

EDUCATION — 2018–19 STATE BUDGET

325. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:

I refer to comments made by the Premier's hapless education minister in the Legislative Council last Thursday when asked about education budget cuts —

... I do not have my notes in front of me, but I can say this, and I have said it before—budget repair continues; it is an ongoing process.

Given the Premier's claim yesterday that education spending is increasing, contrary to the government's own budget papers, will the Premier guarantee that no schools, programs or grants to external organisations will have their funding reduced or ceased as a result of this budget?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thought that the preamble to the question was excessively nasty and unnecessary on behalf of the member for Scarborough. I urge her to show a bit more respect in future. I answered the question accurately yesterday. If we look at the budget, we see that the spend on education is going up, as it should. We are doing a range of things across the state in both the city and the regions. We will find that over the course of the forward estimates, the voluntary targeted separation scheme and the government's wages policy are factored into the out years. The VTSS will mean that education plays some part in that program—every agency across government has to. The reason we had to put in place the voluntary targeted separation scheme is the \$40 billion of debt that we were left by the Liberals and Nationals. That \$40 billion debt that the Liberal–National government left means that we cannot otherwise do everything we would like to. We are also doing a new wages policy.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Members opposite get agitated because they know what failures they were. They were shocking failures. Liberal Party MPs, both federal and state, privately say to me what a catastrophe members opposite were when they were in office.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Yeah, right.

Mr M. McGOWAN: They do.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Name them; name one person who said that to you.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I would not want to out some of the member's colleagues. Ian Campbell says it. The former government was a financial catastrophe, the likes of which this state has never seen before.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Yeah, right.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition keeps saying, "Yeah, right." He took debt from \$3 billion to \$40 billion. How else would we describe it than as a catastrophe?

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order for the third time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What can be found in the forward estimates is the voluntary targeted separation scheme, and I understand 230 or so staff inside Education have taken that opportunity, and there is the government wages policy, the flat \$1 000 for every staff member. Those two things are factored in. Across the forward estimates there is growth in the education spend. We also find that in a range of important programs across the state, as I outlined yesterday: science, technology, engineering and mathematics in schools; science in classrooms; independent learning coordinators in the regions; 300 additional education assistants and Aboriginal Islander education officers. This morning I was at two schools, one in the member for Jandakot's electorate and one in the member for Southern River's electorate, where we are building new primary schools to deal with the growth in population. I might even pay a visit to a few regional electorates shortly to talk about the important improvements in schools out there, for instance —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are building a new school in the member for North West Central's electorate. He is so angry about it.

Mr I.C. Blayney interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He and the member for Geraldton: "I'm so angry they are improving the hospital in Geraldton." Member for North West Central: "I'm so angry they are building a new school in Carnarvon." They really have some anger management issues on that side!