

Division 25: Education, \$5 067 884 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Mr T.J. Healy, Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General.

Mr J. Bell, Deputy Director General.

Ms M. Sands, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr J.T. Peckitt, Deputy Director General, Education Business Services.

Mr M. Clery, Executive Director, Statewide Services.

Ms A.M. Brown, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms R.B. Lee, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy.

Mr A. Blagaich, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

Mr D. Stewart, Executive Director, Workforce.

Mrs P. Beamish-Burton, Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. It is the intention of the chair 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 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. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The parliamentary secretary may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the parliamentary secretary to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the parliamentary secretary's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 1 October 2021. I caution members that if a parliamentary secretary asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Good morning to everyone. Can I ask that when people respond, they get close to and use the microphone, because last night in the Legislative Council we had people just sitting back talking and it was quite hard to pick up. I would appreciate that. My first question refers to page 363 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Towards the bottom of the page under "Election Commitments", there is the line-item "Expanding School Chaplaincy Services", which shows a \$7.5 million increase in funding over the forward estimates. Can the minister explain—I will call the parliamentary secretary "minister" today, if he likes!

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member for Roe can call me what he likes!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister explain this large increase in funding and where the extra services will be allocated?

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, I thank the member for Roe for the Dorothy Dixier at the beginning of today's proceedings! The program the member spoke about is one that I am particularly proud of—that is, the expansion of the school chaplaincy program. As a school teacher myself, I can tell the member that chaplains are wonderful. They serve an incredible role in our schools. In answer to the member, in short, a number of chaplains are employed in our 800-plus schools across the state. The short answer to the member's question is that the programs have always been available to all schools. The expansion of the program will allow schools that could not access a chaplain beforehand to access one now.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: With approximately a \$7.5 million increase in funding over the forward estimates, how many extra chaplains will come into the mix over that period?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In 2020, 654 schools accessed chaplaincy services. There are 820-ish schools overall. We expect that other schools will now be able to access those services. In 2021, the state government committed an additional \$21.8 million. As we have said, the chaplaincy services are in the forward estimates over the 2020 to 2024 school years, allowing all schools now to access them.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the parliamentary secretary explain the criteria for chaplaincy appointments? I am sure he is aware of quite a bit of controversy over time about the qualifications et cetera of chaplains. Can the parliamentary secretary explain the criteria for chaplain appointments?

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, I am advised the number the member for Roe was seeking in his previous question about the annual increase was 107 additional chaplains. Regarding the member's question about qualifications for chaplains, I will pass to executive director Martin Clery.

Mr M. Clery: Chaplains are purchased by schools using a panel of providers available to them. It is not a mandatory panel. Schools can procure a chaplaincy service from beyond that panel if they wish. The buyer's guide for procuring service from that panel is that a chaplain is defined as someone of faith, and there are also some qualifications they need related to the role.

[9.10 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the parliamentary secretary have any concerns about the fact that some chaplains might slip through the cracks and may not have the appropriate skills to provide advice to our students in the school system?

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, to address the "slipping through the cracks" and qualifications, I have worked with some incredible chaplains—I am sure the member has in his schools as well—and I would not claim any of them to have fallen through the cracks. I think the member might be slightly seeking to impugn the reputation of our fantastic chaplains, which I completely challenge. Chaplains are required to undertake professional learning throughout their role. They are subject to working with children checks and there is a training and qualification requirement that a number of the providers have as well. YouthCARE, OnPsych and others have a very strong system that they regulate and we do as well. I have not found examples of people slipping through the cracks or providing poor advice.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is what I wanted some clarity over. Every chaplain who is employed in the school system has completed a working with children check and the qualification, as the parliamentary secretary said, is that they must be a person of faith. That is my question. I want to make sure that every single chaplain has had a working with children check and that they are suitably qualified to give advice in the school system.

Mr T.J. HEALY: As for the first part of the member's question, schools have a choice about who they employ as chaplains. OnPsych, YouthCARE and Scripture Union provide the rules and requirements for them regarding their qualifications. Further, the contract requires them to have a working with children check. No-one would not go through that process as is normal for the majority of schools.

Ms L. METTAM: Further to this line of questioning and the boost for chaplaincy services, the parliamentary secretary referred to the fact that it will provide for schools that do not currently have chaplains. Does this funding also provide for schools that have chaplains but require them for additional days, given the significant pressures that we are experiencing?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The program is designed to assist schools that do not have access. They will be the first focus of the program. In further answer to the member's question, it really depends on demand. A school might be seeking to add further chaplaincy services, but the priority would be first to those schools that could not access them before.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 363 of budget paper No 2 and the line item "Increase in School Psychologists", which is, obviously, a welcome addition. Can the parliamentary secretary explain how many of these extra psychologists will be placed in regional schools and which schools they will be placed in?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I concur, this is a fantastic addition to regional and metropolitan schools. The election commitment is for an incremental increase in the number of public school psychologists, commencing with 40 additional FTE in 2022, rising to a total of 100 by 2025. Every regional and metropolitan school will have access to a psychologist. There is a weighting towards regional schools. As the member knows, this is a government that greatly supports regional education and services. I think the member will find that the weighting is in addition.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I can understand maybe how a larger regional senior high school would have perhaps more access, but can the parliamentary secretary explain to me how outlying smaller district high schools and the like will access these extra school psychologists?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The funding is in two parts. The funding formula set is weighted towards those regional and smaller schools. The second part is that if a school requires further services regarding a critical incident, department staff are immediately allocated. The formula for those people who are based at the school is on a more permanent basis. If there were a critical incident at a school, such as there was recently, extra staff would be immediately deployed to assist in that critical incident. They would not necessarily stay there on a permanent basis, but they would be allocated as per the critical incident.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the reasoning behind the relatively smaller amount in 2021–22 compared with the forward estimates for the next financial year when the need for this service is so urgent?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Just to clarify, the member for Vasse is talking about the line item “Increase in School Psychologists”, that says it is going from \$3 068 000 to \$7 691 000 and beyond? Is that the basis for the member’s question?

Ms L. METTAM: That is right.

[9.20 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member for Vasse, thank you for the question. The clarity and the explanation for that is this relates to the financial year, and the school academic year is basically half a calendar year. The additional funding continues because it is funded for the full year after that. Therefore, it is funded for a partial year. We are absolutely delivering on our important election commitment.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the parliamentary secretary clarify how many days a week these psychologists will be operating at each of the schools?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The allocation depends on the situation based on critical incidents and whether they need to be deployed to a different area. It really depends on that weighting and allocation.

Ms L. METTAM: Speaking from a local point of view, will consideration be given to electorates such as Vasse that have seen an increase in youth suicides or presentations at the local hospital regarding youth mental health issues? We are experiencing significant shortages of psychologists across the board. How do those considerations feed into decisions on the welcome boost to school psychologist resourcing in my area and other areas?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you for the question, member for Vasse. As we discussed before, the formula is weighted towards regional communities. When there are critical issues, the deployment of staff towards those areas is the way that we would best address that. When resources need to be deployed, that is definitely our priority. Regarding the member’s other matter on whether we give consideration to other electorates, no; we do not operate on an electorate model. We operate on what regional communities need. We would not necessarily look at the Vasse electorate, but we would look at the needs of the member’s community without that political consideration. Again, we give priority to the needs of our regional communities.

Regarding the member’s question about whether those staff will work with hospitals, every school works with the community around it to do the best it can to support the students. I think the member’s question was about young people presenting at hospitals. The staff connect and works together as best they can, knowing that young people have complex and diverse personal issues. We are hoping that the increase in staffing will move this in a better direction. I might have some further comments in a moment. Sorry, chair.

Furthermore, member for Vasse, the Department of Education acknowledges the strong association between positive student mental health and wellbeing with learning. Schools have an important role to play in promoting wellbeing through connected, inclusive and culturally safe school communities, teaching mental health literacy, mental health prevention and helping to connect students with more acute needs with specialists and clinical services. All public schools have access to school psychologists whom are well-placed to respond to student wellbeing needs in schools. Here is some meat for the member. In 2021, 377.7 school psychologist FTEs were employed across the public school system, which was an increase from the previous year. In 2021, the state government made a commitment of \$42.2 million to employ more than 100 additional school psychologists over the next four years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I thought I heard the parliamentary secretary say that there would be only an extra four FTEs in the next year. Can he confirm how the total number of school psychologist FTEs has changed since 2017 on a yearly basis?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much, member for Roe. First, it was not four; it was 40. To correct the parliamentary record, it was not an increase of four FTEs; it was an increase of 40. I can definitely give the member figures for new FTE psychologists in public schools. In 2022, it will be 47. In 2023, it will be 70. In 2024, it will be 93. In 2025, it will be 117.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry; what was the number for 2017?

Mr T.J. HEALY: What I just read out was not the total number of FTEs; it was the additional number of FTEs. In 2022, the additional FTEs will be 47. In 2023, there will be an additional 70. In 2024, there will be an additional 93. In 2025, there will be an additional 117. I might have some more information in a moment.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, parliamentary secretary. I have a further question.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I might just predict what the member’s next question will be. The member asked about FTE numbers in 2017. There were 331.2 in 2017; there were 345.4 in 2018; there were 355.7 in 2019; and there were 362.7 in 2020.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Considering the shortage of psychologists throughout the mental health system, does the parliamentary secretary envisage any issues in being able to obtain the right qualified people?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much for the question, member for Roe. No; we do not anticipate a shortage. We have a very strong number of people who are interested in the roles. Because of Mark McGowan and all the great work that has happened over the last 18 months, and although there are still challenges across the community in a booming Western Australia, we have a lot of people who are very much interested in filling these roles. There are a lot of people who want to help the students. I will answer the comment on graduate supply as well. The Minister for Education and Training has been meeting with the vice chancellors of universities to talk about the fact that we want people to continue training and to prepare a pipeline of workers because that is the longer-term plan. We will always be committed to the important element of mental health for young people across Western Australia.

[9.30 am]

Ms L. METTAM: My understanding is that the waiting list to see a psychologist in the regions is extraordinarily long. It can be as long as 12 months. That is not for school psychologists; it is to see a psychologist as perhaps referred by a doctor. I query the comment that the parliamentary secretary has made that it will be easy to attain these additional psychologists and about the good work Mark McGowan has done in this area.

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, I did not say it would be easy to find all those people and I did not say that Mark McGowan has done a great job. I said Mark McGowan has done a great job in keeping us all safe and the Western Australian economy booming. I think for what the member is talking about, she might have a line item to ask the Minister for Health about within a different division for the sourcing and provision of clinical psychologists. We are talking about educational psychologists, who have different roles. I did not say it would be easy to find the people. I said we have a number of people who are very interested in the roles.

Our trajectory for the calendar year for additional FTE for school psychologists was 40, to give the member a comparison. A cross-sectoral working party has been established with local universities, as I said, to support graduate supply to meet the election commitments that were made. As I said, our target was 40 FTE. We had 43 final year Master of Professional Psychology students commence placement in public schools in term 2 of 2021, with 14 of them placed in rural communities. As I said, the department currently employs 378.02 FTE school psychologists, which is already an increase of approximately 6.5 FTE since the election.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What is the role of school psychologists in the bullying space? As shadow education minister, I get a lot of inquiries in my office from parents and other people who talk about bullying issues, and say that bullying has not been addressed by the school. Can the parliamentary secretary tell me what the role of a psychologist is in relation to bullying?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will ask for clarification. Is the member suggesting that school psychologists should be disciplining about bullying? Can the member clarify his question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am just asking what the role of school psychologists is in dealing with children who have been bullied. Do they have a role, or is bullying handled by school administrators? Can the parliamentary secretary clarify that for me?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Bullying and all aspects of the diverse experience of young people in schools definitely come to the attention of school psychologists, but it is of interest to all in the school community to ensure there is support for young people. First of all, it is not the sole role of the school psychologist to address bullying. I think the member will find that in a number of schools, the student services team is largely responsible. There are roles for principals, teachers, parents, families, students and student leaders in addition to the student services teams that exist in most schools. That involves student services team leaders and the school psychologists within the team. They address the diverse needs at the local level.

Further to that, I am also advised that we obviously acknowledge that bullying is definitely a significant issue that unfortunately takes place. We expect every school to have a safe and supportive, respectful and positive learning environment. We acknowledge that bullying behaviour can happen at schools. It can also happen online, through social media and other online platforms. One of the things that school psychologists, as part of a student services team, have access to is that the department is represented on the Safe and Supportive Schools Communities Working Group, or SSSC, with the Australian Education Council. They are involved with the national website, "Bullying. No Way!". They promote the work of the eSafety Commissioner. We have recently launched the eSafety *Best practice framework for online safety education*. Further, there is a range of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs. I will mention three of them that I think the member will find of interest: Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies, or PATHS; Aussie Optimism; and Friendly Schools Plus.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Going along that same line talking about bullying and harassment, does the parliamentary secretary have a comment to make on the recent scenario in which perpetrators of bullying and sexual harassment were placed back in the same school? The children who have been harassed are then faced with dealing with these perpetrators inside the school where it has happened.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think the member is on a different line item. I think it is a valid question but he might want to ask it for a different line item if he has finished the school psychologists part of the question.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I can ask at a different line item, if the parliamentary secretary would like.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, if that is okay; just so we can refer to that part.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the heading “Partnering with Families, Communities and Agencies to Support the Educational Engagement of Every Student” on page 364. Paragraph 4 reads —

Services for students needing extra support, including school psychologists and alternative learning settings will continue to be a priority.

In some cases, alternative learning settings do not seem to be provided and some perpetrators of sexual harassment and the like are being put back into the same school as their victims, who then have to front-up to school every day and face them. I want the parliamentary secretary’s comments on that.

[9.40 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will answer the first part of the member for Roe’s question; the member may seek to add a follow-up question. I want to talk about the alternative learning settings program. It is one of several supports for students with complex and challenging behaviours. I think that is part of what the member was asking about. The program aims to address a gap in service for students who have engaged in violence against others in school or are very physically aggressive but have the capacity to re-establish positive behaviour and transition back to school or other education placements with the appropriate intervention and support. I am very glad that the member mentioned the 2020–21 state government election commitment to establish eight additional alternative learning setting sites over a two-year period. They will allow us to better deal with those diverse issues when they arise.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I welcome any alternative learning settings for these students, but I am concerned about the safety of victims. Why does it appear that the focus is on bringing the perpetrator back to potentially the same learning setting rather than in all cases protecting the victim? Victims are having to face up to school every day potentially with the perpetrator in the background.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The state government has implemented strong measures to protect all students to ensure community confidence that schools are as safe as possible. The Department of Education, the Western Australia Police Force and the Departments of Communities and Justice have developed a formalised multi-agency approach to manage cases in which young people have been charged with harmful sexual behaviours. The multi-agency protocol for education options for young people charged with harmful sexual behaviours provides for these four agencies to cooperate and lawfully share information in the best interests of all students and staff. That protocol is implemented across all public and non-government schools.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the real emphasis now on protecting the victim or on putting the perpetrator back into potentially the same school—business as usual?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The emphasis has always been on protecting all students and ensuring young people have access to the education they are entitled to. First, we always protect the victim. Schools work with communities and families to find the best way to do that. I have discussed alternative learning settings; there are also opportunities for the alleged offender—I will call the student that—to obtain their education path in a different location, but that is not always possible. As I am sure the member is aware, everyone also has a right to education. First, we protect the victim. Secondly, we ensure that everyone has an education path available to them. It is important that we do not politicise this. A risk management plan is always developed in these circumstances, and it is really important that the department has an opportunity to work with the families and schools involved to find the best risk management plan to address the victim, the alleged offender and all those people affected. A number of students and families are affected by these incidents, especially in regional communities where everyone knows everyone.

There are not always options, but I will go through a couple of the things that schools can do logistically when there is no opportunity to provide a separate site for the alleged offender, or offender if they have been convicted. There is not always an opportunity for separate campuses or locations, but I will place on the record a couple of things that schools can do logistically to manage the situation and meet all the criteria. The first is in terms of school layout and timetabling. There is travel between home and school, with parents, families and communities providing transport to and from school. In regional areas, seating arrangements on school buses can be explored. Parents can be available at the entry to and exit from a school site and parents can collect students from the administration building every day. Staff can escort students during transition between classes. At break times, students can be encouraged, and are usually obliged, to sit in different restricted or prearranged areas with same-aged students. The school can ensure that student access to toilets is managed in a way that meets all the criteria. There may be opportunities within class settings.

This all depends on the size of the school, the community and services available. Sometimes things are more complex in a much smaller school. There are a number of other things that I can go through, but, overall, the key thing I want to re-emphasise is that we want to protect the victim. That is what schools do their best to do. If there is not another location for the offender to go to, in terms of the education opportunities available, we maintain that all those people have a right to education.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The parliamentary secretary is saying that they can potentially be on the same school bus, with a bus driver who has no ability to supervise the students on the bus. I do not think it meets the pub test with the public that we have to bend over backwards to try to allocate facilities for the perpetrator when at all cost we should be protecting the victim. Firstly, how many examples are there of the perpetrator and victim being on the same school bus? Secondly, at the moment, how many schools still have the perpetrator and the victim at the same school?

The CHAIR: Is that two questions, member for Roe?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. Thank you.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Bus seating is one of the many tools available to a school. School bus services are sometimes the only way that students can get school. They are a key part of school infrastructure, whether a school is in metropolitan Perth or regional Western Australia. First of all, school bus seating may be something that has to be explored. Like I said, there are a number of other options to explore first. It is important that it is always part of one of the tools available. There are multiple things that the school community will explore with the families of all parties. If it was envisaged that there were no other transport options or scenarios, in those examples a risk management plan would be discussed with the families of all affected. All parties would be part of that discussion. There is always a risk management plan and there are potentially opportunities to use different buses and options about other transport, but this is an extreme example where that cannot be done.

[9.50 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The second part of my question was: can the parliamentary secretary give me the number of public schools where the perpetrator and the victim are at the same school together?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member can put that question on notice.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the parliamentary secretary provide that as supplementary information?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No. I am happy for the member to put the question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: On page 364 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, the third significant issue impacting the agency is furthering the access of Aboriginal learners. Can the parliamentary secretary provide a breakdown of the total amount of funding that is allocated across the forward estimates to deliver the KindiLink program and the Kimberley Schools Project KindiLink program?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse for the question. KindiLink is jointly planned and delivered by early childhood teachers and Aboriginal and Islander education officers, and provides play and learn sessions for Aboriginal children and their parents or carers. From 2018 to 2021, KindiLink has had 38 sites that are funded through the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, the expenditure for which was \$2.459 million in 2020–21. KindiLink has 17 sites that are funded through the department's Kimberley Schools Project.

Ms L. METTAM: How many students are currently participating in the KindiLink program and the Kimberley Schools Project KindiLink program?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse for the follow-up question. On 1 September, 2021, approximately 1 300 children and 1 200 adults participated in a KindiLink program, which is provided at 38 sites throughout the state.

Ms L. METTAM: Are there any plans, or has the department identified a need, to expand the KindiLink program to include additional schools?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The funding and provision for that program is in the national agreement, which is currently being negotiated for its next hopeful phase.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the heading "COVID-19 Response" at the top of page 364 and the line item "Enhanced Cleaning for Schools". I notice that we have a budget estimate —

Mr T.J. HEALY: Sorry; is the member talking about the table?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Right at the top of the table under the heading "COVID-19 Response" is the line item "Enhanced Cleaning for Schools".

Mr T.J. HEALY: I have found it.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We have a drop from \$41.5 million to \$18-odd million for this budget period, and in the forward estimates there is no allocation for that. People are saying that we need to live with COVID going forward. Can the parliamentary secretary explain to me why there is no funding for that at all in the forward estimates?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe for the question. I concur with him that I thought it was a very good addition for the McGowan government to provide additional cleaning staff during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow the schools to better address the cleaning requirements that we have all experienced over the last 18 months. The member is talking about the program to put extra cleaners into schools for a period of time. That was done on the advice of the Chief Health Officer. Again, one of the things that separates government members from opposition members is that we will always follow the advice of the Chief Health Officer on that. The Chief Health Officer's advice was that we put in those additional cleaners. As I am sure the member is aware, Western Australia is not experiencing the same COVID scenarios as the rest of the nation and the rest of the world. A sunset clause for the funding for the school cleaners was based on the Chief Health Officer's advice on the additional allocation of FTE for cleaning.

The member's question was: why has the funding ended? It will end because Mark McGowan and Sue Ellery are doing great work in our schools and they are doing their best to keep COVID-19 out of WA, in short. However, we continue to have enhanced cleaning at schools. I think the member would agree that we all have a better understanding now of health conditions, of not being sick and of following the health advice and rules. The allocation of the funding has changed. I will leave it there. The member may have a follow-up question.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In the next few weeks, does the parliamentary secretary foresee an extension of the vaccination program for ATAR students? Similarly, will there potentially be a vaccination program for the balance of our students in the following years?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will give the member the short answer, but he might want to find a different line item for that question. Currently we are talking about school cleaning allocations and the advice of the Chief Health Officer about maintaining enhanced cleaning at schools. The member would be aware that we have now allowed the newest young person category to walk into the vaccination clinics and get vaccinated. I think the member is asking a different question for a different line item. Does the member want to ask anything further about school cleaning? I have some figures and dollar amounts if he wants to come back to the vaccination program later.

[10.00 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If that is the case, in the next line item down, "Face Masks in Schools", I notice that we have no budget estimate for 2021–22.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Is this a new question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, this is a new question relating to page 364 and the next line item down, "Face Masks in Schools". Am I to take it that we are not expecting to use face masks again or do we have ample supply to last us through until what point?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe for the question. Following the Perth and Peel COVID lockdown in February 2021, a contingency supply of face masks was distributed to primary and secondary schools to provide a safe environment for schools and staff. I can further advise that one million masks have been supplied to schools. If schools have issues with supplying masks, they should contact our COVID support team; however, as far as we understand, schools are reporting to us that they are happy with the supply of masks that they have.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer again to page 364—right at the bottom and the sixth point, "Building the Capability of Principals, Teachers and Allied Professionals". This paragraph recognises the constant challenge of attracting teachers with the right skills to the right areas at the right time. I note that, according to the State School Teachers' Union of WA, approximately 25 per cent of teachers are leaving within five years of graduating. This paragraph refers to strategies. My question is: what is the strategy to retaining those teachers? I foresee a scenario in which we could go down the same path as the health system, in which we have a real shortage of staff.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe. The department has a range of strategies to increase the number of suitably qualified teachers applying for positions in public schools. This includes the Teach in WA program, with online marketing, career expos and presentations and a dedicated contact for teachers considering applying for positions, and a Leap program to retrain teachers into specialised secondary subjects. Retention strategies encourage staff to teach in regional or remote schools. The remote connection program allows staff to experience teaching in remote schools, and the Remote Teaching Service induction supports successful onboarding. I think that the member has close proximity to an existing teacher of the year in his electorate—Mrs Rundle—who I am sure can also give the member further advice as to great ideas. I believe that it is the 10-year anniversary of Mrs Rundle's Australian Teacher of the Year award.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is correct; it is the 10-year anniversary.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Congratulations. The supply of early childhood and primary teachers currently meets demand. The department will continue to work collaboratively with Western Australian universities and focus on maintaining the teacher workforce supply. To fill the gap in secondary teacher workforce supply and demand, we are increasing supply in a number of ways including Teach for Australia, the Public School Teaching Pathway program, Professional Practice Project, the Horizons program and mid-career pathways into workforce areas of need. The department has a centralised teacher staffing pool available to it with the potential to source teachers from other jurisdictions.

To answer the member's final question about what we are doing to stop teachers from leaving, I make the point that I was a teacher who left the workforce of the Department of Education, primarily because I had to come here to this Parliament to fix the education system that was broken by the member's government. I think that if we keep Mark McGowan and Hon Sue Ellery in, we are going to make sure that our schools are strong and people like me will not have to leave the workforce to come to Parliament.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am sure that the opposition will make a comeback and your teaching career will recommence at some stage.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Hear, hear!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the parliamentary secretary tell me how many professionals the department has been able to attract from other occupations? I would have thought that would be a bit of a challenge given the mining activity et cetera that is happening in the state. Has the department had any successes there? Does the department have any numbers?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe. I will talk about a program called Teach for Australia. Before I give the stats, I will say briefly that Teach for Australia is a brilliant program in which people who already have a qualification in another area can come into teaching and complete a Master of Teaching qualification over a shortened period so that they do not have to go to university for a longer period to do their training. I personally was against the program when it first began because I thought that it could not teach what needed to be taught for a classroom. Personally, I saw Teach for Australia at Southern River College, and every single TFA person adapted well to the classroom, classroom management strategies, and all the challenges of teaching in a school. They are actually brilliant. I would like to say on the parliamentary record that I am a convert of Teach for Australia.

There are multiple pathways to attract experienced, qualified people from other industries who may not have considered teaching as a career option in their first few years. I have to say, we have some amazing additional people who have enriched the department's workforce who probably would not have been able to access the opportunity to be a teacher without the Teach for Australia program. I will give the member some more information on Teach for Australia. As I said, it is an employment-based pathway to teaching for high-calibre graduates from fields other than teaching. Maybe the member and I would not have qualified. It is a two-year program that comprises online learning in an initial intensive program of six weeks, which covers one-quarter of a Master of Teaching, including the two-week practicum. It includes a two-year placement as an untrained teacher. There are additional intensive study programs during school holidays and other opportunities. There is support from academic mentors, in-school coaching and support from an experienced mentor teacher, and leadership and career coaching.

The final answer to the member's question is that since 2015, a total of 241 associates have commenced in public secondary schools, and I look forward to many more joining our ranks.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I thank the parliamentary secretary. I will go on to a new question that is an extension of that matter. I refer to page 369 of the *Budget statements*, under "Regulation and Non-Government Sector Assistance". Down at the bottom of that table is the cost of regulatory services per teacher, and then, under "Explanation of Significant Movements", the third point states —

The 2021–22 Budget Target is lower than the 2020–21 Budget and 2020–21 Estimated Actual due to the lower forecast number of renewals for teacher registration.

That is setting off alarm bells with the concerns about the number of teachers being registered, as we talked about earlier. We referred to teacher registration earlier on. Does that concern the parliamentary secretary?

The CHAIR: Is that a question, member for Roe?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. The question is: can the parliamentary secretary confirm that we are getting fewer teachers registered? That is the first part of the question.

[10.10 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: During the COVID pandemic, the government did a number of things to make life easier, with all the different stresses that teachers, families and everyone was experiencing. One of the things that the Department of Education did was push out the renewal requirement so that people did not have the stress of meeting that. As a person who has gone through the teacher registration process, I know it was one less thing for our teachers because

they were focusing on many things, including preparation and support. One of the things that was a good idea—I am sure the member will agree—was pushing out those requirements so that the stress of dealing with COVID and teaching requirements did not also include Teacher Registration Board commitments.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Talking of the Teacher Registration Board, does the Minister for Education and Training have concerns with the way it is operating? I heard during the year that there was a situation in which teachers would send in their registration application and, at one point, the board sent back a notice saying that if it could not process the invoice on time, the teacher would be charged interest. Seriously, if the board is not efficient enough to process someone's application or invoice, why should a teacher suffer the consequence of that? Is the minister concerned about that?

The CHAIR: Is that the question, member for Roe?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member for Roe, the line we are discussing is about teacher registration. I appreciate the member's anecdotal feedback.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have had it from several areas.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I was going to suggest that if the member thinks that there is a document that needs to be forwarded to the department for further query, he can certainly put a question on notice. But it does not really relate—I do not want to embarrass the member—to this particular line item. I think his larger query here might be that he has a concern about an anecdotal rumour that he may or may not have heard. Feel free to put it on notice and provide the document.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will find out where it came out in writing, so it will not be anecdotal.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am also informed that late payment fees were waived during the COVID pandemic.

Ms L. METTAM: Further to the registration of teachers, is the minister considering mandating vaccinations for teachers? Is that a consideration of the Minister for Education and Training and the state government?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse very much for the question. It is a new question. Can she direct me to the line item first, if that is okay?

Ms L. METTAM: It is on page 364 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency". Under the heading "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic", paragraph 2 refers to ensuring that the response and planning for COVID-19 is current and that all public schools are well equipped, including implementing enhanced safety and cleaning regimes. We have already seen the government implement mandatory vaccinations in a number of areas in line with what is set out in paragraph 2 in relation to the COVID-19 response. Is it a current consideration of the Minister for Education and Training or the state government for teachers to be mandatorily vaccinated?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse for the question. She has not made it there entirely, but it was a good go. This is not that line item. It is in there if she finds it. She might want to google it; she could probably find it so that she can ask the question again. But I will answer it for her.

Ms L. METTAM: How kind!

Mr T.J. HEALY: Basically, we will act on health advice. We follow the advice of the Chief Health Officer. The member's question is about mandatory vaccines for teaching staff. We will follow the advice of the Chief Health Officer. That is what we have always done. Again, I know that it is different from other regimes, but we will always follow the Chief Health Officer's advice.

Ms L. METTAM: In considering the Chief Health Officers' advice, will the government also consider the impact of teachers potentially leaving the profession or will it be based purely on the Chief Health Officer's advice and just that advice?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse. We will follow the advice of the Chief Health Officer and consider it if that advice comes through.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to confirm, there will not be any consideration of the impact on teacher numbers; it will be purely a decision for the Chief Health Officer on mandatory vaccination?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member and I went to university together and we both have a Master of Public Policy. We do not have health qualifications. I cannot make a decision on the run and neither should she to say that we are going to make a decision here and now. We have to listen to the Chief Health Officer's advice.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 364 and the line item in the table for the "School Drug Education and Road Aware Program". I see that there is no budget estimate for 2021–22 and going forward. A small amount reappears in 2023–24 and there is a slightly larger amount in 2024–25. Can I have an explanation of what is going on with this important program?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe very much for the question. The department provides a range of evidence-based and informed road safety and alcohol and other drugs education programs for young people from birth to 20 years of age and their parents and carers. Smart Steps is an early childhood road safety program for children up to eight years of age. The program guides parents and carers and early childhood educators to support children's learning focused on safe road passengers, riders and pedestrians. The Keys4Life pre-driver education program, which I have seen myself—it is very popular in the member's electorate and in my electorate—is a brilliant program for students in years 10 to 12, as well as for young adults attending non-mainstream education and training services. This program helps young people to improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes about safer driving practices and risk-reduction strategies. The program introduces novice drivers to the licensing system and also delivers information sessions for parents about licensing and tips for being a safe driver. There is also Challenges and Choices, which is a resilience, road safety and AOD education program for teachers of students from kindy to year 9. There is Drug Talk, which is a prevention and education program for students in years 10 to 12. The program delivers professional learning to school staff to assist in the delivery of drug education. There is Wraparound, which is an early intervention program relating to student AOD use. There is the Changing Health Acting Together, or CHAT, initiative, which supports schools to adopt a whole-school approach to resilience, road safety and drug education. Here we come to the exciting numbers that the member is after. In 2020–21, this initiative supported 147 schools to develop and maintain whole-school plans, supporting resilience, road safety and AOD education. As I have already said, school education programs are critical and very, very important. In January 2019, the School Drug Education and Road Aware program was transferred from Catholic Education Western Australia to the Department of Education, with a residual cash reserve transferred in May 2019. The Mental Health Commission and the Expenditure Review Committee have approved the carryover of \$1 million of the residual cash into 2020–21, and will use it to expand and evaluate the Wraparound early intervention program and to develop a new volatile substance use resource package for school leavers and school staff on how to manage these VSU incidents at school. I apologise that it has taken so long to get here, member for Roe: the increases in the forward estimates realigned the existing budget figures to the current grant agreement.

[10.20 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the line item “Covered Assembly Areas” under “Other School Facilities” on page 375 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Dunsborough Primary School is the only school in the district that does not have an enclosed undercover area—that is now a safety hazard—and the canteen is no longer fit for purpose and does not meet local health standards. During the election, WA Labor pledged \$25 000, leaving a balance of \$875 000. The P&C has resorted to asking parents for a levy to pay for the gap. Is it not reasonable for the government to allocate some of these funds, the \$7.7 million, for a school in desperate need?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse for the question about the covered area at Dunsborough Primary School. The Department of Education does not currently have a program of works to retrospectively extend the covered area due to increased student enrolments. I understand the covered area at Dunsborough Primary School is approximately 260 square metres, with roller doors currently fitted. Is that correct?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: If the school wants to fully enclose the undercover area to prevent wind and rain entering and improving the security, the school can work with the Department of Finance to get a quote or go direct to the market. Further to that, one thing I will also comment on is the McGowan government's maintenance blitz at that school, which I think is very important to note. Dunsborough Primary School is a brilliant school that does some amazing work. There are often a number of things that schools need to prioritise, such as maintenance applications and other works that need to get done. In case the member was not aware, a number of things were allocated to Dunsborough Primary School in the maintenance blitz. There was \$285 000 allocated in the maintenance blitz, and delivery of the program was increased, I am sure, as a result of the member's hard work and her very, very hardworking upper house regional members down there. The amount was increased to \$477 000. Does the member mind if I give her the detail of that?

Ms L. METTAM: No.

Mr T.J. HEALY: In phase 1, there was a maintenance allocation of \$62 400. In phase 2, there were toilet refreshments at \$176 000. There were classroom refreshments worth \$12 000. There were structural integrity repairs at \$7 940. There were shade structures and playgrounds worth \$20 000. There were electrical upgrades at \$4 842. In phase 3 there were additional facilities for EduCare out-of-school-hours care worth \$192 000. I reinforce what I said earlier: if the school wishes to pursue that as an option, it certainly can. The school can work with the Department of Finance to get a quote or go direct to the market.

Ms L. METTAM: To be fair, the school has been advocating and pushing for these funds for some time. It is not just that the weather comes into this area; there is an issue with birds. There is also a massive issue with the capacity of the school, with only a small cohort of the school being able to attend assemblies, which are important events.

As I have stated, during the election campaign WA Labor pledged \$25 000 towards a \$900 000 construct. The P&C has had to resort to asking parents to pay a levy, which is pretty tough. Can I confirm that there is at least that small amount of \$25 000 in the budget for the undercover area?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse; she has beaten me to the point. I have already emphasised what she said. I want to commend her and her very, very hardworking upper house members for the South West Region, Hon Jackie Jarvis, MLC; Hon Sally Talbot, MLC; and Alannah MacTiernan, MLC. They obviously worked very closely with the member to ensure —

Ms L. METTAM: That is not true.

Mr T.J. HEALY: — that a commitment of \$25 000 will be allocated to Dunsborough Primary School for its undercover area upgrade. I will come back to the point the member made. Again, I commend the very, very hardworking members of the upper house down there —

Ms L. METTAM: Why is the government getting rid of regional members then?

The CHAIR: Member for Vasse!

Mr T.J. HEALY: — who have very hardworking electorate officers based in the regional areas. I come back to the point. We will definitely fulfil the election commitment to fund that amount to the school for the undercover area. If the school wants to further enclose that, the quotes for the works can be done through conversations with the department.

Ms L. METTAM: I will just highlight that the school will not be able to do much with \$25 000. The member pointed to regional members of the upper house, but there may —

The CHAIR: Is this a question, member for Vasse?

Ms L. METTAM: I am moving to a question. My next question relates to “Other School Facilities”, and the line-item “Administration Upgrade” on page 375 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. I also refer to page 42 of budget paper No 3. I will ask a question about Cowaramup Primary School. Cowaramup is one of the fastest growing areas in the region. The primary school was built in 1923 and still has no permanent early childhood education facilities and the administration area urgently needs upgrading. Will funds be allocated out of the \$26 million for the ageing infrastructure at Cowaramup Primary School?

[10.30 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Regarding the line item for administration upgrades—there was a separate question about education and career support facilities but because the member addressed the administration upgrade line item I can discuss the administration upgrade budget. In the out years, the allocation of those administration building upgrades has not yet been determined.

Ms L. METTAM: What opportunities will there be for schools such as Cowaramup Primary School to attain funding and how will they be assessed?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member asked about what opportunities there are. A school should ensure that its building condition report is up to date and submitted to the department so that it can assess the functionality of the space and make an assessment. Further, I am sure that if the member has a chance to be down that way, she should meet with the school and invite the region’s upper house members of Parliament to be part of that process. If the member gets a chance to visit Cowaramup Primary School, I am sure they would love to hear from her.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the parliamentary secretary suggesting that if the upper house members are able to visit the school, it will have a better chance of getting this important funding?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No, the member asked about what opportunities there were. As I said, the building condition report is key so that the department can assess that. The member asked for opportunities. I do not want her to think that there is not a role for the member to play as well.

Ms L. METTAM: The parliamentary secretary is suggesting that part of the opportunity lies with the school meeting with the upper house regional Labor members of Parliament? How does that relate?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member’s region is represented by six members of Parliament in the upper house and the member for Vasse as the local member of Parliament.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 364 of budget paper No 2 and Government Regional Officers’ Housing.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Looking at the table?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Can the parliamentary secretary explain how this change in funding provides adequate housing for professional public sector officers when they are placed in regional positions?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The adjustment reflects the updated GROH expenses forecast based on the department's property listing as at 31 January 2021.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The GROH program is a real concern in not only education but also police and other public sector areas. How seriously is Education contributing to the GROH program? It is becoming a scenario whereby potentially at times principals and teachers can apply for a job, turn up and not actually have somewhere to stay. Is a program in place in which the Department of Education is investing? The numbers along the line item on page 364 seem to be a bit up and down, and mainly down.

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, support for accommodation and relocation are major considerations for attracting and retaining quality employees in regional, rural and remote locations. Housing is provided to the Department of Education from the Government Regional Officers' Housing program and GROH properties are either owned by the Department of Communities—that might be a better place for the member's query, though I will try to answer as best I can for the member—or leased from the private rental market. The Department of Education leases over 2 250 properties from the GROH program to provide teacher housing at 160 locations. Again, we lease from Communities, and it is a good location if the member wants to attend that section of the budget estimates. The Department of Education meets the cost of relocating furniture, personal effects and vehicles when staff are appointed to regional or remote schools.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I notice places like Nyabing—funnily enough I just had the Nyabing, Pingrup, Kukerin and Dumbleyung schoolkids out the back there—are really struggling for GROH accommodation. Does Education have a proactive program in place? I know the parliamentary secretary said it is leasing many places, but is it putting any capital investment in there as well?

[10.40 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you for the further question, member for Roe. The McGowan government takes the Government Regional Officers' Housing supply very seriously. A regular forum has been established to discuss improving housing for education staff. Representatives from the Department of Communities—again, a good place to send your query—the GROH program, the Principals' Federation of Western Australia and the State School Teachers' Union of WA are part of that forum. To answer the member's query, when a GROH property is unable to be provided, staff are provided temporary accommodation at no cost to the employee. I think the member's larger question—I am sorry to embarrass him a little bit here—really rests with the Department of Communities.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I appreciate that. I had an example recently in which we had a teacher's house was broken into up in the central wheatbelt. The teacher was on holiday 700 kilometres away, and the Department of Communities or whatever department controls GROH basically said, "It's your problem. You need to come back and secure the house even though you're in the middle of school holidays 700 kilometres away." Does the parliamentary secretary think that that is acceptable? Is the Department of Education making any moves to help secure this type of housing and to work with the Department of Communities to encourage teachers? That particular teacher, who, I understand, is an excellent teacher has now basically said, "It is too hard. If my house is getting broken into and I have to come back to secure it during holidays, I may as well go back to the metropolitan area."

The CHAIR: Can I just clarify the question, member for Roe?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the Department of Education working with the Department of Communities to encourage our regional teachers to have extra security on their houses to help secure them so they have a proper place of residence?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I have three chunks to answer. First, the member needs to refer this query to the Minister for Housing. Regarding the member's question about security, though, if there is a concern about the provision, sustainability or security of housing, the Department of Education will deploy our own security services if requested. The Department of Communities has line items in the budget about which the member can ask those questions. The Minister for Housing is a great advocate and very much an expert in this space to fully answer the member's queries. The final part is I want to thank teachers for the work that they do in that area. With all due respect, member for Roe, instead of talking to the member for Roe about the challenges they have with security or housing, they should talk to the department and advise it of their concerns. There are some fantastic regional officers in the departments of Education and Communities they could inform. Did the member say the teacher was in the ag region?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: By the sound of it, they may have reached out to Hon Steve Martin, the upper house member, but because his office is in West Perth, they did not get a good regional response. But I would definitely encourage them to reach out to their local representative and the department to ensure that they are informed because the department has resources and services available.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a comment, if I may, Madam Chair. The parents of this teacher were very worried about their daughter, and they reached out to me because they are my constituents because they were not getting a response from the department. Once again, we have a good quality teacher who actually wants to teach in the regions saying,

“If I can’t get a secure house, I’m going back to the metropolitan area.” Then we have lost another good teacher in the regions. Be that as it may, I will ask a new question.

I refer to page 364 of the *Budget statements* and the table concerning the National Assessment program—Literacy and Numeracy, NAPLAN. The budget estimate for 2021–22 is \$2 106 000, but it disappears in the forward estimates. Does that tell me that NAPLAN is over or is there some other explanation?

Mr T.J. HEALY: While I am finding that information, regarding the member for Roe’s previous question, when the parents of the teacher raised the issue with the member that they were not getting the reply they were seeking, I am sure that the member would have forwarded that inquiry posthaste to the relevant minister’s office.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am sorry. Just run that by me again.

Mr T.J. HEALY: In terms of the previous question about the parents of the teacher involved who reached out to the member saying that they had not had a response from the Department of Education, I am sure the member would not have wasted any time in making sure that that was brought to the attention of the minister’s office so that they could make sure that people in the department were replying.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Absolutely. Yes. I was onto that.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I find them to be champions in that area, doing the best they can under very challenging circumstances by ensuring that everyone gets the reply they seek.

The CHAIR: Thank you, parliamentary secretary.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Would the member mind repeating the question regarding page 364—the NAPLAN question.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The line item table has a budget estimate of \$2 106 000 in 2021–22, and then it disappears with no further amounts in the forward estimates. I wonder what the explanation is for that.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Sure. The spending change the member is discussing provides for funding to cover cost pressures resulting from the delay in the national implementation of NAPLAN Online. Due to national delays, of course—the COVID-19 pandemic, which I am sure the member is aware of—the time frame for the full transition to NAPLAN Online has been extended to 2022.

Ms L. METTAM: Are all schools in regional WA now able to undertake NAPLAN Online?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much, member for Vasse. I am advised that all public schools are online.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Parliamentary secretary, does the department see NAPLAN Online as part of the ongoing framework in the years ahead? Is there any plan to discontinue or —

The CHAIR: Is that the question, member for Roe?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member for Roe, no.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 363 of the *Budget statements* and the reference to specialised career practitioners. The budget estimate for 2021–22 is \$4 832 000, and then there is an increase. Can the parliamentary secretary explain what the increase is, and what the specialised career practitioners do?

[10.50 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Firstly, I will talk about the numbers—the meat. In 2021–22, the figure is \$4 832 000. In 2022–23, the figure is \$8 190 000. In 2023–24, the figure is \$8 307 000. In 2024–25, the figure is \$8 386 000—bingo!

The second question the member asked was about what specialised career practitioners do. Career practitioners are an essential part of any school community. I am very impressed that our minister, Hon Sue Ellery, very wisely listened to the community and we funded our election commitment in this budget to employ additional career practitioners in schools. They work in a number of schools to provide career development for students. They are a key conduit between schools and industry, and schools and TAFE campuses. They connect students and young people to career pathways. Feel free to ask me some further questions about the year 9 taster program that is also funded in here. As a person who used to be allocated FTE to coordinate these sorts of things, their role is to bring industry into schools to expose young people to career conversations and advise them. Another key thing is that the member may not be aware that the previous government increased TAFE fees by 510 per cent. For a period of time, we froze TAFE fees. There are still very important conversations to have to make sure—not politically—that young people are aware that they can afford to go to TAFE again. They can look forward to exploring all the career opportunities that are available to them.

Ms L. METTAM: Commencements are going down; why is that?

The CHAIR: Is that the question, member for Vasse?

Ms L. METTAM: The parliamentary secretary is talking about TAFE fees but commencements have actually consistently gone down.

The CHAIR: That is a different portfolio. Does the parliamentary secretary want to answer?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will take the question. We discussed commencements in Parliament about two weeks ago. I am very, very happy to answer the question. It is definitely a question for the division on Department of Training and Workforce Development. If the member is ready for us to change over, I am happy to answer once the staff have been swapped. There is a great story to tell!

Ms L. METTAM: No, we have further education questions. The parliamentary secretary can spin it later if he likes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: We will put this one on hold until the member is ready to ask it during the Department of Training and Workforce Development division, if she would like.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I note that the parliamentary secretary introduced the subject of TAFE fees into his answer, which was not part of my initial question.

The CHAIR: What is the next question on this division then, please?

Mr T.J. HEALY: We will do commencements first up when the member is ready.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the parliamentary secretary have a breakdown of the regional component of specialised career practitioners?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Can the member for Roe repeat the question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the parliamentary secretary have a breakdown of the regional component versus the metropolitan component?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member for Roe can put that question on notice but I will read out to him the announcement made this very morning, in anticipation of his question. The Minister for Education and Training announced an exciting new initiative to help students make plans to set them up for successful futures. The breakdown is in the minister's media release. It will be available in the following regional schools: Albany Senior High School, Broome Senior High School, Bunbury Senior High School, Busselton Senior High School, Cape Naturaliste College, which is of interest to the member for Vasse, Collie Senior High School, Eastern Hills Senior High School, East Kimberley College, Eaton Community College, Esperance Senior High School, Geraldton Senior High School, Hedland Senior High School, Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School and Katanning Senior High School. I do not want to waste any more of the member's time reading out that information. Again, if he puts the question on notice or subscribes to my favourite media statement disperser, Minister Sue Ellery, the member will have all the information available to him.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My question is about the table "Support to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority" on page 370. Could there be an explanation of the additional staffing? The FTEs have gone up.

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is partially related to two programs: the enterprise bargaining agreement commitment to curriculum support for professional learning and, further, three new languages for Western Australian schools that are being implemented. I might throw to the wonderful Executive Director Blagaich for some further information.

Mr A. Blagaich: The additional funding for FTEs is related to the expansion of the international education program. It is also related to, over the coming years, the development of three new languages. Essentially, the 11 FTEs will reduce a little later on once the languages come online fully. There is increased funding for the development of the languages. Once they are developed, the number of FTEs will come down.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Could the three languages be identified?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Before I throw to Executive Director Blagaich, on behalf of the Minister for Education and Training, I will acknowledge the students in our gallery. Welcome to the Legislative Council and the Estimates Committee B hearing.

Mr A. Blagaich: The three languages are Tamil, Korean and Hindi.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question about the international education program. When will it be implemented?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member for Vasse, it is already underway.

Ms L. METTAM: By "already underway", does the parliamentary secretary mean that it is currently being taught in schools?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member for Vasse, it is not new news that this program is already underway, because it is in its thirty-fourth year of delivery. Before 2019, there were 11 schools. The Expenditure Review Committee 2019 allocation of \$6.6 million over the forward estimates was for 17 schools. The COVID recovery plan allocated \$1.3 million for 2020–21 and 2021–22 for an additional 23 schools. Eight schools have signed up as of September 2021.

Ms L. METTAM: Are there additional staff to expand the program further?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has the national curriculum framework affected FTEs or increased the workload of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The short answer is no. The longer answer is that there was a review of the Australian curriculum and SCSA's role in the review of those programs was to give feedback on its role and its assessment. But the short answer is no.

The CHAIR: We have been going for two hours, so I propose, with the agreement of the committee, that we break for 10 minutes. Parliamentary secretary, is that okay?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Certainly. Before we break, are there many more questions for Education? I want to make sure committee members have enough time. We have another two hours. Would members like Education to remain?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Education for probably another hour.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Okay.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Meeting suspended from 11.00 to 11.10 am

The CHAIR: We will resume. The member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the refurbishment works that have commenced at Hedland Senior High School as outlined at paragraph 44 on page 372. I would like an update on how that is progressing, given the trauma we have had at Hedland Senior High School trying to get a new gymnasium, sports hall, undercover areas and so forth.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe for the question. I am sure he would join me in congratulating the advocacy of Kevin Michel, the member for Pilbara, for getting this allocation of \$15 million for Hedland Senior High School. I can inform the member that the refurbishment was for the school's south wing, Hardie House, and was completed in October 2020 by Pilbara Constructions, along with the technical drawing classroom conversions, the home economics classroom refurbishment and the addition of a general learning area for the library. They are well-needed facilities.

The Pindan Group was originally contracted to deliver a new sports hall and classroom building, and refurbishments to other existing areas within the school. In May this year, the Department of Education was informed that Pindan was in administration and all works at the school ceased. The incomplete works were re-tendered as two separate packages. The first tender was for the completion of the new sports hall and classroom building, and was awarded to ADCO Constructions on 1 September 2021—that is a great day; it is my birthday—with building expected to be completed and open for use in term 4, 2022. The second tender was for the completion of refurbishments to the school's welcome centre, which provides education support facilities. That contract has been awarded to local contractor Pilbara Constructions and works have commenced.

Ms L. METTAM: The parliamentary secretary keeps referring to Labor members of Parliament at the same time as saying that these upgrades and investments will be based on need. When I talked about Cowaramup Primary School, the parliamentary secretary talked about the opportunity to bring Labor Party upper house members to the school. When talking about Dunsborough Primary School, the parliamentary secretary referred to the great advocacy of upper house Labor members. In reference to the dire needs at Hedland Senior High School, the member is suggesting that work has progressed because of a lower house Labor member. I just ask the question: is the McGowan Labor government funding schools based on need or based on the Labor representation in those areas?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Vasse for the question. When we talked about the member's electorate, I concurred with how great the member is, and when talking about aspects of the member for Roe's electorate, I also spoke about him. There could be no Vasse community without Libby Mettam, and I would never say that great things are not done by all the MLAs across the state. We are all part of a team.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Further to that question, I seem to recall that the member for Roe went to Hedland Senior High School and got an article on the front page of the *North West Telegraph* that ended up on the front page of *The West Australian* after asking a question of the Premier, with all due respect.

The CHAIR: Is there a question?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Is the member talking about himself in the third person?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As the member for Vasse pointed out about advocacy, and as the parliamentary secretary knows, I am an advocate for Esperance Senior High School. When we talk about need, that campus is in much need. I point out that the budget contains funding for a variety of performing arts centres and various projects, which I am sure are all very important. Esperance Senior High School has \$1.7 million in STEM spending coming up. I am wondering whether there is any —

The CHAIR: Can the member for Roe direct his question to a line item?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My question is: is Esperance Senior High School being recognised as a school in need, as pointed out by the member for Vasse, regardless of the political persuasion of the local member?

The CHAIR: Where in the budget papers is this, member for Roe? Can the member show me where that line item is?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is a flow-on effect from the Esperance Senior High School —

The CHAIR: The member's last question was directed at Hedland Senior High School. I am looking to where in the budget papers the member is asking a question about Esperance Senior High School.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am talking about the STEM election commitments on page 370.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Is that a new question, member?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The new question is —

Mr T.J. HEALY: So it is a new question about page 370. While the member is finding it, I am very happy to answer his questions, but he might want to look for the line item before asking the question. I want to commend the member: not everyone can talk about themselves in the third person; I was quite impressed. I am happy for the member to find the line item for Esperance Senior High School and we can discuss it.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would appreciate that. I think it was an election commitment as part of the large STEM funding that has a flow-on effect, and it is on pages 370 and 371.

[11.20 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Did the member say page 371? Please, take your time, member.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I can come back to it if the parliamentary secretary likes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, whenever the member is ready.

MS L. METTAM: I refer to page 365 and the outcomes, services and key performance information. Under "Relationship to Government Goals" there is the government goal of "Safe, Strong and Fair Communities: Developing healthy and resilient communities", and then there is the desired outcome of "School students across Western Australia have access to high quality education." Of the students who are currently part of the state's public education system, how many are students whose current whereabouts are unknown?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can inform the member that there has definitely been a significant reduction in the total number of students recorded as students whose whereabouts are unknown. I commend the whole team behind me for the work that they have done over the last four years to create the factors to reduce that number. The member can put that as a question on notice and we will be happy to provide that.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the parliamentary secretary able to provide it as supplementary information? Obviously, the department has an awareness of the figure.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I do not want to embarrass the member for Vasse. This specific issue is not in the budget papers. It is definitely in the annual reports, and it is certainly information that is available to the member now, but if the member places it as a question on notice, I am sure that we can provide the information to her.

Ms L. METTAM: I am certainly not embarrassed by asking what I think is a pretty important question.

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is a very important question.

Ms L. METTAM: I am asking about the number of students unaccounted for in the public education system. I just wonder why that information is not easily at hand?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think the member just said "students unaccounted for"; the question was about "whereabouts unknown". That is different but important. The information is available in the current annual reports. It is not available in the budget papers, but if the member asks a question on notice, that is the best way to access that information, unless she wants to access the annual reports herself.

Ms L. METTAM: The reason we ask questions in the budget estimates is to tease out information that is referred to in the budget papers. Of course that information is not in the budget papers; that is what the questions in estimates are about. I would have thought that the reference that I have provided would allow for some accountability of that, but we can just leave that there.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to take that question. The member for Vasse is absolutely right: this is a very important process in which we go through the budget papers line item by line item. In answer to the member's question, I can confirm that there has been a significant reduction in the last three or four years of the number of students whose

whereabouts are unknown. If the member wants specific year-by-year data for that, a question on notice is the best way to provide that information.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 368, public secondary education, and the line item “Total Cost of Service” at the top of that table. I refer to the first point in the notes, further down, “due to additional election commitment funding for secondary pathway initiatives including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics”. I go back to Esperance Senior High School, which I understand was given an election commitment of \$1.7 million for STEM as part of that funding, if you like. My question is: aside from that election commitment, is there a recognition by the department that Esperance Senior High School needs substantial work right through the middle of the school? I see in the budget papers that there is recognition of ageing schools, but I do not see Esperance included. Does the government recognise the needs of Esperance Senior High School?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe. He gets bonus points for finding one of the many references to the great work that we are doing across STEM education. Certainly, Esperance Senior High School is one of the recipients of \$1.5 million. I am happy to give the member some further detail about that and the other upgrades that have been done by this government. Esperance Senior High School was unfortunately neglected under the previous government, and it is great to see a great school like this is getting investment in its infrastructure. I am happy to give the member the details of that.

As part of the state government’s election commitments, Esperance Senior High School will receive \$1.5 million for a STEM classroom upgrade. I am sure the member agrees that that is a fantastic place for a STEM classroom upgrade. I am sure the member will concur that that should be allocated and continued, because we certainly do not plan to change that. Very recently, the minister visited Esperance Senior High School. Just last month, she met with the chair of the school board. That is what we do—we meet, we talk and we listen. This government is known for its consultation with regional communities and representation. Further, the school will receive funding as part of the maintenance blitz. The member will remember that during our previous parliamentary term, the maintenance blitz was a very, very large investment in schools under which a huge backlog of maintenance issues was funded based on what schools told the department and the government were their priorities. I am very happy to inform the member that almost \$2 million was allocated to Esperance Senior High School for maintenance, design and technology upgrade and solar panels for that school. The member will be aware that the TAFE will be relocating from the site at the end of this year and the Department of Education is currently investigating how to make effective use of the facilities. I will give the member the information about the maintenance blitz in case he does not have it to hand. Actually, I will finish there. I am happy to answer a further question if the member would like the details of that.

[11.30 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that, regardless of whether it is a National Party member, a Labor Party member or whomever, the department will recognise some of the issues at Esperance Senior High School, as per the cracking ceilings and areas that need to be roped or fenced off? Is the infrastructure department of the Department of Education recognising Esperance Senior High School as a priority in the short term? I am looking for a budget commitment, hopefully in 2022–23 with any luck.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe for the question. There are a couple of points to answer. First, we do not think of things perhaps like the member does—which seats vote a particular way or whether they are represented by Nationals, Labor or Liberal members. We are all in this together. Mark McGowan and Sue Ellery are here for all of us. They look after all regional and metropolitan communities, as does the department. The department does not think in partisan terms either, and I think that is important. It is important that that is the case.

I am happy to inform the chamber that the department acknowledges that there is some ageing infrastructure on the site at Esperance. There is also recently built infrastructure that is of a very good standard. As I said, there are upgraded science classrooms and middle school classrooms.

I will now bring the member back to the maintenance blitz. Under the maintenance blitz that has already been announced, at Esperance Senior High School there has been a maintenance allocation of \$93 000; over \$16 000 for roof safety; \$62 000 for structural integrity reforms; over \$206 000 for traffic management, which is very important for the school; \$701 000 for design and technology upgrades; \$30 000 for shade structures and playgrounds; and \$796 000 for sustainability and solar panels. I am sure that the member will agree that it was a very good decision to make that investment of funds at that school. I hope he is not suggesting that we made a poor decision in choosing to fund this maintenance blitz at that school.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I wanted to get it on the public record that I am concerned about the safety aspect and perhaps the integrity of the buildings. I wanted to make that comment and I hope that the infrastructure department of the Department of Education will note that and prioritise it for the future.

I now move to a fresh question. I refer to page 363 and the line item “Expanding Respectful Relationships—Teacher Relief”. Can the parliamentary secretary expand on that? Teacher relief is becoming a real issue in almost every school, not just regional schools. It is becoming an issue in the metropolitan area as well.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe. Is he asking me to give him some more information about respectful relationships or about teacher relief? Can he clarify that or maybe break it down into two sections?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I just want a quick explanation of what that is about. Is it about addressing the teacher relief issue?

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is a brilliant program. Respectful relationships is an essential program. In direct answer to the member’s question, the Department of Education is to provide teacher relief funding to public schools to facilitate participation in the program at approximately \$7 000 per annum.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the education department have other strategies in place to deal with the teacher relief shortage that seems to be coming forth in just about every school that I know of?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am pretty sure I have some good information for the member. Can he re-ask his question for me so that I can make sure that I give him the best possible answer?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The question is: what strategies does the department have in place to address the teacher relief issue that seems to be cropping up?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe for the question. There are a number of strategies. We have a very well-equipped department. We have a very good leadership team at the department and at the ministerial level in education, but I will name a couple of programs for the member’s information. There is the Public School Teaching Pathway, professional experience in regional and remote public schools and the supported Professional Practice Project. That is abbreviated as PPP, but it is not the public–private partnerships that the member’s government did but that no longer continue to be created at new schools. There is the Horizons program and mid-career pathways. There is also the casual staff seeker tool, which was launched at the beginning of term 3 in 2021 for principals to access a greater supply of registered teachers who are job ready. There is also a marketing campaign to attract teachers to the system. We are also looking to procure the services of organisations that can source teachers from other jurisdictions and, of course, we are hoping to streamline the process for recently retired teachers to be reregistered.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the parliamentary secretary have any numbers for schools that have been unable to find relief teachers during the last financial year? Is a record kept by the department at a central level of schools that are struggling?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member for Roe for the question. In direct answer to his question, there is a special unit in this workforce team that specifically makes sure that we have a supply of those teachers. If a principal has pressure to find relief teachers, we ask them to liaise with the department, and they do. A couple of things that will assist the member with that is that the department currently has 8 000 registered relief teachers. Approximately 4 000 of those are used each fortnight. As I said, there is the new casual staff seeker tool that connects teachers to opportunities. When I was a relief teacher, it involved me just handing in my résumé at each of the schools that I might like to work at. We now have a much more complex and informative way to connect those people who are seeking to do relief and those people who are seeking to have relief roles filled. The program also uses final year students for relief. There is the teacher flying squad as well, which is of great importance for our regional communities. They are used to directly support regional and remote schools.

[11.40 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Further to that, I believe there has been a need to use the teacher flying squad in the lands and some of the areas further out from the goldfields and the like. Does the parliamentary secretary have any numbers on where schools have been caught short?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The flying squad has been around for some time; it is not a new proposal. It has been utilised well in regional communities for some time. I am happy for the member to put the question on notice if he is after specific numbers.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the sixth item on page 364 of budget paper No 2 relating to the difficulties in attracting in areas of specialised skill, particularly in secondary schools. Can the parliamentary secretary be more specific and advise which specialised skill sets are currently in short supply and outline what work is being done by the department to promote specialised teacher training?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Maths and science are primarily the areas of shortages of specialised teachers. The Teach for Australia program will often fill that need. Those categories are often the most attractive to that area. We also have a pathway for final year students to enter the workforce, as a trial, on limited registration.

Ms L. METTAM: How many teachers are we short of in maths and science for this reporting period?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am informed that every classroom has a teacher.

Ms L. METTAM: We are not asking about whether every classroom as a teacher; we are talking about specialised teachers. This item refers specifically to a challenge in attaining these teachers with specialised skills. Surely, if it is a goal to attain more teachers with specialised skills, the parliamentary secretary would have an idea or an understanding of how many of these teachers were needed.

Mr T.J. HEALY: We have a number of programs that all principals can access to meet demands. On that same thing, I welcome the students in the gallery above to the chamber and acknowledge the very, very specialised skill in their teacher. Welcome!

Ms L. METTAM: That is not answering the question. The question is: how many teachers are we short in the specialty areas of maths and science?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to say again that we are not short of those science and maths teachers in front of classrooms. However, I am happy to give the member more information about the strategies we are using to continue to attract more. We are not short.

Ms L. METTAM: So, is the parliamentary secretary satisfied with the status quo?

The CHAIR: Member for Vasse!

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will just give the member for Vasse the information about the strategies. The department has a range of strategies to increase the number of suitably qualified teachers applying for positions in public schools. This includes the Teach in WA program of online marketing, career expos and presentations, a dedicated contact for teachers considering applying for positions and the Leap program to retrain teachers for specialised secondary subjects. Retention strategies also encourage staff to teach in regional and remote schooling. There are a number of challenges to making sure we deliver that quality in our remote and regional schools as well. The remote connection program allows staff to experience teaching in remote schools, and the remote teaching service induction supports successful onboarding. These are the sorts of programs that ensure that we will continue to have teachers in front of classrooms next year. As I said, we have them now, and we want to make sure that there are teachers in front of those classrooms at all times. I will further add that there has been a change in the one-year graduate diploma program, with the introduction of a two-year Master of Education program, which has seen the number of initial secondary teacher education graduates decline. We have to address that with our strategies. I have mentioned Teach for Australia. There is also the Public School Teaching Pathway, Professional Practice Project, Horizons program and mid-career pathways into workforce areas of need.

Ms L. METTAM: How can the government address the issue stated in the budget papers of “attracting teachers with the right skills to the right areas at the right time” if there is no visibility on what the size of the problem is? Clearly the government does not have that.

The CHAIR: Is that the question, member for Vasse?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am sure the member would agree that one of the characteristics of the McGowan government is its ability to plan for the long term and the short term. We are not just thinking in short-term bubbles and political fixes; we have a strategy that allows us to do our best to ensure that in a world in which there is a global demand for such skills, there is always the right teacher in front of the right classroom. I think the member is trying to say that there are not the relevant teachers in front of classrooms. In direct answer to the member’s question, we have a classroom teacher in front of each classroom. We are talking about specialised teachers. We are ensuring that we have that pipeline of skills and specialist teachers to continue working in metropolitan and regional areas.

[11.50 am]

Ms L. METTAM: The Teach for Australia program is one source of attracting these specialised teachers. How many people are currently participating in this program? Can the parliamentary secretary advise what subject areas they are teaching?

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is certainly available for the member to request that information as a question on notice, but I detected some hesitancy and frustration about that earlier. I am happy to give the member a freebie now, to save the member that process, but I do not want to deprive the member and her office of the opportunity of doing that sort of research. I can tell the member that in 2019, 48 TFA graduates commenced; in 2020, 35; and in 2021, 43. I will give the member for Vasse some further freebie information, because they are a fantastic cohort. In the area of science, there are a total of 26 teachers. In the area of maths, there are 22.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On page 364 of budget paper No 2, the third line from the bottom of the table is the line item “Revision to RiskCover Insurance”. I notice that it has a reasonable increase into the forward estimates. Principals who go on workplace leave under workers’ compensation have their payments capped at below their salary. Is there any relationship between the increase in RiskCover insurance and that situation?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The short answer is no.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What is the reason for the revision to RiskCover insurance increasing over that period?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The department has increased its expenditure budget by \$39.8 million over the period 2021–22 to 2024–25, reflecting the upward revision in the RiskCover insurance fund contributions. The increase primarily relates to workers' compensation and insurance, which has been driven by a higher number of severe claims over the past five years and an increase in hospital costs by more than the consumer price index.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On page 364 as well, further up the table I refer to the line item "Pilbara Education Partnership and Sponsorship", which seems to cease funding in 2024–25. Can the parliamentary secretary explain how this change of funding has happened? I would assume that a reduction in funding will not assist schools in the Pilbara.

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is a fixed-term arrangement; that is why the funding changes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is it a partnership or sponsorship that has pulled out? What are the actual details of the reduction in funding?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will answer this, rather than answering a couple of follow-up questions. The new iteration of the BHP Pilbara Education Partnership was endorsed in February 2021, with BHP committing a total of \$6.6 million in funding over three years. The partnership has two focused areas, with schools in Hedland and Newman, along with Onslow Primary School, Jigalong Remote Community School, Marble Bar Primary School, Nullagine Primary School and Yandeyarra Remote Community School supported by the partnership. On 12 August 2021, the wonderful Minister for Education and Training announced an additional \$602 000 funding allocation for a new component to the partnership, the Rise Up program. This is a 14-month pilot program that will focus on supporting students to set individual goals to improve attendance and academic achievement, while also participating in leadership and mentoring roles, and volunteering in the community. This program will promote and support student achievement and wellbeing by providing all year 5 and 12 students in Newman and Hedland with the opportunity to participate, ensuring more effective transition processes between primary and secondary schools.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My understanding is that BHP has pulled out of this program, which was very highly valued in Hedland and the like. It is quite disappointing to be honest. Has there been any attempt to reinstate this funding? Has the department been working with BHP to try to reinstate this important funding considering how many billions of dollars that it makes out of the Pilbara region?

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, I would hate for the member to impugn the integrity of BHP's investment into our regional communities. I think it is also disappointing that the member would challenge the role of the department or the government in investing in regional education in that area, too.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not challenging the department's role.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member asked a direct question: did BHP pull out? I can confirm that the BHP Pilbara Education Partnership, endorsed in February 2021, has BHP committing \$6.6 million in funding over three years. That is a significant investment of funds, and I would not classify that as pulling out. For the parliamentary record, I am disappointed that the member would suggest that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In the line item I am looking at, all I am seeing is a reduction in funding. If the parliamentary secretary can point me to the line item where that particular funding exists, I will be more than happy to look at it.

[12.00 pm]

Mr T.J. HEALY: I refer the member back to the line item—I hate to do his work for him—and the figure is \$2 775 000 in 2021–22, \$2 059 000 in 2022–23 and \$1 032 000 in 2023–24.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is there no funding from 2023–24 onwards?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Clearly neither the member for Roe nor I will become a maths teacher! It is a three-year program.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 364. Paragraph 4 refers to services for students needing extra support et cetera. I refer to the *DETECT schools study: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in Western Australian schools* that surveyed more than 24 000 students across 79 public schools, and found that around 40 per cent of secondary school students were experiencing moderate to high levels of emotional distress. Can the parliamentary secretary outline what the education department has done to respond to the DETECT report, which has been repeatedly referred to in Parliament?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The Department of Education acknowledges a strong association between positive student mental health and wellbeing and learning. All schools have access to school psychologists, the numbers of which are increasing with the additional school psychologist FTEs that I mentioned earlier during estimates. School psychologists can provide risk assessment and intervention for students with identified needs, including those with suicidal behaviour and non-suicidal self-injury. The Mental Health Commission provides the department with funding to coordinate the response to suicide and self-harm in an important schools' program. The Mental Health

in Schools project, from our previous term of government, is continuing in 300 schools. It is very important. The department also supports whole-school approaches to wellbeing, including other social and emotional learning programs delivered by classroom teachers, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, Friendly Schools, and Aussie Optimism. Almost 2 000 staff have completed an online professional learning module on creating supportive and inclusive school policies, as one example.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I note that stress levels of teachers have been identified as being very high and the complexities of dealing with the mental health of our teachers have also substantially increased. Can the parliamentary secretary outline what the department is doing to deal with the mental health of our teachers?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will come back to the member's question about staff in a moment, but I do not think I emphasised the role of the chaplains as part of our strategy in responding to the DETECT report. I did not mention the increase in the number of chaplains and the role that they play. I do not want to let the record slip without mentioning the fantastic role that our chaplains play.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My understanding is that chaplains generally deal with students. However, I am asking: what is the department doing to deal with the mental health welfare of our teachers?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much, member for Roe. I just wanted to add to my answer to the member's previous question by saying that I did not mention the chaplains.

The mental health and wellbeing of staff is, again, a priority for this government and this fantastic education department. As part of the department's range of programs and services available to all public schools to build and foster student wellbeing, the priority for 2021–22 is to increase access to those services. The department is finalising a new staff health and wellbeing plan for 2021 to 2024 and the school leader health and wellbeing plan for 2021 to 2024 that will focus on ensuring that all staff in schools and other department workplaces are healthy, safe and well through enhanced professional learning, information, initiatives, resources and support with a priority focus on mental health. The department also supports all staff through the Employee Assistance Program, which is delivered by PeopleSense, a free counselling service supporting the emotional and mental health needs of employees and their immediate families. Further, I am not sure whether the member has heard of the collegiate principal program whereby learned principals can assist others. It is a great way to connect resources and experienced people. I have worked with a number of collegiate principals and it is a great way to connect and inform the great staff already in our system.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the parliamentary secretary have an understanding of how many teachers are seeking assistance and what the size of the problem is?

Mr T.J. HEALY: To clarify, is the member asking how many principals are acting in the principal collegiate program or one of the other programs, or does the member mean staff?

Ms L. METTAM: I mean staff. The member for Roe asked about the mental health and wellbeing of teachers, and I am asking whether the parliamentary secretary has an idea of the size, or a number, of this problem?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The Employee Assistance Program is probably the best way to give the member that information. If the member wants a number relating to a program, I am happy to give that to her. The best way to give the member that information is to read out the Employee Assistance Program information and the number of people who are accessing it, if that is okay with the member?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The Employee Assistance Program continues to be a key strategy to support employees and immediate family members with mental health concerns. Services include confidential counselling with experienced psychologists for employees and immediate family members for personal and work-related issues, critical incident management to provide support to employees and school leaders following a critical incident in the workplace, and the manager assistance program to provide advice and support to school leaders faced with people-related issues. I can inform the chamber that a total of 10 121 counselling sessions were provided in 2020–21, representing an increase of 8.52 per cent or 795 sessions. That is one program.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the parliamentary secretary able to provide by way of supplementary information the number of teachers or staff members who have been involved in the program over the last four years?

[12.10 pm]

Mr T.J. HEALY: As I said, I am happy to provide the numbers about this specific program through the chair to the member for Vasse. The numbers I have are 10 121 counselling sessions were provided in 2020–21, representing an increase of 8.52 per cent or 795 sessions. I am definitely informing the member there has been an increase. The member is asking about the last couple of years. I am happy for the member to put that question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Issues have been raised with me regarding the education assistants' union induction program.

The CHAIR: Can you refer to a line item?

Ms L. METTAM: It is further to this question, about providing support services for teachers and students.

The CHAIR: What is your question again, sorry?

Ms L. METTAM: I am asking where the EA union induction program fits in. I understand that it is a compulsory program. Where does that fit in with the goals of the Department of Education?

Mr T.J. HEALY: There is funding for education assistants. A better location for this question would be if the member can find another line item. It is definitely in there because we have increased the number of education assistants by 300 FTE, as promised in the previous term of government. It is definitely in the recurrent funding, but I think that is probably the best place for the member to ask the question.

Ms L. METTAM: I am happy to refer to whatever section that is, or to the overall goals of the Department of Education on page 365 under the heading “Desired Outcome”, which is for school students across Western Australia have access to high quality education. There is a range of services. My question is a genuine query. Why is it compulsory for education assistants to attend compulsory union-held induction sessions?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will give the member a short answer, because I know she also wants to get to the Department of Training and Workforce Development. I am not trying to frustrate the member. It is in a line item. It is here for the member to find. If she has the PDF there, I am sure she will find it in about 10 seconds.

Induction is part of the industrial agreement for education assistants. That was negotiated as part of their industrial agreement. If the member wants to go to the line item, we can go through it in more detail. It is not in this part of the budget, but it is in there. I am happy to spend the next 50 minutes on this or on the Department of Training and Workforce Development—however the member wishes to allocate the time. I am answering the member’s question. It is there because it is part of the agreed industrial agreement.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 219 in budget paper No 3 and the line item “Put Education Assistants Back in the Classroom”. I will ask the question again, referring to that line item. Why are union induction sessions compulsory for education assistants?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Induction is part of their industrial agreement.

Ms L. METTAM: I appreciate that it is part of the agreement. I am asking why it is compulsory for education assistants to attend these meetings. I have had feedback from local teachers and a local principal who was certainly very frustrated when their teacher assistant made a trip from Busselton all the way to Australind. They were five minutes late and were told to turn around and come back for another session. That was quite a strong response and certainly a waste of the teacher assistant’s valuable time. I have a genuine question. These induction sessions are compulsory. What is the objective of these sessions and what value do they have in the overall goals of the Department of Education?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In terms of the negotiations, when each of those agreements come up, I understand that an agreement was reached by all parties that they saw value in them. These agreements come up every few years. I think the member is arguing that a case should be made at the next opportunity to discuss it. I think it will be something that all parties will continue to discuss at the next agreement. Is that what the member’s question is?

Ms L. METTAM: My question is: if a teacher assistant does not want to attend one of these meetings, are they still able to contribute and teach in the classroom, given that they would be qualified to do so?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Is that if they have not done their induction?

Ms L. METTAM: If they have not been to the union induction, yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I have given the answer, member for Vasse. It is in the agreement. It is what has been agreed to by the parties.

Ms L. METTAM: This has been raised as a concern with me locally, given that teacher assistants have had to travel to Australind for these meetings. The feedback on what is actually taught at these meetings has not been particularly positive. What sort of feedback or number of complaints does the Department of Education receive about these compulsory union induction meetings?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am informed that the department is not aware of complaints about the process. Further, I think the member’s real question here is about whether the department will implement the obligations under the agreement—yes. I think the member’s question might be better placed on notice. If she cannot google it, she may want to put a question on notice to the minister asking when the agreement is next up for negotiation and discussion. Does the member want it to be changed or reviewed at the next round of agreement?

Ms L. METTAM: My question is: if a teacher assistant does not want to take part in the union induction meeting, are they still able to teach or provide their services as teacher assistants? I guess the answer is no; it is compulsory.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am informed that, yes, an education assistant is still able to be present to support roles in the classroom even if they have not done their agreed-upon induction program.

[12.20 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a final question on that. I find it quite disturbing that there is a compulsory induction by the union. I want an unequivocal statement, I guess, from the Department of Education that if a teaching assistant refuses to attend a union induction meeting, their employment will not be jeopardised.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I apologise that I am repeating what I have said before to members. I know there is a lot of stuff going on and it is bit hard to follow all of it; essentially, I will reiterate what I said. We are here to support all parties. This arrangement was agreed upon by all parties as part of their enterprise bargaining agreement. If a person does not participate in the agreed-upon induction, they are able to continue in the classroom in their support role.

The appropriation was recommended.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Madam Chair, if I can say, we have an amazing team of people here and I thank them all for their preparation and their organisation. We have an awesome Department of Education!

The CHAIR: Having been on that side in parliamentary estimates, I absolutely concur.