

Division 36: Education Services, \$406 703 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Dr E. Constable, Minister for Education.

Mr R. Strickland, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr D. Lloyd, Executive Director, Corporate Governance and Strategic Resources.

Mr M.R. Brown, Director, Education and Training Regulation.

Mr R.S. Willis, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr T. Werner, Director, Higher Education and Legislative Review.

Ms J. Taggart, Principal Adviser, Office of the Minister for Education.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: I give the call to the member for Warnbro.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to the last dot point on page 410 relating to the implications of the Teacher Registration Bill. Once we move the administrative role from the Western Australian College of Teaching to the Department of Education Services, what will be the cost of registering and administering and any disciplinary processes—basically running the new teachers registration board process from within the department or within Education Services?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The new board will have a chairman and the services to support that board will be provided by the Department of Education Services. I will ask Mr Strickland to comment.

Mr R. Strickland: Basically, the functions will be financed from the registration fees that are charged of teachers now. That is the way the college is currently resourced and that will be the way this function is resourced in the department. It will be based on the current fees.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What is the current cost of operating WACOT, which the minister anticipates will be fully transferred to Education Services? I understand that there is a mortgage component that it will not be meeting.

Mr R. Strickland: Parliament has not made a decision that this will happen yet. It is still to go through the upper house.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We will not defeat it in the upper house.

Mr R. Strickland: We are meeting with the people at WACOT to ascertain exactly what those costs will be when it comes across to us.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member should bear in mind that WACOT is not an agency of the crown, which means that I do not have access to that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Has the minister ever received a statement from WACOT on its operating costs each year? What were they?

Mr R. Strickland: It is in the annual report. I do not have a copy of it here because it is not part of my current appropriation or in my estimates.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Until it is, it is difficult to answer.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The minister would understand my expectation that she might have a rough idea of how much it will cost to operate the teachers registration board process.

Mr R. Strickland: It will cost approximately \$5 million.

Mr P. PAPALIA: During debate on this matter in the other place, the minister said that the annual revenue stream from registration was \$5.2 million. Is the minister saying that once it is transferred, once we abandon the mortgage and we move in and have the benefit of administrative support that is already in the department, the overall cost will still be \$5 million annually?

Mr R. Strickland: I am not sure that the member is aware but the Western Australian College of Teaching has been getting itself into a position of insolvency. In terms of it coming across, we will be finding efficiencies so that we can provide on an efficient basis the services that are currently being provided.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Some of those services that are provided under the WACOT act, such as the professional development aspects, do not come under the teacher registration board. The teacher registration board will have a much more straightforward task in that regard.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am assuming it will be cheaper for you to operate within Education Services and the teacher registration board structure than it currently is for WACOT.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is my expectation that when the Department of Education Services provides the administrative support—it does this with another statutory board, the Training Accreditation Council—because of its expertise in this area, it will be far more efficient than WACOT could be. My expectation is that it will work within the bounds of the current fees that are collected. Most of these organisations have a cost of living increase to CPI.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the minister anticipating that it will be in the order of \$5 million?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is what I am advised from what is known at this point.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Can I confirm that all the administrative staff at WACOT will be absorbed into Education Services?

Mr R. Strickland: All the administrative staff have the right to come across to the Department of Education Services with their existing conditions intact.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: I refer to “Per Capita Grants for Non-Government Schools: Salary Increases” under “Major Spending Changes” at the bottom of page 409. The minister will be aware that there is a large proportion of private schools in my electorate. Would the minister please provide an update to the house on how the state budget addresses the increased costs to non-government schools of the increases in salaries for teachers in government schools?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for his question; it is a very important question. When there is an increase through the EBA to government-employed teachers, an adjustment is made for low and middle fees paid by non-government schools. In the 2012–13 budget we provided an additional amount of \$10.4 million in financial assistance to the non-government school sector in Western Australia. Fourteen schools are considered to be high fee schools. They do not receive this. This is funding—Mr Strickland can correct me if I am wrong—that the schools would receive with an 18-month gap, which is the way the calculation is made on what is paid to non-government schools. We are bringing that funding forward—it is funding they would have got for this purpose—to support the low and middle fee schools. This will allow non-government schools to provide the same salary level as provided by government schools and to bring the level up to what has been negotiated recently.

There is a long history to this. Back in the 1990s—I think about 1994—the government at the time provided this money to Catholic and non-Catholic independent schools. That has continued, although there was a bit of a blip in the first part of this century when only Catholic schools were provided with this catch-up money. When we came to government, and after the first enterprise bargaining agreement, we provided the catch-up for low and middle fee non-government schools, both Catholic and independent. The same thing is happening now to accommodate those schools, and they are very grateful for us bringing that funding forward.

[12.50 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to note 1 on page 411 regarding the Australian Skills Quality Authority and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. I assume that the negotiations for establishing the mutual recognition of qualifications were done under the auspices of the Western Australian College of Teaching, as our representative body. Now that the college is going, will that role be assumed by the Department of Education Services or by the Teacher Registration Board? In the transition phase before the legislation goes through, if there is to be harmonisation or mutual recognition across the nation —

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The member is referring to page 411.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am just picking the reference to that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It is not there, so I am not too sure where we go from here, Mr Chairman.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is the reference to the new national regulatory reform frameworks.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The reference in the note.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. Under the guise of that reference, in the interim as we move from WACOT to the Teacher Registration Board, is the authority held within the department? I do not know what the arrangements are at a national level for the recognition of teachers’ qualifications.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think the member might be muddling a couple of things. The new regulatory frameworks, the Australian Skills Quality Authority and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Forget that then.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not think it follows. I think the member has picked the wrong thing.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to the last dot point on page 410, which refers to the Teacher Registration Bill. The legislation has not passed through Parliament and we are still seeking to get national mutual recognition of qualifications. This continues the discussion we had in the Education division about teachers moving across borders. Will the Teacher Registration Board be the authority or will it be held with the minister or the department?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: To register the teachers?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, to be the Western Australian authority for authorising a teacher's qualification.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The Teacher Registration Board will check the qualifications of both interstate and overseas people, bearing in mind that we have mutual recognition.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Until the board exists, it will be WACOT.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is correct. Until the act comes in, it will be WACOT

The appropriation was recommended.