

MOORA RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

Grievance

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore) [9.42 am]: My grievance today is to the minister representing the Minister for Education and Training about the Moora Residential College. Moora Residential College, formerly St James Residential College, is located in the town of Moora, 170 kilometres north of Perth on the Midlands Road. The college provides a residential boarding facility for students attending the Central Midlands Senior High School in Moora, which is the only senior high school in the electorate of Moore. Since the early 1970s, the facility has provided a low-cost boarding service for students from surrounding areas, and together with the CMSHS, the campus is the only senior high school boarding option between Perth and Geraldton. In that time, many children from the surrounding districts have made use of this very important institution, including a member of the other place, my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge. I have visited the college on a number of occasions since my election in 2013, including for end-of-year awards and other functions. During those visits I have been really impressed by the great behaviour of all the young people in that college and the dedication of its staff. The kitchen staff right through to the college manager have a great bond with all the students and they create a friendly, welcoming and supportive environment, which is a credit to the whole college community. Surveys conducted regularly by the college report that the support and care provided is consistently given a very high satisfaction rating by families.

What is not so impressive is the condition of the college buildings. The kitchens, bathrooms and dormitories are very tired, there is severe cracking in a lot of the walls and some real structural deficiencies. The buildings do not meet the standards that would be attractive to many parents who want to send their children there. I suspect that they would fall well short of modern building standards and almost certainly affect the college's ability to attract new residents. I was very pleased when in August 2016, following a state cabinet meeting held in Moora, the then Minister for Education, Hon Peter Collier, and the former Minister for Regional Development, the member for Warren–Blackwood, announced an \$8.7 million redevelopment of the Moora Residential College. In making the announcement, the former education minister also suggested that he would be open to the eventual redevelopment of the CMSHS as a K–12 campus, similar to Merredin College. The \$8.7 million was mooted to come from royalties for regions. Indeed, the 2016–17 budget listed that money as being available in forward estimates as part of a wider package under the heading “Regional Residential College Upgrades”.

This project was approved by the cabinet of Western Australia, announced by the relevant ministers at the college itself, with the kids all standing around, very excited, and provided for in budget documents. Imagine my surprise and dismay, and that of the communities that I represent—not just Moora but the communities that are serviced by that college—to see in the current budget that the funding for this project has been cut and that the upgrade has been shelved. Perhaps it is the government's intention that it remain shelved forever. This calamitous state of affairs was confirmed by the question without notice asked in the other place by my Nationals colleague Hon Martin Aldridge on Tuesday, 12 September 2017. Hon Martin Aldridge referred to the upgrades at the residential college and the \$8.7 million allocated in the forward estimates and asked —

- (1) Will the \$8.7 million upgrade proceed?

The Minister for Education and Training answered —

- (1) No. This was a commitment of the former government with funding provided through royalties for regions. The college currently has 33 students enrolled. This is expected to decrease in 2018 when Yanchep secondary college opens.

The second part of the question was —

Is the minister aware of the building condition audit that raises numerous structural and safety concerns about the college?

The answer was —

Yes. The department is currently costing work identified in the audit.

The third part of the question was —

Is the minister aware of health concerns at the college about regularly occurring cockroach infestations?

The answer was —

I am advised that the department has not received any advice from Moora Residential College on the matter of health concerns. The college has a regular vermin control program and pest control contractors from Perth attend one to two times per term.

Exactly what effect the opening of Yanchep secondary college would have on Moora Residential College is a bit of a mystery to me. I know that some students from the Lancelin area may be affected, but the draw would not extend very far into the electorate of Moore, which is 72 000 square kilometres. Yanchep is not in that electorate,

so it would have a relatively minor effect, I imagine. It is also a bit of a mystery to me why pest controllers from Perth are used rather than local contractors, but there you go; local jobs are not a priority in this case.

All that aside, I understand that some early planning and development has already taken place at the college. This work, I expect, was informed by a thorough analysis of the current buildings and their future needs. I understand, and the minister has confirmed, that a building condition audit was carried out by Building Management and Works and this would have provided that information. Will the minister release the building condition audit and any other building condition analysis and table those in this house? Can the minister reveal how much money has already been spent on planning and development for the proposed college upgrade? Can the minister advise of any costings that have been done to address and rectify the most urgent issues identified in the building condition audit or other analysis? Will the minister undertake to reconsider the decision to not upgrade the college? In the meantime, can the minister guarantee the students and families of my electorate that the Moora Residential College will remain open to continue to provide a low-cost boarding option for them, and will the minister undertake to ensure that the buildings are safe and provide a level of amenity that any member of this house would expect for their own children?

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [9.49 am]: I thank the member for Moore for his grievance and his ongoing support for schools in his electorate. I will again respond today on behalf of the Minister for Education and Training.

The former Country High School Hostels Authority was abolished in July 2017 and its nine residential colleges were incorporated into the Department of Education. The colleges are located in the regional areas of Albany, Broome, Esperance, Geraldton, Merredin, Narrogin, Northam and Moora, as well as one in City Beach, which provides boarding accommodation for regional students who gain entry into Perth-based gifted and talented programs. Residential colleges mainly provide boarding accommodation for students who do not live within daily travel distance of a regional secondary school. The colleges have a combined capacity for 949 students and a total current enrolment of 593 students. There is, therefore, available capacity for 356 students. Residential colleges are an important contributor to the provision of quality regional secondary education. The colleges service students from 21 secondary schools, including 16 public, four Catholic and one independent school.

Moora Residential College started life as St James Residential College when it was established by the Anglican Diocese of Perth in 1974. On 4 August 2016, its name was changed to Moora Residential College. I think the member indicated that it has a current enrolment of 32 students.

Mr R.S. Love: Thirty-three was the answer they gave me.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It has indicated 32 or thereabouts, but it has capacity for 50 students, meaning the occupancy rate is around 64 per cent. The majority of students who reside at the college come from the regional towns of Lancelin, Ledge Point and Seabird, as well as the Shire of Dandaragan, which includes Jurien Bay, Cervantes, Badgingarra, Cataby, Cooljarloo, Dandaragan, Hill River, Regans Ford and Wedge Island. Moora Residential College provides accommodation for secondary students who choose to attend Central Midlands Senior High School. As at semester 1 of 2017, Central Midlands Senior High School had an enrolment of 188 students from years 7 to 12.

Major upgrades and improvements have been made to the residential colleges in Broome, Esperance, Geraldton, Merredin and Narrogin. In addition, the accommodation capacity of Broome and Merredin Residential Colleges was increased. The McGowan government has maintained a \$6.4 million commitment for a major upgrade to City Beach Residential College. On 29 August 2016, the previous government announced that it had made an allocation from the royalties for regions regional infrastructure and headworks fund to upgrade residential colleges. The final amount of \$8.7 million was allocated for a major upgrade to Moora Residential College, including courtyards, student dormitories, toilets and showers, a new kitchen and laundry, and general building maintenance. As the member identified, the major upgrade is not budgeted and will not now proceed. However, I am able to confirm and advise the member that the general maintenance program will be delivered. Cost estimates and the scope of works for the maintenance program are under development. I think that was one of the member's questions at the end—specifically what amount had been identified for that?

Mr R.S. Love: If costings were available —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think they are being developed at the moment, so I do not —

Mr R.S. Love: And also if you will release the building condition audit.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will address that in a bit.

Cost estimates and the scope of works for the maintenance program are under development. The major upgrade funding has been reallocated to other regional projects that have higher priority for this government. That is reflective of the general approach to the allocation of royalties for regions funds. The money is going to other regional projects though. It is worth noting also that with the opening of a Yanchep secondary school from 2019,

students from Lancelin, Ledge Point and Seabird may decide to access daily school bus services to Yanchep, so there may be a reduction in the number of students residing at Moora Residential College. I know the member indicated he did not necessarily see that as a factor but there are daily bus services so there may be, as a consequence —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. I am advised by the department that it anticipates it may have an impact, so that is something to consider. Nevertheless, the college provides a high level of support and service to its students. As indicated, the maintenance program will proceed and its scale and the allocation of funds are being determined. I can confirm that the advice I am provided with by the minister in the other place is that the services will be continued.

Regarding the other questions the member asked, clearly, the minister will read them in *Hansard* and I will advise her that he asked questions about a number of issues beyond the upgrade. The response to the question about the upgrade is, unfortunately, no; there is not capacity and priority has been given to other projects in the regions. Beyond that, I will ask the minister to respond to the other questions. This is not a political point. It is about the budget. The member for Moore's party has publicly announced that it will not support \$800 million of revenue-generating action by this government in the budget. In the event that the National Party blocks these budget repair measures, where does the member think the funding will come from for not only the maintenance of Moora Residential College, but also any other state government projects? The member's party blocking those measures in the upper house would mean that we would have to find \$800 million of additional revenue sources or make \$800 million of additional savings. Where does the member think that will come from? No C-130 will fly over with someone kicking the money out the back door. I know that the member's party has engaged in cultivating a cargo cult mentality in the regions for the last eight years and people expect that money will magically appear from the sky every time we say the words "royalties for regions". The truth of the matter is that the money has to be found from somewhere. I appreciate that the member cares about the schools and the children in his schools; everyone does, and everyone needs to contribute to budget repair. The member is undermining that process and undermining the ability of the education minister to meet his requests for additional funding for schools in his electorate.