teaching. We will —

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What does the minister mean when he says he will be doing more in those areas?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I mean that there are teachers who are doing jobs that are not in the classroom. In any given school there may be teachers who are doing non-teaching jobs who are not deputy principals or principals. That might be a teacher who assumes a role providing some social work assistance, or I have heard of examples of teachers who might become the person repairing or doing some of the work on the computer network or teachers coordinating relief—those sorts of tasks that are not necessary for a teacher to be performing. We will ensure that we get people appropriate to do those jobs doing those jobs.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** When does the minister plan to make those changes?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I understand it, we have already started rolling those out. I am sure the member would agree that ensuring that having trained, professional teachers teaching rather than in other roles is a better use of the workforce. There will be a range of changes and they will be quite public, some of which have already been implemented. The director general has already made a speech to secondary principals. I will let the director general advise the member of what she announced.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** We had a meeting of all secondary principals from across the state on 5 May. We discussed the publication that the minister has referred to, and I talked with the principals, as senior members of the department, about planning for the future. We talked about timetabling in different ways in schools; about schools organising their program delivery in different ways to maximise the use of their teachers; and about making sure that teachers are teaching and not undertaking those additional roles that they may have been undertaking in the past, unless the teacher is needed—for example, for the coordination of structured workplace learning and the like. We are converting some of the full-time equivalents that we might have provided previously to funding, so that schools can use that increased flexibility. Schools are always asking for greater flexibility of their resources so that they can deliver in a way that best suits the local level. They are the school-level kinds of approaches. We are looking for innovation, but obviously never at the expense of the standard and quality of the service delivery we are after. Alongside that, we have a whole lot of systemic initiatives, some of which the minister has referred to, and we can go into more detail about those if needed.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I thank the director general for that information. It is pretty obvious that the minister is sitting on the Twomey report because it is embarrassing to him. I am trying to get some information, which both the public and Parliament would like, about these important issues that both the minister and the director general have agreed are of major significance for the school system in the state over the next decade. If he will not answer that, will the minister tell us where the—it is no good him shrugging his shoulders; he is clearly not going to answer that, and it is time he did, given that he was presented with the report six months ago. What stage are the industrial relations negotiations with the State School Teachers' Union of WA for a new enterprise bargaining agreement for the teaching workforce at, and when does he expect, or hope, they will be concluded?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I hope they will be resolved today; that is what I hope. It is not easy.

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** When does the minister expect they will be concluded?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I seem to recall that when the member was the education minister, he had to negotiate enterprise bargaining agreements, and I recall that it was not easy for him either; would that be correct?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** There can be difficult issues involved, but they have been facing the minister for a long time; he is in the hot seat and is being paid the salary —

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** — so it is up to him and his government to deal with it.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Look, I hope it is resolved as soon as possible. It has not been possible to do it yet. We negotiated in good faith for a long time with the teachers' union. As the member recalls, it was offered a 13.6 per cent to 22 per cent pay rise, depending upon seniority and location; graduates received quite a big pay rise. Level 2.4 teachers, whose access to senior teacher II status would have been enhanced, would have received a 22 per cent pay rise, and if they were in a country location, they would be recipients of the additional allowances, which is another \$4 000 on top of that. Plus, if they were aged over 55 years, they would get access to transition retirement—a huge increase in pay. That offer was rejected by the workforce. We continued to negotiate this year on the basis of trying to reach an outcome, but that was not possible. We have now made application in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission to enter into an arbitration-style process. That will be heard at some point in the near future, when a decision will be made on whether it will go to arbitration. We are hopeful that that decision will be in the affirmative; if it is, the matter will be arbitrated in the Industrial Relations Commission between the teachers' union and the government.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Is the minister aware of the pretty deep-seated anger in the teaching profession? My understanding is that part of that anger is based on the fact that the offer that has been made is patchy, and there are certainly people in the profession who do not do nearly so well out of it. From what I have discerned around my electorate and elsewhere, there is not just the usual sort of argy-bargy going on, but there is quite a deep-seated level of anger about how the profession feels it is being treated.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We value the workforce and want to treat it, and everyone in it, very well. However, I outlined earlier to the member that I wanted to reward teachers in difficult locations—that is, to give them additional money. I wanted to put some additional merit into the system, so that we have another level above level III teachers that teachers in the classroom could aspire to. They were the two principles that I went into that negotiation with—rewarding difficult locations and adding more merit. This was along with paying the entire workforce better. At the end of last year's negotiations, we had those two principles, plus rewarding teachers who had hit level 2.4, which is reached after seven years' service, with easier access to senior teacher II. At the moment to get senior teacher II, they are required to do 42 hours' prescribed professional development over the previous five years. It does not sound too onerous to me and I am sure it does not sound too onerous to the member. At the moment, there are 5 800 teachers at that level. We will ensure that a couple of thousand additional teachers will reach that level.

Out of a full-time workforce of 16 000, that would have meant that by February 2011, in excess of 7 500 teachers would have been on \$84 400 before allowances. If they were at a Carnarvon or Port Hedland or another remote school—or even an Armadale, Kwinana, Rockingham or Wanneroo school—they would have received somewhere between \$3 000 and \$20 000 worth of additional allowances. I thought that was a good deal; unfortunately, it was not supported. I am aware of the anger in some sections of the workforce. I am aware, also, that that anger is being fanned by inaccurate and misleading commentary by people who should know better. The consistent running down of the public education system by people on the basis of trying to pursue their own agendas is a great danger to public education, and I would really urge them not to do it.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Does the minister consider that over the longer term, in order to ensure an adequate supply of well-qualified people in the teaching profession, and to compete with the other attractive careers in this state in particular, given the activity in the mining industry, there will need to be substantial above-inflation rate rises in teachers' salaries?

[4.10 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We want to pay teachers well, and I accept that we have to do so. That is what we tried to do. The offer we put was 22 per cent for a teacher with a minimum of seven years' experience, to whom we would provide easier access to senior teacher II status, which would have meant a salary of \$84 400 minimum, plus allowances. If the member thinks about it, a teaching graduate aged 21 years to 22 years, after four years at university, would have been paid in excess of \$50 000 in the first year out. They are the ones more likely to go to more difficult schools, so they would receive allowances of anything up to \$20 000—I will not specify, but at

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some schools it is \$15 000, at some schools, \$12 000, and at some schools, \$4 000. That is not bad pay in the first year out. Furthermore, after nine years' work, teachers were to receive \$84 400 plus keep their twelve weeks' annual leave—eight of which are in addition to that which most of the rest of the workforce gets—which has a value. I personally thought it was a reasonable deal. Our teachers were to be better paid than Victorian teachers following their pay deal, and certainly better paid than teachers in any other state that we are aware of. New South Wales' wages policy would have got them to \$82 000 and the Western Australian offer was \$2 400 above that. New South Wales teachers were always regarded as the best-paid teachers, and Western Australian teachers would have been better paid.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The second dot point on page 853 states —

Parental involvement in children's education is an important element in preparing young children for learning and maximising the effectiveness of schooling.

This leads me to an issue which has been raised with me in my electorate and about which I have asked the minister a question on notice; that is, the subject of truancy. I am led to believe that truancy is on the rise. I have been told that the Department of Education and Training does not keep centralised data on the number of truants, but it keeps data on the number of non-attendees. The figures show that non-attendance at primary school has gone up from seven per cent in 2005 to eight per cent in 2007, and non-attendance at secondary schools has gone up from 11 per cent in 2005 to 13 per cent in 2007. We all know that if kids are not going to school for an acceptable reason, they can get into all sorts of trouble. Many of us have experiences in our electorates of kids not going to school and getting into mischief. What support do schools receive from the district and central offices to prosecute parents who allow their children to truant; and, is there any record of parents being prosecuted, bearing in mind that it is against the law not to send children to school?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will comment generally and then I will get Mr Axworthy to say something more. As I am aware, no-one has been prosecuted under the School Education Act because his or her child is truanting. However, the member for South Perth is correct. It is not just a school responsibility; it is a parental responsibility to make sure that children attend school. As I understand it, we better record truancy incidents these days, so maybe the truancy figures are more accurate than they used to be. Furthermore, we are trialling some new initiatives that I announced last year; namely, the SMS initiatives that allow schools to SMS parents if their children are not at school by a certain time in the day. It is easier, less time consuming and more effective to use modern technology to notify parents. However, it is a parental responsibility to make sure that children attend school. It is no secret—this is certainly something I have observed—that truancy is one of the most significant issues that affects student performance in Indigenous communities. The coroner's report on deaths in the Kimberley identified truancy as a significant issue that needs to be addressed. We try hard. Anecdotally, I can tell members that when I drove around the streets of Meekatharra with the school principal, he wound down his car window to ask kids why they were not at school. That is the extent of the effort made in some communities to get kids to school. Teachers pick kids up, run breakfast clubs, and in some schools shower kids when they arrive at school; those sorts of things go on at schools to try to improve student attendance, in particular the attendance of Indigenous students.

I support those sorts of initiatives but there has to be some increased parental responsibility. Charging parents would have to be an absolute last resort. It is a hard thing to charge parents because a child truants. However, I will finish to allow Mr Axworthy to make further comment.

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** As the minister has stated, there are powers to prosecute parents through the courts. However, this action is regarded as an absolute last resort. The resort before that is to call parents before a panel and, basically, put them on a good behaviour bond. A number of panels were convened last year—in fact, 16 panels—and the results were favourable in nine cases. The seven cases that could have gone onto prosecution were aborted on the legal advice that they were unlikely to lead to a result that would encourage the children to attend school.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I noticed Hon Kim Chance made a statement—I do not know in what regard he made the statement—in which he said that the government had introduced an annual audit of student attendances at every public school in Western Australia, requiring schools to set improvement targets. Will this audit include truants and give us some idea of truancy figures? Will the department be able to centralise the data so that parents will know how serious the matter of truancy has become—if it does become serious—ensuring that the community, including the minister and the Parliament, will be made aware that we perhaps need to bring in some other measures to get kids to school? I grew up in the days of truant officers—not that I ever wagged school. However, kids did wag school and the truant officer would find them and bring them back. The kids would be very apologetic and they would always have a line such as, "Oh, mum was sick; I just went home to see her."

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However, I do not believe that there are truant officers anymore and, obviously, a lot more kids go to school today. Truancy is a matter that I am genuinely concerned about.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member for South Perth's outstanding academic record would indicate that he did not truant. I will ask Ms O'Neill to provide a full answer.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** The attendance audits are ongoing activities that schools undertake annually. Improvement targets are set on a school-by-school basis, and each school is responsible for creating strategies at a school level to encourage their students to attend school. Schools use a range of strategies, clearly in concert with the student's parents, to encourage and support school attendance. Someone in the district office is identified as having responsibility for attendance, and that person works with schools, particularly in support of the attendance panel process. Many programs are pitched to support children's attendance—specifically the Follow the Dream program for Indigenous students, and other similar programs. However, by and large a school-by-school approach is taken because each school faces unique problems. Schools are supported in that approach.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I have a further question. One of the problems raised with me was the matter of resources. Many schools say that they just do not have the resources to find the kids and take them back to school or find out why they are not at school. Generally that task is left to a teacher, and we know that teachers are fairly flat out and under-resourced. If the situation does not improve, perhaps the government needs to look at giving schools some extra resources to target non-attendance.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Additional resources are given to those schools that might be characterised as having a lower socioeconomic index. That index is generally a good indicator of the level of truancy in a school. I would expect that most of the schools in the member for South Perth's electorate would experience lower truancy levels than other schools around Western Australia. The member will find—the member for Cottesloe will probably also verify this—that in some communities around the state, particularly in the north and the goldfields and so forth, the teachers go out in the morning and round up some of the kids. However, those schools are more heavily resourced than some of the schools in the metropolitan area, and it is the additional allocation of staff and teachers aides and so forth that allows these schools to do that. As I said, when one visits some of these schools, one discovers that the Aboriginal and Islander education officers have provided breakfast and even showers for some of the students. That is an additional incentive for kids to come to school.

[4.20 pm]

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** The differential for the resourcing of schools through their general school grant and their staffing provision is weighted by the socioeconomic index, which is a strong indicator for some of the difficulties we have with attendance. Apart from that, our program allocation is often weighted by the SEI, and in the Indigenous areas in particular, resources that are given to those schools are pitched very much at difficulties such as literacy, numeracy and attendance. It is true to say that we have a differential approach to the way that we resource schools. By and large, remote schools in particular are well resourced to attack this problem, as are other schools with a low SEI. They do it very much in partnership with and through the support of parent groups. Encouraging and supporting student attendance is a particular role played by AIEO officers. It is true to say that schools are resourced to tackle some of these problems. It is never a uni-dimensional problem. Problems of attendance are often accompanied by difficulties in performance in literacy and numeracy. The strategies are very often multilevelled to accommodate all those issues.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Members, this committee is very well represented today. I have a very large list in front of me and I understand that members wish to interject in between questions. However, considering the number of members who want to ask questions, I ask members to refrain from interjecting and to put their name on the list to ask a question.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** For once, a supplementary question follows on from —

**The CHAIRMAN:** I understand what the member for Bassendean is saying, but I am going to stick to the list. The member for Cottesloe.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I refer to the first dot point under "Major Achievements For 2007-08" on page 854 of the *Budget Statements* relating to enrolment figures. I seek some information on the percentage of total students, primary and secondary, enrolled in government schools as distinct from non-government schools this year. What has been the trend in recent years? What does the department expect in future—say, five or 10 years out?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Did the member for Cottesloe say "goldfields" or just general?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** No, I said all schools.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is a good question. To give the overall figures, there are 252 585 students enrolled in public schools, of whom 168 972 are enrolled in primary schools and 83 613 in secondary schools. In addition,

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there are some 1 285 part-time secondary students at Canning and Tuart Colleges, and 1 253 children enrolled in community kindergartens. A couple of thousand can therefore be added to the figure of 252 585. The percentage of primary school students in public primary schools was 71 per cent. The percentage of secondary students in public schools was 59 per cent. There has been obvious growth in the number of students attending private schools compared with the number for public schools, although as I understand it the number of students in public schools has remained relatively stable. The bigger and more concerning declines are in secondary school numbers—our primary schools seem to be relatively stable. In secondary schools, we are down to 59 per cent of the student population. It declines each year. We held the figures for year 8 last year, but my general understanding—I can provide the member with more detailed information if he wishes—is that the exact total percentage decline in market share each year is one per cent, although our numbers remain fairly static. That is because of the growth in population. We do better in primary schools, obviously.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Was there growth in the numbers of students in secondary government schools this year?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There was growth because of the raising of the school leaving age and increased migration to Western Australia. The percentage share for public schools is declining and has been declining since the mid-1980s.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** What is the department expecting or planning for in, say, five or 10 years with regard to the total student population in government schools?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will ask the director general to expand, but, as I said to the member, the government expects a decline in numbers over time, although the decline has been arrested this year because of the increase in the school leaving age and the increase in state population. The funny thing is that, as any expert will attest, the decline is related to the fact that, amongst other factors, the relative success of the economy encourages people to send their kids to private schools rather than public schools. If and when the economy stops going as strongly as it is now, migration and household income will decrease, which will probably mean an increase in the number of students in public schools.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** As the minister said, the trend over some years has been one of decline. This year we have an extra 959 students in years 11 and 12. The raised leaving age has resulted in additional students. This is particularly good news for the additional numbers of Indigenous students at that level. If we did nothing, we would continue on that trajectory. However, as we have already discussed in the workforce planning document, there will be an increased student population across all sectors as a result of the baby boom and skilled migration. The forecasting is not as clear as it might be, given the new economic factors in play. The department is planning to continue to provide high-quality programs to provide a high-quality education for students who enrol in public schools. We will at the very least continue to plan to maintain and indeed grow the share we have.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I ask the minister to provide as supplementary information figures for the past 10 years, including this year, of total enrolments in primary and secondary schools in the government and non-government sectors.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am happy to do that. To clarify: the member seeks the figures for the growth over the past 10 years in the numbers of students in primary and secondary public schools.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** It is for primary and secondary for both government and non-government.

*[Supplementary Information No B6.]*

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I refer to the table on page 857 under “Service and Appropriation Summary”. I note that there is a fairly large blank in the forward estimates. I wonder whether the minister can explain to me why that is blank, given that he is able to put totals in there. There must be some sort of a breakdown where that blank is in the forward estimates for the next three years.

[4.30 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will defer to my financial adviser, Mr McCaffrey, who I am sure has an explanation of what the blank is.

**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** I do not have an explicit answer; we have figures that go out across those years that are reflected in the income statement, which provides more detail than what is given under these services. I am not trying to duck the issue but I think this is a framework that Treasury asked us to complete. I think it has been like this for a number of years —

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Has it? That is really what my first question was; I wanted to know whether that was the case.

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**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** Anything that is a variation can be picked up in the income statement, which will give the member a better sense about where the money flows, if that is any help. I do not have that detail with me, sorry.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Okay. Is the enterprise bargaining agreement that is on the table at the moment embedded in these figures?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is in the budget but it may not be in that service and appropriation summary table.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** What is the total cost of the EBA offer?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The total cost budgeted for is \$639 million.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I thought it was more than \$600 million. I have been trying to work out how it might be embedded in these figures and I cannot see how it is. Where does that figure appear in the budget?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is \$639 million, and Mr McCaffrey will explain where it is. Remember that we have already paid \$63 million in graduate pay increases. On top of that there is \$18.5 million in scholarships, which is also money in the pocket of teachers.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That is a long way off \$600-plus million.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** However, we budgeted \$639 million for pay rises for the workforce on top of those two other initiatives.

**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** I refer the member to the services statement line item “Total Cost of Services” of \$3 592 078 for 2008-09. On page 867 of the *Budget Statements*, the income statement has the line item “Total Cost of Services” for 2008-09, which is the same figure—\$3 592 078. As I alluded to earlier, in those out years under “Employee benefits expenses” there is significant growth going up by \$90-odd million into those out years. Those provisions we have been given so far to meet what was approved for the enterprise agreements for teachers, lecturers and any other staff who are embedded across those out years in those figures.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** This question also relates to page 857 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the Minister for Education and Training tell me how many full-time equivalent staff there are for the current financial year and estimated for next year for what used to be called teacher aides for kids with disabilities but who are probably called something else these days—education assistants? How many FTEs were estimated for this year and how many are estimated for next year?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Does the member want the number of FTEs or the money that will be spent on them?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I want the numbers—I said FTEs.

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

**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** Education assistants —

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** For kids with disabilities.

**Mr P.J. McCaffrey:** Special needs specifically—I do not have that breakdown.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will ask Ms O’Neill to respond.

**Ms S.A. O’Neill:** As at 1 May 2008, we have special needs assistant FTEs of 2 456.7.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** What is the projection for the next financial year?

**Ms S.A. O’Neill:** The allocation of special needs assistants is in accordance with the students with disabilities requirements through the Schools Plus program. We anticipate a similar figure again because as the students move from year to year, this kind of support that they want or need is by and large the same but not necessarily always the same. Therefore, in doing a projection we would work at the very least on that figure as a start.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am interested in the number of FTEs for Indigenous teachers and assistants who are Indigenous.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In Aboriginal schools?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** No, Aboriginal people teaching or assisting. Could the minister give me some sense of the FTEs for 2006-07 and 2007-08 so that I can see whether there has been an increase in either of those categories?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We have the number of Aboriginal employees.

**Ms S.A. O’Neill:** We have 452 AIEOs—Aboriginal and Islander education officers—as of 1 May.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will have to get that information for the member.

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**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That would be fine as supplementary information. I would like to know the FTE figures for 2006-07 and 2007-08 because I think it is a really interesting and important area.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The number of Aboriginal teachers?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal assistants in classrooms because I understand there are Indigenous people who are not fully qualified teachers but who work in classrooms.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is right.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Therefore, if I could have the breakdown for both those years for those two categories.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That would be the number of Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal aides who are working in the Department of Education and Training in 2006-07 and 2007-08.

[*Supplementary Information No B7.*]

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The first dot point under “Significant Issues and Trends” on page 853 of the *Budget Statements* states —

The community expects high standards of academic excellence and quality teaching in public schools, especially in literacy and numeracy. In particular, the outcomes for Aboriginal learners must be improved.

I move from those trends to the third dot point under “Major Initiatives For 2008-09” on page 855, which flows from that. It states —

Implement the Indigenous Early Childhood Education Initiative that will focus on the learning needs of early childhood . . . Aboriginal children and support their early literacy development.

Can the minister provide this committee with the expected outcomes from that initiative and whether the application of that initiative is specific to regional areas, metropolitan areas or more generally across the state?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Is the member for Victoria Park referring to the Aboriginal literacy strategy?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I refer to the Indigenous early childhood education initiative.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Director General of Education will assist the member with that question.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** There is agreement to develop a national framework to support early literacy development for kindergarten to year 1 Aboriginal children. Western Australia is leading the development of that national framework. The framework focuses, obviously, on describing the conditions, skills and understanding that is required when starting formal schooling. Therefore, materials and resources will be developed to support the successful implementation of that framework. The framework will describe the kind of skills, knowledge and experience that young Indigenous learners need to acquire and it will be supported by materials. It is a national agreement, although it will be localised for various states. To support that framework, we will also look at the language development services we already have in place in kindergarten and preprimary year 1 for those students.

[4.40 pm]

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Is it broadly across the state, not just regional areas?

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Yes. At this point the national framework is for all Indigenous learners, particularly for those who are at risk of struggling with their early learning, but at this stage it is not specific to remote and regional areas.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** My questions cover several dot points so I may as well put my questions all in one. My questions relate to the first dot point on page 854, the last dot point on page 855 and the first dot point on page 856. As the minister is aware, I am very concerned about the maintenance problems at schools in my electorate, but my first question relates to professional development for teachers. In the past, teachers have had access to professional development. They have had the First Steps program, which has been free to attend, and schools have had to pay only for relief teachers in their absence. Can the minister explain the contract that the government has with Edith Cowan University for the steps program? I believe schools in my electorate now must pay for not only teacher relief, but also the course as well. My question relates to professional development for teachers and why the minister has gone from the initial professional development First Steps program to the steps program being coordinated by Edith Cowan University.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** First Steps is widely acknowledged as an excellent professional development tool. As I recall, it was developed in the 1990s by the Western Australian Education Department and is used around the world as a professional development tool for teachers. Even my wife, who is a primary school teacher, has been

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very laudatory about the program. The advice I have from Bill Lowden about the First Steps program is that it is one of the best tools ever developed for educating teachers to educate young students in literacy and mathematics. It is one of the reasons we do so well internationally in our literacy and numeracy performance, and perform better than all the other states. Bill Lowden advised the Department of Education and Training that we should make the program more readily available to teachers; therefore, we put the First Steps English and mathematics resource materials on the department's website so teachers could access it more readily. Professional support in the use of these materials is available through modules developed by the Professional Learning Institute.

In relation to anything to do with Edith Cowan University, I am unaware of what the member for Alfred Cove is referring to. I will defer to Mr Axworthy, who might be able to answer the member's question.

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** For some time now, in addition to the training that we have been offering in-house, Edith Cowan University has a contract that enables it to offer training at a commercial rate as a commercial exercise. There has been no attempt on our part, as has been suggested, to move out of our training program for our schools. A program will run during these holidays by the Professional Learning Institute, and schools have been able to sign up for that.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** Schools now have to pay for that course, whereas before —

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** No, sorry; that is offered by the department.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does the member for Alfred Cove have a further question?

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** It is in relation to this matter.

Is Mr Axworthy saying that staff will not have to pay to go to that course?

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** If teaching staff choose to go to a commercial course that is charging commercial fees, they will pay for it, but teachers need not go to the commercial course in order to get the training because the department will still provide it in the way that it has previously.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** Is that through the internet?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No. We are providing internet access on top of that, as I understand it. We were advised to make it more readily available, so we put it online so all teachers can access it. Every teacher can access the internet; the resource is available for them.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** In relation to information technology, could the minister explain the relationship the government now has with Trilogy? I believe that a lot of teaching staff were told by their district offices to go back into the classrooms because of the teacher shortage. The teachers either said no at the start, or they went back to the classrooms and have since pulled out. I believe people are now setting up businesses to provide the services that were previously run by district offices. Can the minister explain the government's relationship with Trilogy, how those services are subcontracted and what those subcontracted arrangements are?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am not sure whether Trilogy is a person or an enterprise or a company? Where is Trilogy?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It is a shop in Claremont!

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I have been informed that the minister responded to a question from Peter Collier in the Legislative Council that the Department of Education and Training does not have consultants providing advice that was previously provided by district office, and that the work is subcontracted to companies like Trilogy?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I cannot answer about Trilogy. I am sure Trilogy is a lovely shop, but I cannot answer the question in relation to Trilogy, because I do not know. I am pretty confident that my advisers around me are not aware of that level of detail either. If the member for Alfred Cove wants to put a question on notice, we will examine the issue of Trilogy and what is going on.

On the broader point concerning people moving out of district offices, 144 teachers from district offices or central office were allocated back to classrooms last year. Of those 144 teachers, 21 left the Department of Education and Training. Therefore, in effect 123 went back to the classrooms. What has happened with Trilogy is what has happened with Trilogy; nevertheless, we have allocated resources to district offices to make up for that shortfall. I am not going to say definitely that I can provide supplementary information because I have no idea what the member for Alfred Cove is talking about. If the member puts a question on notice, we will have a look at it.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to "Major Initiatives For 2008-09" on page 855 of the *Budget Statements*. The first dot point under the heading states —

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Provide for an increase in training places for apprentices and trainees . . .

I have been approached by communities concerned about the lack of coordination in resourcing for students undertaking their school-based traineeships and apprenticeships. There has been a very successful pilot program in Wongan Hills. That program funds a coordinator, who liaises between the students, parents, school, employer and training provider to ensure the success of the training placement. It has worked very well. Will the minister continue to support that successful program in Wongan Hills, and will the minister consider a program to place coordinators in other schools to undertake this role, or would the minister look at funding similar programs to the Wongan Hills program in other areas where there is a need?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will get Mr Player to give more specific advice to the member for Wagin because I am unaware of the Wongan Hills example.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** It is a pilot project that has been working very well. It is doing what should take place.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will defer to Norma Jeffery.

**Mrs N. Jeffery:** This pilot project has been funded for some years by the Public Education Endowment Trust on the understanding that after a few years it would generate its own funding. It is continuing to be funded through that source. I have no information about what it is planning in the future.

[4.50 pm]

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I may need to talk to the minister about this at another time, but from what I have seen and heard as a result of meeting with the people involved, it is working well and is a successful program. As it is successful, does the minister think that it should be looked at and perhaps be adopted in other areas? We are having real problems with coordination in some areas. I am not saying that people are not doing their best, but there may be another way. As this program is working, will it be looked at and considered or would a similar person to that program's coordinator be considered for schools in country areas?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I cannot commit to anything now because I am unaware of the facts, but I can certainly talk to the member about the program to find out how well it is working and to get some details. We have all sorts of arrangements at local levels around the state where different schools do different things to coordinate projects. As the member would be aware, since raising the school leaving age we have had a lot of success getting students into alternative pathways to the traditional, more academic pathways. We have employed 85 participation coordinators to make those connections between employers and students and also to ensure that when they need to study in TAFE, those sorts of arrangements are in place. A lot of work is going on around the place, which can be seen wherever people go. As the member correctly identified, there has been another massive increase in funding to support additional apprentices and trainees in the TAFE system. I am happy to have a discussion with the member or maybe he could give me a note about what works in Wongan Hills to see whether it can be done elsewhere.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** This is really a supplementary question arising out of the member for South Perth's questions on truancy. I understand how the system works for monitoring truancy when a child is registered at a school. I do not have any firm evidence of this, but I have a suspicion that in my electorate some children may not be registered with any school. I am wondering how the system works for monitoring those children. What audit processes are there to ensure that children are registered at a school at the beginning of a school year? As I have said, I do not have any evidence of it being the case, but I have a suspicion that some families I am aware of are not registering their children at a school.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** This sounds like one of Donald Rumsfeld's known unknowns or unknown unknowns.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** It is an unknown unknown.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the member is asking me about students who are not enrolled anywhere and whether they fall through the cracks and how do we identify them. I will get the director general to answer that.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Is the member talking about adolescent age students?

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** There is a range. One particular family I have in mind has a range of children, both primary school and secondary age school students.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Certainly, with the adolescent age students, since the bringing in of the legislation for the changed leaving age, we have participation coordinators, to whom the minister was just referring. Part of their role has been to get very specific and individual about students, working out who and where are the ones who have not been at school for some time and putting them in connection with pathways to TAFE and employment, so there is a very specific program for secondary students in that regard. We know about younger students from primary age when they arrive as four-year-olds at kindergarten, for example; from that point they are obviously

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associated with schools and we monitor their enrolment. Once they are enrolled, we continue to monitor their enrolment and, even when they transfer from school to school, we have the capacity to monitor, and we do monitor, that movement from school to school. From the first time we have contact with them at the kindergarten point we have processes in place to monitor their attendance.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** As long as they register at four-year-old kindergarten —

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Once they register as four-year-olds at kindergarten—remembering that it is pre-compulsory, so it is a voluntary program. By and large, in Western Australia parents do enrol their children in kindergarten. Once they are enrolled we have them on our records and we continue the attendance monitoring.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** My suspicion is that these kids would not be attending any voluntary education. My concern is that they may not be attending any education. How are they picked up if their first entry to school is not compulsory? Is there an audit process?

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** It is the same process, so once they enrol at a school at a compulsory age, which would be greater than six years, and once we have that first contact with them, the attendance audit process and support would continue from there. If they are Indigenous, however, we have processes that start much earlier even than kindergarten to connect with their parents. In addition to that, for the early years we run a marketing and advertising program to get children into school.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I would have thought that was obviously voluntary. Frankly, I have concerns that there are some families with kids who are not even in the school system. If the parents are not cooperative, what audit processes are in place to pick up those kids who change schools and also perhaps those kids who never register and who at six years of age do not go to school?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will let the director general answer in a moment, but it is very difficult if parents move from another state to this state or if their kids are never enrolled. There might be the odd exception, but I think the vast number of parents want their kids to go to school. Even parents who are not particularly interested in education—at least I would expect—would appreciate the time away from their kids.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Is there the capacity for people to approach the department to say that they have a concern about a particular family and that its kids may not be in the school system?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is a good question. I will let the director general deal with it.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Yes, that often happens. By and large, that information comes through from the Department for Communities because a concern is registered about a family. Certainly, if we had information about a specific child not attending school, yes, through and with the Department for Communities we would follow that up. They need to be in school; it is legislated. We have also introduced in the past couple of years a national transfer protocol, because there used to be some slippage between states when people would arrive from another state. A range of strategies have been put in place for that purpose. The important point, however, is that unless a student is known to us and unless we have had a first point of contact, it is difficult for us to know about someone whom we do not know. However, if there was a proactive means of bringing to our attention an individual, yes, we would pursue with the Department for Communities that family.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Is the Department for Communities obliged to tell the department or is it just a protocol?

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Attendance at school is legislated. If we got information from any source, we would need to work through the appropriate channels to make communication with those students. We do not believe that there are enormous numbers of these students, but, as the member quite rightly points out, in some families parents struggle to support a child into the schooling process.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** If the member for Bassendean has examples that he wants us to follow up and if he gives them to us, we will deal with them.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The capital works program information commences on page 863, but I refer more specifically to page 865. I would like the estimated figure for the amount of maintenance that is required in government schools across the state. We have asked about a figure previously and it has been given. What is the total estimate for maintenance that is required?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the member is referring to the BCA—the building condition assessment—that we were talking about earlier.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** That is what determines the estimate of what is required, so what is the most up-to-date figure?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The BCA is currently being undertaken, so we do not have it in our possession. It is not due until July. The Department of Housing and Works is undertaking the assessment.

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**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The last BCA was undertaken two years ago, was it?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It was conducted two years ago.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Is the latest figure based on that BCA? What is that figure?

[5.00 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** A BCA was done two years ago. One is currently being undertaken, which will conclude some time in the middle of this year. We have been spending an amount on maintenance, the figure for which is publicly available, as I understand it. I am not exactly sure what the member is asking for but we do not have a BCA figure at the moment because a new BCA is being undertaken.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What is the most recent figure? There must be a figure—four years ago it was about \$65 million.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That was the Fixing our Schools allocation.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which just happened to match the amount required for the backlog of maintenance needed at the time. What is the estimated figure required at the moment, or the most recent figure available? The minister can provide it by supplementary information if he likes.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We do not have a more recent figure than the figure for what was done because the new report has not been undertaken.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What is the figure from two years ago?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We do not have it.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Does the minister not have it here? Can we have it as supplementary information?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We do not have it. We are getting a new BCA done at the moment.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I understand that, but can the minister give us the most recent figure by way of supplementary information?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am not sure I can give that to the member. If he puts a question on notice, I will have a look at it. He is asking me for something that I am not sure I can provide, so if I say that I am going to provide it by supplementary information when I do not know whether I can, I will be misleading the chamber.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** The figure has been provided previously, but, okay, we will pursue it that way. I have some other questions about capital works. I refer to page 865. Can we have some information about the line that refers to new primary schools to be announced? Under “New Works” a total of \$38 million is allocated across the forward estimates, with \$9 million for the current year. Which schools are proposed? Under the line “Mt Barker Replacement — Stage 2” is the line “New Schools to be announced”.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is a sort of internally considered issue that I am currently considering.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which schools are under consideration? Where are the needs and how many are there?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There are a lot of demands for new schools around Western Australia. I am currently considering where that money will be spent.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** What are the options?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I cannot give the member any final decisions. They will be announced when they are announced, but they are currently being considered.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member is stretching his friendship to continue.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** How many would it fund?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It does not cover many schools, when we think about it, because a new primary school in the metropolitan area costs around \$14 million. In the country area, it depends on the size of the school. I opened quite a small school in Wiluna the other day that cost \$7 million. We are building a new primary school in Karratha worth \$26 million. That is an example of the cost of building there. If we built a new primary school in a town in that region, it would take up almost the whole amount of money, so that is why we must consider quite carefully where we allocate funding. There are huge demands also in outer metropolitan areas where there is population growth. The number of new schools being built in the far northern suburbs is quite incredible.

**The CHAIRMAN:** A good thing it is, too.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Can I follow up on that?

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**The CHAIRMAN:** Other members are on the list.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I appreciate that. Will the minister make the decision based on the political needs of the Labor Party or on the basis of needs of the students who require education in this state?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can give the member a list of any number of schools built in Liberal Party electorates. In fact, I opened one the other day announced by the government in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate. That is always a cute point to make, but the demands on new schools are generally in the outer urban areas and in growth centres such as Bunbury. That is hard to deal with because I would like to do up also a lot of older schools in the inner urban areas.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Which they need.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Yes. But when there is such extreme growth and demand—I cannot think of one at the moment—because the number of students is heading towards 1 000, it makes it very hard to pull away resources and put them into older schools. As can be seen in the budget papers, Karratha and Governor Stirling schools are both to be rebuilt, so they will be brand-new schools. If we add the cost of those two commitments we would have been able to build, roughly, 10 new primary schools. That is the sort of cost we are dealing with.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I refer to land acquisition.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think that is another question, member. If we give some other members a go, I will come back to you.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Can I just follow up on Governor Stirling?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Will Governor Stirling Senior High School be rebuilt on the current location? If so, how will student classes be managed during that rebuilding?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It will be rebuilt on the current location. We did not go for any other locations because none is viable. Various locations were thought of, one of which was the location set aside for the new hospital in Midland that we are building, so we could not build it there; another was the former saleyards site, but there were certain issues to do with transport and perhaps previous uses; another site was the former Midland workshops, but there were significant issues concerning the materials used over the 100 years of that former site that made it very difficult to consider building a school there, and I was not willing to take that risk. The existing school site is a lovely site, which faces the river. The member will know it well.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I do know it well.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Is it in the member's electorate?

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, but it is not far away.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It faces the river, so we can build a school that utilises quite well that asset and the playing fields that are just a stone's throw away. There is no doubt that building it while the existing school is operational will be tricky, and I think that is one of the reasons it is so expensive, at \$63 million. There has never been a school built in the city like it at that cost.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Will transportables be established to deal with the inconvenience?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We may have to do all sorts of things, so there will be some discomfort for existing staff and students for some years. However, all the letters I have received from the member's constituents have indicated that they are pretty happy. That is another thing we are doing for the member for Darling Range's constituents.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** When will it be completed?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It will start January 2013.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** While we are on capital works, let us stay on page 865. I point out to the minister that under "New Works", "Additions and Improvements to High Schools" there is a serious omission; namely, Churchlands Senior High School.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Is it okay if the director general leaves for a little while?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** No.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am asking the Chair.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The session stops only if the minister leaves.

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can answer the questions. I advised members before of the function the director general must attend for hundreds of former staff.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I venture to say that the date for these estimates committees were set before the other date, but never mind.

I refer to the serious omission in the education and training capital works budget. I would have expected Churchlands Senior High School to appear under “Additions and Improvements to High Schools”. I understand that—the minister can confirm it—a study was done not only by the school internally, but more widely by the department, on the current and future needs of Churchlands Senior High School given that it is catering for 400 or 500 students more than it is equipped to cater for. It has a music school that has not been completed in more than 20 years, which must be one of the jewels in the crown of the government system. It must cope with the capacity given the closure of schools around it. I want to know when Churchlands Senior High School will get on the radar screen.

[5.10 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I appreciate the member’s concerns. She is a good local member, and that is a prominent school in her electorate. I visited it recently with the member.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It is the only high school in my electorate.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is not the only high school in the area.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It is one of the few.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am not sure where the boundary of the Shenton College catchment with the member’s electorate lies.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That is also at capacity.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As I recall, there are 11 private schools in that area that are heavily used by residents of the member’s electorate. Although there are only a limited number of public high schools, there are 11 private high schools in the western suburbs of Perth that are heavily used by the member’s constituents.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That has nothing to do with the question.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is relevant. There are many good educational institutions in the member’s electorate.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** There are no buses for the students to get to those schools. We are talking about the needs of Churchlands Senior High School.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There are a number of good educational institutions in the member’s electorate that are used by her constituents and their children. In relation to Churchlands, I am aware that the member has some concerns. She showed me around, and I saw the music facility. Personally, I think it is one of the best I have ever seen. The only better one I have seen at a public school is at John Curtin College of the Arts.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Try Carine or Perth Modern School. They have all had money spent on them.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have been to Perth Modern School, but the music facility at Churchlands was better than any I have seen bar that at John Curtin. While the member has said that the other facilities are not in good condition, I have been to roughly 200 schools, and I do not think they are in too bad a condition.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I did not say they were not in good condition; I said they are inadequate. There are 400 or 500 students more than the school’s capacity. When will the government do something about that?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is always under consideration, and prominent in my mind, because I have been there. The member must understand that there are many other demands. For instance, both Ellenbrook and Comet Bay schools are growing rapidly, and students were reaching year 11 with no year 11 or 12 facility. We had to spend that money.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I understand the demands. Maybe the government should change its priorities, can the stadium for a while and do something about what I think is a much higher priority; that is, the needs of schools.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The amount being spent on school capital works is far greater than that being spent on the stadium. However, if that is the member’s view, that is her view.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to the eleventh and twelfth dot points on page 855 of the *Budget Statements*, particularly the twelfth, which states that three secondary behaviour centres were established for a trial period. It

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was recently raised with me by teachers in primary schools in my electorate that a similar system for primary schools should be considered. Is consideration being given to establishing a system like that for primary schools?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The behaviour centres are a new initiative. Basically, so that the member will understand the philosophy underpinning them, public schools are available to everyone. We have to educate everyone who walks in the door and make sure they receive a good education. That is sometimes a bit tricky when some students behave in extremely violent or disruptive ways. That is one of the factors, in my view, that is contributing to the drift of students to private schools. I want to make sure that students who are exhibiting those extremely violent and disruptive behaviours have somewhere to go where they can be catered for, and hopefully have their behaviours addressed in an intensive way, because they are not learning, and they can be reintegrated back into school. We have launched three behaviour centres—one in Belmont, one in Fremantle and one in Kalgoorlie. By all reports, they have been going very well and have had some successes. There have been calls for more, naturally. Whenever something is done, it is never enough. We are examining the options for what we might do in the future. We are also examining what we might do with primary school students. Naturally, it is a bit different with primary school students because of the age and physical strength issues, so it may need to be structured slightly differently. We are examining ways of establishing primary school behaviour centres to deal with students, particularly those in the older year groups who may exhibit some of these behaviours, and working out ways of dealing with them. It is a good question, and I suppose my answer is: watch this space.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I refer to service 2, “Secondary Education”, on page 860, and note that the preamble states that secondary education is for children over 12 years of age. I know that the member for Churchlands raised this issue last year. I am not asking this question because of my electorate, although it illustrates the point. I asked a question earlier about the proportion of children going into private secondary schools. In the Cottesloe electorate, the majority of students go into private secondary schools. All the private secondary schools in my electorate have now opted to adopt middle schooling and a year 7 intake for secondary education. This was anticipated when the school starting age changed, but it has had the consequence that the primary schools are now virtually devoid of year 7 students. There are one or two ways of dealing with this problem. Shenton College could have a year 7 added to it, as has been done in Ballajura, or there may be a need to combine year 7s across two or three primary schools. Some of the schools have only one or two year 7 children. Although that is a problem in my electorate, it will increasingly become a problem in other electorates. Given that private secondary enrolments are at least 40 per cent of the total, is the department looking at ways of accommodating this general year 7 entry point? It changes the balance in primary schools. It is a long question, but what is the government doing about it?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is a good question, and as the member will be aware, a number of private schools are moving in that direction with year 7s.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** All the private schools in my electorate are doing it.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** A number of Catholic schools are doing the same. As I understand, anecdotally, it is being sold by some principals and school councils that parents had better get in quick, otherwise they will miss out. That sort of thing is being spread around.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** There is an element of that, but all of them genuinely are starting year 7 as middle schooling.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We have decided not to do that, and I will tell the member why. A report that was started before I became Minister for Education and Training was presented to me in March of last year. I think I have released the report. Firstly, the report said that there was a lot of confusion in the public education system about what year a child starts high school. It then said that we need more consistency across the system about what year children start high school. The middle schooling concept, particularly where middle schools were on a separate campus from the senior school, was causing problems and was not working particularly well. The reason for that is that there are too many exit points from the school. Once the child hits year 10, he or she has to go to another campus, and many students will go elsewhere.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** My question is not about middle schooling; it is about the year of entry into secondary school, whether it is a middle schooling structure or not.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There are difficulties with middle schools in that respect. The report said that to move public school students into year 7 on high school sites would cost roughly \$870 million, and there was no educational benefit that we could perceive. The government would spend \$870 million and cause a lot of upheaval, and there would be no educational benefit in doing that. Anecdotally, I might add, I have met a lot of people who say they want their kids to stay in a primary school environment for as long as possible.

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**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Can I just make a comment? There is an educational cost in the senior year of primary school. Although the minister may have said that, I reassure him that at the time the school starting age changed, while no decision was made, it was anticipated that year 7 would move into high school. It cannot be introduced overnight, but the department should look at phasing that in over a number of years. It is expensive, but I think it is necessary.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is expensive; it is an opportunity cost issue. If the government spends nearly \$1 billion on that, it is \$1 billion that cannot be spent on something else. Some states do it that way, and other states have a system similar to ours. There is no uniformity across Australia. When I went to school, I was in high school in year 7. I have met many mothers out there who do not want their children going into high school any earlier than they do now. That is not exactly an authoritative educational source from a university, but a lot of mothers know what they want for their children. That is the feedback I have had when I have visited parents and citizens associations and schools. There is a feeling that they like their children to be in the primary school environment for longer.

[5.20 pm]

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** My question relates to page 862 of the *Budget Statements*, under the heading of “Major Additions and Improvements”. I ask this question on behalf of the member for Bunbury, who has told me that in 2004 Bunbury Primary School was allocated Lighthouse project stage 1 funding, which was to the tune of \$450 000. There were apparently four stages to this Lighthouse project. In general, the school’s infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth of the school. I heard what the minister said about Bunbury being a rapidly growing city with facilities that have become outdated and old. Why have stages 2, 3 and 4 not been funded to complete the upgrades at Bunbury Primary School?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Thanks for that question. I will put a bit of context around that question: an improvement to the school was undertaken during the last term of government. It was named stage 1 for some reason; I am not quite to the bottom of why it was called that, but there was a significant improvement to Bunbury Primary School. Bunbury has received more spending on capital works for school infrastructure than virtually any other place in the state, bar perhaps the far northern suburbs of Perth. To outline the spending to members: there has been the construction of the new Manea College, the new Dalyellup Secondary College, the new Eaton Community College, the new Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School and the new Kingston Primary School, which is under construction. There has been \$14 million or so worth of improvements to Newton Moore Senior High School, and \$6 million or \$7 million worth of upgrades to South West Regional College of TAFE in Bunbury. I may have missed one or two off the list. Most people would give their eyeteeth to have that sort of spending on infrastructure in their town or city, and as I outlined before, there is always a demand for more —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** It must be a marginal seat!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is a growing area and we have to keep up with the demands. Manea College, of course, is a bit bigger than Bunbury Senior High School; it is a broader south west college that we hope will draw in students from further afield than Bunbury. There has also been the construction of Dalyellup Primary School. There are six or seven new schools just in that area, and members will have seen the cost of new schools. Bunbury Primary School has had an upgrade, and we will consider that for the future.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I have a further question. Minister, how many other existing schools in Bunbury have been funded for upgrades, bearing in mind what was just said about new schools? Has any money been allocated in this year’s budget to Withers Primary School in Bunbury? Apparently it has an administration area that is totally dysfunctional and requires major upgrades.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Whilst my advisers are attempting to find that information; College Row School, which is a special school, has had a new indoor swimming pool constructed for it that is used by the students as a sort of therapeutic facility. From memory, Newton Moore Senior High School has had \$14 million worth of upgrades allocated. Bunbury Senior High School has had some work done on it, as has Bunbury Primary School. They are four significant upgrades in addition to those six or seven new schools that have been constructed. Eaton Community College was announced by the last government, but it was opened in 2003; Djidi Djidi was opened in the early 2000s; Dalyellup College is due to open in the next year or so; Dalyellup Primary School was opened a year or so ago; Kingston Primary School is due to open next year; Manea College is due to open next year—and that is a lot. I mean, my God, the member for Bunbury is insatiable! I will ask Mr Parr to answer the question about Withers Primary School.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** While we are speaking about Withers, through the Chair, apparently a transportable classroom that housed Withers’ successful music program has been removed. The member for Bunbury asks whether any funds have been allocated to revamp any existing area to make it suitable for music.

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will get Mr Parr to answer the question.

**Mr M.J. Parr:** In the 2008-09 budget, \$2 million has been allocated for administration upgrades in schools. The initial process is that the district education offices make an assessment of priority of the schools within their district. The Bunbury district office has rated Withers Primary School as priority 5 in its district. These priorities from the 14 districts across the state will be assessed shortly, and some recommendations made. The need for an administration upgrade at Withers will be considered in that process. The subsequent question about music room facilities —

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** About the transportable.

**Mr M.J. Parr:** Yes. No capital funds have been allocated for that purpose in this budget; however, all schools receive some minor works funding within their annual school grant. Depending on the magnitude of the improvements that might be required to create a music room, that is always an option for a school, depending on its other priorities. Those decisions are taken by the school management team.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I outline for the member for South Perth the process with transportables so that he understands it and can pass it on to the member for Bunbury. This process has been consistent across all governments. Transportables are allocated according to a formula related to the population of the school. There are more transportables these days than there were previously, so they are more readily available for these sorts of purposes. However, I do not interfere if they are needed somewhere, because once we get into the business of interfering on the basis of someone saying that transportables have to be put here or there or the other, they are not allocated as rationally as they could be. The department allocates them based on a formula and on the need of the schools, and if one is taken away, there is obviously a greater need somewhere else.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The person from the department just said that the Withers school had been rated priority 5. May I please get an explanation of how that is rated? Is number five the fifth most important project in the district?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In the district.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I assume the chances of them getting up would be pretty slim if they are number five; it would be a bit like being number five on the North Metropolitan ticket, would it not?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It depends which party it is. It is a fair point, and there are obviously other demands in the district. The south west has the Bunbury district and the Warren-Blackwood district. It is number five on the list within the Bunbury district. We rely upon the districts to give us advice on which has the greatest demand.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I refer to page 865 of the *Budget Statements*. Under the heading of “Miscellaneous — 2008-09 Programs” is a section showing the funding for sewer connections. Is Booragoon Primary School included in that funding; and, if so, when is that connection likely to take place?

[5.30 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am aware of the issue with Booragoon Primary School. There were some issues and some work has been done on the school’s septic system. Since that work was completed during the recent school holidays, no further problems have been reported. The ventilation has been improved; the ventilation of the septic tank has been modified; and the drainage for the air conditioning system has been improved. The cost of doing what the member for Alfred Cove proposes is estimated to be \$170 000 and would have to be considered in light of all the other capital works demands. The money in the provision outlined by the member has not been allocated, and the Booragoon Primary School project will be considered along with all the other requests. As I understand it, the problem experienced with the septic tanks was recently repaired.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** The minister is saying that that money has not been set aside but that if the problem occurs again, he will consider allocating that money to the school. Is that what the minister is saying? We believe it is an ongoing issue.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No; I am saying that an allocation is made for sewer connections, which takes into account all the demands in the system and prioritises those demands by greatest need. The fact that a school is on a septic tank system does not necessarily mean it has any problems. We will allocate that amount of money on the basis of greatest need.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** In that case, I know the minister is aware that the children have been evacuated from Booragoon Primary School on a regular basis because of the smells from the septic tank. I know it is difficult to provide a list now, but will the minister provide, as supplementary information, a list of all the other government schools in the metropolitan area that are not connected to mains sewerage?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We do not have that information.

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**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** The minister does not know!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not know which schools are served by septic tanks. The member for Alfred Cove might think this is a huge issue, but suburbs in my electorate are still served by septic tanks.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I have children being evacuated because of the smells!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There was a smell —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** They were evacuated because of health concerns and the environmental concerns.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order, member!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There was a smell at the school, work was undertaken to repair the problem and the problem has been fixed. The fact that a school is on a septic system does not mean that there will, necessarily, be a big problem. As I have previously said, people in suburbs in my electorate have septic tanks, and I never hear of any problems whatsoever. I am aware of the issue at Booragoon Primary School, and we will consider it, but I am unaware of students being evacuated on a regular basis. There may have been an issue about the smell —

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I have written to the minister about the issue; how can he say he is unaware of it?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order, member for Alfred Cove!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member for Alfred Cove writes to me a lot! There may well have been an issue, and I am aware of it now.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** The third dot point on page 862 refers to additional stages to high schools. Several approaches and applications have been made over several years for funding for an upgrade of the outdated and decaying boarding facilities at the Western Australian College of Agriculture, Narrogin. Could the minister advise whether these much-needed upgrades to the boarding facilities are on the drawing board? Will they happen; and, if so, is there a time line for consideration by the government?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Members, I will point out that we are meant to address items in the budget, not what is missing from the budget. However, I am sure that in general terms, an appropriate line will lend itself to the member's question. I will allow a reasonable amount of latitude on this occasion.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That latitude is appreciated.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That may not last, but for now the member is okay.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** This is a very important issue and the minister is aware of it.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I appreciate that the member for Wagin has breached the standing orders; but that is hardly new! I appreciate the member's concerns and I agree with him. I tell the member in all sincerity that I would like to do more for agricultural colleges. I visited Harvey agricultural college and I saw the facilities that students are living in there. The kids are terrific and the education they receive at the college is fantastic. Apparently, Western Australia's five agricultural colleges are better than those found in any other state. Our agricultural colleges are very intensively managed, as the member would be aware, by staff and so forth. The state government subsidises the students who attend the colleges, as does, I think, the commonwealth government. I would like to do more. I am aware that some projects were unobtainable; for example, the \$26 million project to move the Harvey college. Given that 90 kids attend that school, it was too big an ask. However, I would like to do up the agricultural colleges' facilities. This budget does not contain any money for Narrogin agricultural college. As the member will see from the capital works line, some of the bigger projects, such as the facility at Karratha, take up a lot of the budget capacity. However, the department will undertake a review of the agricultural colleges' facilities, and Mr Player will be able to advise the member about that review and when it will take place and so forth. I have already told the member for Wagin about the bunch of big tough farming blokes from the community—the fellows on the college board—who, with their big gnarled hands, come to see me. They are great fellows. They pointed out some of the issues with the college, even down to the level of some of the doors and partitions between the rooms and so forth. A new residential college is under construction in Albany and the construction of a residential college in Broome is now finished.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I have seen the facility in Broome.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** They are fantastic facilities, but those at the facilities that were built 40 or 50 years ago feel that they have missed out. That is the constant balancing act in the capital works program. The new facilities are so fantastic that those who use the older ones feel that they have missed out. The building at Karratha and the rebuilding of the boarding facility at Governor Stirling Senior High School was done in part to try to address the issues faced by these older schools; however, such solutions are very expensive.

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**Mr R. Player:** As the minister said, we are scoping a review that includes the sick bays, the residential facilities and the teaching and training facilities at all the colleges. We need to take a good look at these facilities right across the board.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** We have raised these matters for some time now, and the minister has agreed to inspect the Narrogin agricultural college on 31 May when he is in town to open the new design and technology centre at Narrogin High School.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** That will be good. One further point I will make is about the growth in the number of female students who attend the college as a result of the excellent equine program. That is a concern because it is now about not only the state of the facilities, but also the management of the male and female students. We look forward to the minister's visit; he will be well looked after.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** My question is about the item relating to land acquisition on page 865. According to that line item, \$31.6 million is due to be expended in 2008-09. Will the minister provide a list detailing where he expects land will be acquired?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There is a list of properties that are being examined. We have not made a final decision on what properties will be purchased because of changing demographics throughout the year. However, as the member will understand, the list identifying the properties is, to a certain extent, commercial-in-confidence because if we release the list of land parcels the government is considering, the landowners will see who their competitors are and what the government's various options are, and that might affect the price of the land.

[5.40 pm]

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Without compromising that, can the minister give me an indication of what the high priority areas are?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Outer urban expanding regional centres—it is always the way. The member's area in the eastern suburbs would be one, although, amazingly, the experience for Governor Stirling Senior High School was that it was very hard to find land. It always seems to me that the eastern suburbs have so much land, but it was very hard to find suitable land there. Other high priority areas are the upper north, south east and south western areas, and probably now also the Peel area. I know the Rockingham area quite well and perhaps the inland Rockingham area and the Bunbury and Busselton areas are also high priority. It is demographic growth. This year we have opened 11 schools. The figure for next year will be around 15.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I refer to service 2, "Secondary Education", on page 860 of the *Budget Statements*. I want to again return to the issue of teacher shortages. For which subject areas are there concerns about specific teacher shortages at the moment?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The particular areas move around a bit, but design and technology teachers are always at the top of the list. After that it is physics and maths teachers. There are shortages in language teachers and, recently, shortfalls in physical education teachers.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Can the minister give me an idea how many teachers short we were at the last count? Can someone give me the numbers to attach to the areas the minister just mentioned?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can give the member the most recent shortfall figures by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No B8.*]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The problem for the supply of design and technology teachers is that although many of them enjoy the lifestyle of being a teacher, they also have skills that are attractive elsewhere. In many other parts of the teaching workforce, although teachers' skills are attractive outside the education sector, they are not as attractive as design and technology skills. I met a design and technology teacher the other day who had formerly been a chief petty officer in the Navy. He did a one-year Dip Ed conversion at the University of Notre Dame and enjoyed the teaching lifestyle—he enjoyed teaching rugby and so forth—but he could have got a job at a power station or something and probably would have been paid more money. The figures bounce around every day, because positions are filled every day. Maybe I will provide the figures as of today.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** As of 1 May or some recent date would give some idea.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We will try to make it as of today and, if not, we will make it 1 May.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** The brochure published by the department on Western Australian teacher demand and supply projections provides figures to 2015, which is only seven years away. The red line for secondary teachers

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reveals that we will be close to 1 500 teachers short in secondary schools. What areas does the minister see as being the biggest problem in that context? I assume some strategic planning is being undertaken for this. If the minister knows we will be short by 1 500 teachers, he must have some idea where the shortfall will be.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** This refers to anticipated figures. It is based upon the department doing nothing. We are doing things, as the member knows and as I outlined earlier, and we will do a lot more. It is also predicated on the economy staying as strong as it is. If the economy does not remain as strong, one of the paradoxical benefits will be that these problems will dissipate. However, the shortfalls are in the areas in which we are currently experiencing shortfalls. The advice I have just received is that it is the areas of design and technology, maths, physics and chemistry. Languages bounce around a bit, although that is not as significant a problem for obvious reasons. We have had difficulty with the supply of physical education teachers. We had some problems with English teachers.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That was going to be my next question.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Some of the problems with retention of English teachers were based upon some of the curriculum issues. Some of those issues have now been resolved. These are the key areas. That is still a pretty big chunk of the workforce, for which we have to do a lot of work. We have to encourage more people to go into maths and sciences; there is no doubt about that.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** On the question of shortages, what is the current percentage of male teachers in primary schools? Has the number gone down or up over the past year or so?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The former minister will be able to relate the same experience—nine out of 10 teachers at the primary schools I visit are female, while more than half of the principals are male. It is a funny dynamic. I do not have an exact figure; I do not even know whether I can provide the figure for the member.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I have received this information in past estimates committees, so I imagine it is around somewhere.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will provide the answer to the member by way of supplementary information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can the minister confirm exactly the information he is going to provide?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will provide the percentage of teachers in primary schools who are male and the percentage who are female.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** We can work that out!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Not necessarily, but we think it is pretty well a direct division! It is not as easy as one thinks these days!

*[Supplementary Information No B9.]*

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to page 854. The fifth dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” reads —

From the beginning of 2008, 52 government secondary schools will operate additionally funded ‘senior schooling engagement programs’ to assist at risk young people in their 16th and 17th year to participate more effectively in schooling.

Does the minister have any performance indicators to determine the success of these programs? I realise it was put in place only this year. How many of those 52 schools are in country Western Australia?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will defer to Mrs Jeffery.

**Mrs N. Jeffery:** These programs were started only last year. The schools regard them as being extremely successful because they provide very specific courses to young people who would otherwise be disengaged. We are reviewing the raising of the school leaving age through all of the initiatives this year, so by the end of the year we should have some information about the whole process of raising the school leaving age. It may not specifically concern this particular program. I am sorry; I do not have the names of the schools, but I am fairly certain that quite a number of them are in the country.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We can provide that information.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** It would be good if I could have that information.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** What is the exact information?

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**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** There are 52 government secondary schools operating the senior schooling engagement program to assist kids at risk. I want to know how many of those 52 schools are in country Western Australia.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** And where?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Yes, if the minister can give me that information.

[*Supplementary Information No B10.*]

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I recently went to the Hillside Farm Education Centre near Maddington. It is associated with the farm program at Kelmscott Senior High School. I know that students from other schools also go there. Is that part of this program? There are kids at risk there, and it seems to me to be a very good program. That is what drew me to look at this, because it seems to be something that is working well.

[5.50 pm]

**Mrs N. Jeffery:** As well as the senior school engagement programs, other programs operate in our government schools for students at risk of disengaging. I have been to the Hillside Farm Education Centre too, and it is one of those programs that I think suits young people but I am not sure, because I do not have a list with me, whether that is a program on that list.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Okay; that list will show me anyway.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** My question refers to the fifth dot point about school-based apprenticeships under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 855 of the *Budget Statements*. I know we have expanded the number of apprenticeships and traineeships in the state. However, I sense from people, particularly those who are engaged in the defence industry programs we run, that there is concern about the manner in which the success of schools is measured. It seems that the system is set up so that the Department of Education and Training would assess a student who left school prior to year 12, having been engaged in a vocational program and going into employment, as a failure on the school’s behalf. This assessment of failure is not necessarily direct or overt but is in the form of assessing schools’ retention rates and reflecting their success in that manner. I think that is a gap, and I want to know whether any work has been done to try to accommodate the view that young people who leave school for employment should be seen as a success on the school’s behalf.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Under the raising the school leaving age initiative, students are required to be in school, full-time training or approved employment. We regard that as the equivalent, I suppose, of those students completing year 12 at school, although we are trying to improve the retention of students in schools and have them either attend technical and further education colleges or undertake courses at the same time. I personally tell schools that it is not a failure if their students undertake a vocational education and training course. It is a fact these days—perhaps it was not when I was leaving school—that doing a trade apprenticeship or undertaking a traineeship provides people with just as good a job outcome, future and earning potential as does going to university. Therefore, I encourage schools to regard students who do well in VET as a success. In addition, when we analyse the results of schools at the end of the year or when we publish the results, one of the criteria for ascertaining the success of the school is whether it was in the top 50 schools for vocational education and training results; not just tertiary entrance examination results. Therefore, if a school is in the top 50 in the state in TEE or in the top 50 in the state in VET, that is published at the same time, so we do not draw a distinction between the publication of those results. These days, another thing we do is allocate a Beazley Medal to the student who is first in the state in VET, as well as to the student who is first in the state in TEE. Both medals are presented on the same day and both students receive the same sort of attention. Therefore, I encourage schools not to regard students doing well at VET as unsuccessful.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Maybe my question was not clear enough. The concern I hear from principals appears to be that when students do not complete their time at school—maybe they commenced vocational training at the school, or a school-based apprenticeship, and before year 12 they leave to go into full-time employment, which occurs on an increasingly regular basis—the school stands to be penalised in the way it is assessed. This is not necessarily done intentionally; it is done inadvertently through the school’s retention rate not being considered to be as high as that of other schools, and perhaps the school’s funding is affected. That has been articulated to me by a number of principals.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am unaware of it. The member said that increasing numbers of students in years 11 and 12 are leaving to go to work. It is actually the opposite; an increasing number of students are going on to years 11 and 12 at school these days.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There is a demand for people; therefore, students who get involved in programs and are attached to a workplace can be offered employment in this current environment.

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In this current environment, students can be offered employment; however, the number of students has increased who are not working but are going to school these days. I ask Ms Jeffery to comment on whether a school is formally or informally regarded as a failure, as the member may have put it.

**Mrs N. Jeffery:** I may not have the member's question quite clear, but we have two measures. One measure is the retention rates, and that counts the number of students who started in year 8 and finished year 12. When we count retention rates, we do not count the students who then perhaps go on to VET and work; they are included in our participation rates. Since the school leaving age was raised, about 95 per cent of students have participated. That participation rate counts work, VET and school, or any combination of them. Perhaps when principals talk to the member, they are talking about the graduation figure rather than the participation figure. Therefore, I am not quite clear what the issue is from the school's point of view.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is okay; I will grab the minister and talk to him about it some other time.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Members, it is past 5.55 pm. We will have a break at six o'clock for an hour, after which we will have three hours left to do four divisions. Is it members' intention to come back to Education and Training after the dinner break? I ask this because I have three people left on the call sheet. I see members indicating that that is their intention. Fair enough; we will continue.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I want the Minister for Education and Training to clarify an issue for me. As I have pointed out before, the last building condition assessments for schools in my electorate were done in 2004. I have copies of those assessments and I know what work has and has not been done. Obviously, I will notify each school of the work that has not been done.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Sorry, what page number is the member referring to?

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I am referring again to item 92, on page 853 of the *Budget Statements*, which deals with recurrent expenditure and maintenance. Treasury told me that that item was very broad ranging. In 2004, the government issued a press release that stated in part —

Dr Gallop today announced an additional \$65million over the next four years to clear the entire school maintenance backlog. This is on top of the \$60.1million already allocated for the 2004-05 financial year.

My understanding from that press release, the building condition assessments of the schools in my electorate and the print-out that I received was that this work would be done as per the building condition assessments, based on the priorities that were set. When a building condition assessment is conducted at a school, someone identifies all the faults, and then a person from the Department of Housing and Works and the school principal must prioritise. Priorities one to nine are the items that go on the building condition assessment. Therefore, not everything that needs to be done appears on the building condition assessments for the schools; it is just priorities one to nine. The priorities were listed on the building condition assessments that were done four years ago, and 80 to 90 per cent of those priorities have not been attended to at most of the schools.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am sure that some time before six o'clock I will hear a question.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** That was the \$60.1 million and the extra \$65 million mentioned in the government's 2004 press release. It has been four years and the annual recurrent expenditure, year by year, has not really gone up that much. My concern is that it has been four years —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Member, come on, where is the question?

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** The question is: will the building condition assessments now be done on an annual basis and will we again be given another four years? What exactly will the minister do with the current building condition assessments that are being undertaken?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thanks, member.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The building condition assessment is not conducted annually; it is every two years. When we receive the assessment we will consider it.

**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** In view of what our district office has said, what do I do about the 80 to 90 per cent of work which still has not been done and which was prioritised in 2004-05? Where will that funding come from?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member says that 80 to 90 per cent of the work has not been done. I would like to have that verified because I have figures that show that more than \$16 million worth of work has been done on schools in the member for Alfred Cove's constituency.

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**Dr J.M. WOOLLARD:** I could give the minister a list of what has not been done —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order, member!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** If the member for Alfred Cove wants to give me a list of what has not been done, I will have a look at it. However, I am not exactly sure that some of the things she says have not been done have not been done, and I am not exactly sure that the things the member says should be done are on the list.

*Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Churchlands has the first question.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** My question relates to services 1 and 2 dealing with secondments of teachers to other agencies—places like the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. I understand that there were a number of secondments during the last school year. I want to know how many secondments took place, what changes have been made for the current school year, and what is the budget for those changes? How many full-time equivalent employees, which organisations are involved, and what is the total dollar value of those secondments from the Department of Education and Training to those organisations?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** What page is the member referring to?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It is related to services 1 and 2 on page 857 of the *Budget Statements*.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** A range of people are seconded, particularly teachers. I have some concerns about the number of people seconded out, particularly in an age in which we need teachers in classrooms. We are examining that number, but I do not have any figures with me. Does the member for Churchlands want me to try and provide her with some information as to where these are located?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Yes. I would like those figures for the school year 2007 and the current situation in 2008.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The figures may be fluid because some will be retrospective, but I am happy to provide the member for Churchlands with that information.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That should be possible for last year, and up to 1 May this year, then we can ask again.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We will provide information for 2007 until 1 May 2008 of all teachers seconded from the Department of Education and Training into other agencies or other organisations. There might be some non-government organisations that people have been seconded to as well, so we will provide the member for Churchlands with that information also.

*[Supplementary Information No B11.]*

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I declare an interest in this matter. I am on the board of trustees of the Francis Burt Law Education Centre, which, until the end of last year, had a secondment, and that was subsequently withdrawn. A compromise measure was taken towards part-funding of a teacher for this year. Does the minister see that sort of arrangement being more in keeping with his needs and that of his department in the future?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I was aware there was an arrangement regarding a teacher at the Francis Burt Law Education Centre. The reason that we often put staff members into those locations—there might be some in environmental organisations; some are allocated to Clontarf football academies and so forth—is that a lot of our students often access those facilities, so it is a good arrangement. In an environment in which our main priority is placing teachers before classrooms, we will look at those arrangements that have just been outlined; namely, withdrawing a staff member and providing some money so that someone else can be employed instead of a teacher being in that location.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Would the minister see that as a good compromise in the current circumstances?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Yes.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** So does the organisation; it is a good result for everyone.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There are a lot of organisations like that out there.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It is quite legitimate.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We provide those staffing arrangements for a lot of organisations. I have seen a list before—I do not have it here. As I said, Clontarf is one that springs to mind. There might even be one at the Zoo, from memory, as that organisation involves school excursions and so forth. I do not think that staff here at Parliament House are Department of Education and Training staff.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** They are employed by Parliament.

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is right. That is another arrangement. A teacher may not be required, but they are obviously great educators and know a lot about their subject. However, a teacher may not be needed in that role. That is the sort of thing we are looking at.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** It is valuable that the minister and the department consider it worthwhile to continue to support those organisations in some form.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to the fourth dot point under “Major Initiatives For 2008-09” on page 855 of the *Budget Statements* —

Continue the early childhood enrolment campaign, parent publications and monitoring of issues and trends.

In relation to the early childhood enrolment campaign, does the minister intend to increase support for the highly successful Smart Start program that operates in the great southern, central and upper great southern areas of WA? I think the minister is aware of the program. The Department of Health has also supported it. Is the minister aware of the early childhood program, and will that support continue?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will let the Director General of Education answer that question.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** We are aware of the program. My understanding is that it is well supported. We do not have any plans at this point that I am aware of to draw that to a close. Like any program, we would seek to evaluate its success in deciding whether we would go any further with that program. We are trying to have a look at all of the early childhood programs with a focus on kindergarten and pre-primary. At this point I am not aware of any plan to draw that to a close.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** I refer the minister to the ninth dot point on page 856 that refers to upgrading and refreshing plant and equipment for TAFEWA. The minister may not be aware, but Mr Tony McRae made a report back in about 2003-04 that the Curtin Vocational Training and Education Centre campus at Kalgoorlie be taken over by TAFE and that that facility become a part of TAFE. Another report last year made the same recommendation. Why is it not happening?

**Mr A.D. McRAE:** I did not write that question!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There was some suggestion that Curtin University hand the VTEC arrangement in Kalgoorlie back to the TAFE system, and that it be integrated into the TAFE system. I told Professor Jeanette Hackett from Curtin University that that was something that we were amenable to, provided that it was cost neutral to the state government. Curtin University has now indicated that is not something it is currently interested in doing, but my mind remains relatively open. I do not want to add a financial impost to the state's taxpayers in doing that. As I understand it, that is where the situation stands. I will ask Mr Player whether he has anything to add.

**Mr R. Player:** There were extensive negotiations with Curtin University, and, at the end of the day, it decided to withdraw from the negotiations.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** I have a supplementary question. Is the minister telling me that Curtin now wants to be compensated for something it received for nothing when it took over the former Kalgoorlie College and then turned that into VTEC?

[7.10 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** My recollection is that Curtin University of Technology wanted a financial transfer in the form of some money from the state if it was to transfer it back to the state. That was never the basis of the discussions I commenced with Curtin University, but there were subsequent negotiations. As I understand it, Curtin University initiated pulling out of the negotiations. Does Mr Player wish to elaborate on that?

**Mr R. Player:** What the minister has said is exactly right. At the end of the day Curtin withdrew from any negotiations.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** May I urge the minister to continue those negotiations? I think the meat in the sandwich is the young people of the goldfields who are missing out, because they would do far better under TAFE. Attendance and course numbers at VTEC are average to say the least. I think the entire goldfields looks forward to the day when the minister can conclude successful negotiations.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I thank the member. That is a good point.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The first dot point on page 856 refers to the complete implementation of the Learning with Information and Communication Technology program by the end of 2009. How will the Carpenter

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government implement the federal Labor government's promise to ensure that each high school student has access to a computer and how much has been budgeted to implement this promise?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member has referred to the LICT program. We are expanding it with another 32 schools by the end of 2008, particularly in the eastern hills, Willetton and Forrestfield areas. We have put more than \$48 million into the project. We have an additional \$2.8 million budgeted for the rest of this calendar year and an additional \$1.6 million for school power upgrades. Basically, this is all about making sure that schools, particularly in areas that have not had high socioeconomic indices or a high take-up of information technology, receive additional support with ICT. That is what that project is, and it has been very well received by schools around the state. How the national program is going to roll out is the subject of a lot of discussion. Naturally, we appreciate the fact that the federal government has an interest in and is supporting the provision of more information technology in the senior years of schooling. I think that Western Australia is way ahead of the other states with IT. Whenever I go to one of those national ministerial councils, when we talk about what we do with the provision of computers in schools, back-up support, notebooks for teachers, notebooks for students and all these programs, and the modernity of the infrastructure we have rolled out, it is clear we are way ahead of the other states. However, if the commonwealth wants to provide us with additional computers, we would welcome that. What the Premier has said, which I support, is that there needs to be a full funding package for all of this. How that program will roll out is currently being negotiated between the state Treasurers, but the commonwealth understands our position, which is that we need its financial support to implement its election commitment.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Once again, I think the best place for reference to my question is services 1 and 2. For the first time that I can remember there is no major achievement or major initiative listed for children with disabilities. I cannot believe that the government is complacent enough to believe that everything that needs to be done for children with disabilities is being done. Perhaps somebody can tell me what the achievements have been in the past financial year for children with disabilities and what new programs are being built on—for instance, programs for children with autism.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Naturally, the government regards education for students with disabilities as being an enormously important area. To list the range of programs and projects that have been put in place to support children with disabilities would be impossible.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am not asking for that; I am asking for major achievements. What does the minister see as the major achievements in the financial year that is coming to a close now, and what sorts of initiatives does the minister see progressing in the next financial year, particularly for children with autism?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As for major achievements, obviously we have been rolling out additional support for children with disabilities. That is one. As the director general was outlining earlier, the inclusion program means additional staff and support for students with disabilities. I have outlined that the retention of special schools, education support units and education support centres around the state must be an integral and important part of educating students with disabilities, and that we need to make sure that parents are properly informed and that students are in the right environment to suit their educational needs. I think that often our excellent education support centres, excellent support units and special schools are the right environment, but we also have the other aspect of the inclusion policy that allows students to go into mainstream classes if that is deemed to be the appropriate environment for those students. As for the specific question of what is the major achievement, I suppose it is additional support services out there for students with disabilities. I will give the member one other. There are currently four autism units around the state. We expect that we will expand those in coming years. If the member watched the *60 Minutes* program, she would know that the incidence of autism is increasing. Providing additional support is one of the other things that we are doing.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Will the minister quantify the additional support this year for children with autism?

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** The number of students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, as the member is probably aware, continues to increase by about 18 per cent per annum. We have more than 1 200 students enrolled at the moment with ASD. We are providing 12 visiting teachers to those students through our ongoing and additional commitment to the autism education service. We have teacher consultancy, professional learning programs, online teaching resources and the like. We have established two secondary units for the secondary autism extension program, and we will continue to monitor that to see whether it is successful so that there can be some sort of expansion. The additional resources for the growth in the number of students are additional funding. As we talked about before, the growth between 2007 and 2008 in the number of special needs education assistants has meant additional funding for the department to cover. That is in addition to the expansion of the primary autism centres that the minister spoke of.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** How many of those 1 200 students have some help from an education assistant?

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**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Does the member refer to a special needs education assistant?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Yes.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Under the Schools Plus resourcing program, that decision is made in concert with the school. Not everyone of those 1 200 students requires the intervention or the support of a special needs education assistant. I do not have the percentage of those 1 200 who have a special needs education assistant, but by and large most of those students would have access to at least a fractional time of a special needs education assistant.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Of those 2 000-plus education assistants, how many are special needs education assistants?

[7.20 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As at 1 May 2008, there were 2 456.7 special needs FTEs, and there were 2 309 education assistant FTEs.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** That is about 5 000 total.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is a bit under 5 000, yes.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** The number the minister gave before was for special needs.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is right. Before dinner I thought that was what the member asked for.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Maybe I did, but that clarifies that situation.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to the seventh dot point from the bottom of page 856 under “Major Initiatives For 2008-09”. It refers to the establishment of a football academy at Halls Creek and the expansion of the academy in Kununurra, which are part of the Gerard Neesham Clontarf Foundation. The program in Kununurra has been very successful. I hope Halls Creek will provide some great advantages. Are there plans to further extend these programs into other schools? It was planned to start a football academy at the Katanning residential college in the middle of this year. It was on course; is it still going ahead? Has thought been given to utilising other residential colleges for this program if there is space?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member is correct; the programs are very successful. We have been funding more of them. From memory, there are eight of them—one each in Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Yule Brook in the southern suburbs of Perth, Broome, Albany, Bunbury, Kununurra, Kwinana, now Halls Creek and an annexe in Esperance. In total, the number is nine or 10, and that is a massive expansion over the past five or six years. The Halls Creek program has the highest priority, and, naturally, I think Clontarf would like to develop more of them. If the member has ideas about where else they should go, we can consider that. However, every time a program is established, it requires another allocation of money, and we must consider it in that context. I would like to do something in the future for Aboriginal girls. A basketball program is running in Geraldton, although it is not run by Clontarf. I have visited that program. I would like to look at the prospect of establishing some of those initiatives elsewhere in light of the fact that football is an institution that has a very powerful influence on Aboriginal people. However, the basketball program in Geraldton for Aboriginal girls seems to be quite successful. We will look at establishing more of them. The Halls Creek program will be another part of the puzzle in supporting Halls Creek.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** It may be that I need to ask this question under the country hostels division. I understood that it was proposed that, half way through this year, another program would run out of the residential college in Katanning. Is that going ahead? The minister may not know. If there is room in the country hostels’ budget, and there is an opportunity to utilise good facilities, it would seem natural to use Katanning, where there is a high Nyoongah population.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I want to make it clear that I do not have funding for it. If Clontarf would like to do it, the people there would have to come and talk to us about it. Given that I do not have any money for it, it is something we will have to consider in the future. The member is correct that the program in Broome will work well given the residential college we have just finished building there. No doubt the member for Wagin has been out to the back of Broome Senior High School and visited it. It seems to be a very effective facility, run by a couple of former prominent footballers, from memory. There are so many good ex-footballers that I lose track of them.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** They are like politicians.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is right—but probably more valuable. I do not have money for it, but I appreciate that the member for Wagin is a keen pursuer of issues for his electorate and we will look at it in the future.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** How many boys are involved in the eight centres?

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**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think the number varies from one to another.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I want to know the total figure.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The figure I have here is 900 students involved as part of the football academies. There are more in some areas than in others. However, the number will obviously climb with the Halls Creek academy coming on stream.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** What is the evidence to show that attendance at the football academy schools has positive spin-offs for educational outcomes?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** They are very effective.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** The minister can do better than that; he should give us some detail.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have met Ross Kelly, Gerard Neesham and some of the other staff, including Craig Brierty, and discussed it with them. I have seen three, four or maybe five of them. They are very effective in improving retention among boys whose retention otherwise would be reduced. The figure we have is that the rate of retention of students who participate was 89 per cent in 2007. I am informally advised that that rate of retention is much higher than would have been expected had the academy not been there.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** What formal evaluation is being done to show solid evidence of their attendance?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We are doing an evaluation of them this year—I am not sure who is doing it—to work out whether they are the most effective way of achieving retentions. I think they are very good and I have said that publicly.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am not doubting that; I am just really interested to know the results.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** An evaluation is to be done on their effectiveness and, I expect, their cost-effectiveness. As I said earlier, I am particularly keen also on working out ways of dealing with girls, although football is probably not the right way.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Soccer might be.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It might be another sport.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I refer to the eleventh dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 855 of the *Budget Statements*, which refers to behaviour management and discipline strategy. Some reference has been made to this. Has the minister advised today how many schools have received funding during 2007-08 through the behaviour management and discipline strategy? How many of those schools were primary and how many were secondary; and, of those schools, what was the average class size for years 4 to 9?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The annual spend is \$16.6 million. Two hundred and seventy three primary and secondary schools receive funding for the strategy. I do not have a breakdown between primary and secondary schools. If the member wants, I can get it.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** We can follow that up with the minister later. This is a really worrying statistic. Given the 23 per cent increase in assaults by students against teachers and other education staff in 2007 compared with the figure in 2006, what strategies are in place to protect staff against this kind of violence?

[7.30 pm]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I want to be quite clear about this: violence in schools, whether by students against teachers, other staff members or other students, is unacceptable. We have found that there has been an increasing awareness of the reporting of these incidents and an increasing propensity to report them, which is good. A lot of the reports come from education support centres and education support units. A lot of reports also come from primary schools and concern younger children. General advice has been given to teachers to report assaults, so if a young child hits a teacher, that is sometimes reported. A student in an education support centre might have a lot of difficulty controlling his or her behaviour.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** So it is not the kind of assault one would see outside a pub.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Not always. A lot of the time it is. That is obviously unacceptable. I recently heard someone say that anyone who assaults a teacher should be instantly excluded and suspended from school. I have a five-year-old and I know what they are like—they sometimes react badly to something they are told and lash out. I do not think a five-year-old should be suspended from school for doing that. In the same vein, I do not want students from education support centres who might not be able to control their behaviour to be excluded either. There is a mix. We obviously encourage more reporting of assaults so that we can be aware of the exact figure. More reporting is occurring.

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To address these issues, I recently changed the exclusion and suspension procedures to make it easier for schools to exclude or suspend students. The process was streamlined so that a student excluded from one high school cannot just go to another school down the street or in the next suburb, which could have happened before. I also recently launched a good resource on keeping the workplace safe, which is a professional development document for teachers. The document explains some of the strategies that teachers can put in place, how to report an assault, how to prevent assaults from happening again, behaviour management and discipline strategies, behaviour centres and so forth. Those sorts of initiatives have been put in place. If the member wants a breakdown of the distribution of those funds between primary and secondary schools, I am happy to give that to him.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No, that will be fine. I have one further question. How much would class size impact on the growing incidence of assaults on teachers? Can the minister confirm that 1 004 classes in 320 schools have more students than the maximum allowed under the teachers' last enterprise bargaining agreement?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There has been a progressive reduction in class sizes over the years. As part of the behaviour management and discipline strategy, there has been a progressive reduction in class sizes for year 8 and 9 students in schools that have received additional money to do that. A lot of work has been done on that. In relation to the issue the member raised, I want to make it quite clear that the enterprise bargaining agreement that was negotiated between the Department of Education and Training and the State School Teachers' Union of WA—that is, the School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2006—sets out quite clearly that there can be some variation in the general class size and the notional class size. The agreement states on pages 25 and 26 that class sizes can be varied. This has been agreed between the union and the department. It is agreed for individual school sites. Schools are staffed according to a formula, which takes into account the number of students. We abide by that formula and make sure that schools have sufficient staff. Arrangements are often entered into between teachers and principals to vary class sizes. A variation may take place because the school may want to employ another specialist teacher. For example, a school might vary its class sizes so that it can employ an additional physical education teacher or music teacher within its staffing allocation. A teacher may want to negotiate a slightly higher class size in order to receive additional duties other than teaching time or something of that nature. There are myriad arrangements in schools. What we have said, what the agreement says and what has been agreed with the teachers' union is that there should be some flexibility in schools. The department should not just direct a maximum class size that cannot be increased when a teacher and a school want a larger class size. I think that allowing a bit of flexibility on solutions to local problems is not a bad thing. The union has agreed to that. In terms of providing details of individual cases, we recently gave an undertaking to the Industrial Relations Commission that we will negotiate and deal with the Industrial Relations Commission in confidence. I do not intend to breach that confidence.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I refer to the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 858 of the *Budget Statements*. The table contains a couple of quite interesting percentages. I will seek an explanation of those figures, although I think I understand the second one. I refer to the line item "Secondary graduation rate (proportion of Year 8 cohort achieving Secondary graduation in Year 12)". The figure for 2008-09 is 54 per cent. Can the minister explain why it is 54 per cent?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will seek advice.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I thought the minister might do that. Mr Axworthy looks like he knows the answer.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will ask Mr Axworthy to have a go at it.

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** The figure refers to the percentage of students who graduated in year 12 who four years earlier were in year 8. In other words, 54 per cent of students who were in year 8 in 2002 graduated last year.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I worked that part out. What happens to the other 46 per cent? Where do they go?

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** They have completed their schooling without graduating.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Are you sure? If I asked what percentage of year 12 students graduate, I would get a quite interesting answer. They must go somewhere.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Broadly speaking, the government has raised the school leaving age. Everyone is now required to attend to year 12 and so forth. Way more than 90 per cent of students now do that; that is, they finish school, undertake vocational education and training or are in approved employment. Most students are in the first two categories. From memory, 95 per cent of students are in those three categories. The number of students has increased since the school leaving age was raised. Now, the 54 per cent refers to those achieving the Western Australian certificate of education, which is a different thing. I will ask the director general to explain that.

[7.40 pm]

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**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** The 54 per cent refers to those achieving graduation, so the remainder of the students are those who would be studying vocational education and training in schools, have left to go to employment, are in senior secondary engagement programs, or do not meet secondary graduation requirements.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Or they might have gone to a private school somewhere along the way. They might have graduated elsewhere; they might have moved interstate.

**Ms S.A. O'Neill:** Yes, they might have left for employment or any other purpose.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is the minister happy with that figure of 54 per cent?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not think the 54 per cent figure should be misread.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I am not misreading it; I understand it.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am happy that we have a rate above 90 per cent, and growing, of students completing those three tiers. Not every student going on to years 11 and 12 will do a tertiary entrance examination course, or even finish the Western Australian certificate of education. A number will adopt other pathways. However, the important thing is that they remain in education or improved employment. The figure I gave before, which was 95 per cent, is far higher than it has ever been before in those areas.

**Mr A.D. McRAE:** That is a more useful figure than the 54 per cent.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think it might be interesting, for effectiveness later on, to take the figures for children starting year 8 and break them down even more, so we can actually see what happens to them. We all know there is more than one pathway for people to follow. One of those is to stay in secondary school, but the other pathways are equally interesting. If that figure could be broken down, it would tell a much better story about what is happening in the public sector than is being told by this one figure.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The combined participation for year 11 and year 12 groups in semester 1, 2008 indicates that 95 per cent of students of that age were calculated as participating in education, training or employment options available to them. It has grown massively.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I will repeat what I just said. In the future, if more detail were given about what those people were doing, the government would be doing us all a favour. We would understand more about the effectiveness of the system that we have all seen develop and grow in the past few years. This does not tell us that.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is a fair point.

**Mr A.D. McRAE:** Can I ask a question?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I have not finished. When I am finished the member can ask his question.

**Mr A.D. McRAE:** It might assist the member.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I do not want to be assisted by the member for Riverton—only the minister. Of year 12 students in government high schools last year, what percentage received secondary graduation?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is the 54 per cent.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** So, of every 100 kids in government high schools in year 12 last year, only 54 received graduation. That is not what the first figure indicated.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No, that is not what the 54 per cent is. The member is correct. It is the proportion of year 8 students—not necessarily the proportion at year 12. As I said, some might go east, some might pass away and so on.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Exactly, so now I am asking what percentage are in schools.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not have that figure, but the member will note when the end-of-year results are published that a whole bunch of schools report the percentage of their graduation, and a lot of them are at 100 per cent, including some in my area at Safety Bay and so forth.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Of course schools vary, but I want an overall figure.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do not have that exact figure here for the member. I am sorry about that. I have asked my advisers and they do not have that exact figure here either.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is it possible to get that figure?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Yes, we can get that figure.

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**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** The answer is 96 per cent.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** Is it the case that 96 per cent of all year 12s get secondary graduation in government high schools?

**Mr D.G. Axworthy:** Yes; it is up one per cent on the result in the previous year.

**Dr E. CONSTABLE:** I knew someone would know, Mr Axworthy!

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** This is my last question in this section. It is a bit left field. I refer to page 857 —

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** How many parts?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I struggle if there is more than one part! I will tell the minister after I have asked it! I refer to appropriations under service 1. Is the minister aware of Irlen syndrome? I asked because I was not aware of it myself until about 18 months ago. It is a disease that affects children's sight, particularly their focus and their ability to read. Obviously, it affects their learning ability. I wonder whether the Department of Education and Training is taking any action or getting any support to children who have Irlen syndrome?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is two questions. Am I aware of it? The answer is no. Is the department doing anything? I am not sure whether we know. We have not heard of the disease. If the member likes, I can get him some information on what we do. I think those students would be broadly supported as are other students with illnesses.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** It appears to me, from my limited knowledge, that it is something that is expanding and growing. I am no expert on it, obviously, but it is something we should be aware of. From what I am told, it has a great effect on the child's ability to learn.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I refer to the third dot point on page 854 of the *Budget Statements* under significant issues and trends. How many senior executives with the Department of Education and Training are still in acting positions?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** This question was asked last year by the member for Cottesloe. Last year there was still some considerable flux after the departure of the former director general. It has obviously improved a great deal on the situation last year. I will try to find the exact figure. There are three at the moment, but, as I said, it is a huge improvement on the situation last year. The three positions that are acting, out of 14, are the deputy director general, workforce; the executive director, infrastructure; and the executive director, policy planning and accountability. As the member will recall, last year the figure was probably triple that.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

[7.50 pm]