

JOHN CURTIN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS — HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

**271. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Premier:**

Before I ask my question, the member for Nollamara asked me to place on record, even though they have already left, acknowledgement of Koondoola Primary School students in the public gallery, and the great work they do at the Koondoola Integrated Services Centre.

I refer to reports today of concerns regarding the health and safety of children at John Curtin College of the Arts as outlined in a letter from the principal, who was, for the interest of members of the house, last year's runner-up principal of the year.

- (1) What is the government doing today to address the significant health and safety issues raised by the principal of John Curtin College of the Arts?
- (2) If the government has no plans to immediately address the significant health and safety issues raised by the principal, why not?
- (3) What additional funding for renovations or repairs beyond that necessary to accommodate the year 7 move to high school has John Curtin College received?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:**

(1)–(3) Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** The Minister for Education is ill, is that all right?

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** Second day.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Yes, she has been ill for two days; it does happen.

John Curtin College of the Arts is a good school, it is a very fine school, and indeed I happened to be education minister when it became a school for the arts, the first specialist school of its nature, and now, of course, we have Perth Modern School with its academic programs. John Curtin College of the Arts is an old school, as indeed, are many of the secondary schools in Western Australia. There is indeed a job to be done and the Minister for Education alluded to that the other day. The major job to be done in a capital works sense in our education system is the modernisation of our secondary schools, and indeed, a number of our secondary schools built back in the 1960s and 1970s were designed for perhaps a 30-year life, which has been exceeded. Also, the nature of teaching, the curriculum and the programs have changed dramatically. Probably the best functioning secondary schools now tend to be larger schools; that is the pattern both in private education and in government or public education. I certainly agree that John Curtin College of the Arts does need major capital works. It probably needs a significant rebuilding as, indeed, a number of other schools do, and those projects are underway, but there is more to do. Therefore, I do not disagree with that notion. But I make a comment referring to John Curtin College of the Arts that in 2012 the school received two new science labs, preparation areas and staff studies at a cost of \$1.5 million. It also had capital works bringing a significant refurbishment of design technology at the cost of an estimated \$1.1 million; I think that is where the member was talking about occupational safety and working conditions—the design and technology labs—and \$1.1 million has been put there. During the time of the previous government, \$6.5 million was spent on a purpose-built performing arts centre, which is quite magnificent. Over the last three years, \$840 000 has been spent on maintenance, including over \$477 000 on specific faults, over \$262 000 on minor works and over \$84 000 on routine maintenance. It is anticipated that by the end of the 2011–12, not far away, a further \$300 000 will have been spent replacing specialised guttering to north and western elevations, \$93 000 re-pointing walls, \$650 000 addressing concrete cancer and \$115 000 replacing 28 gas heaters at the school. Therefore, there is a bit going on at John Curtin; it is all busy there!

Having said all that, which clearly the member for Warnbro was not aware of, I agree with the principal that the school is old. It has 1 000 students, so it has a good strong student population, and it does need new facilities. But every school cannot be done at once, and indeed, down the road Governor Stirling Senior High School is being done, as are Rossmoyne Senior High School, Ballajura and so on. They are big schools; Ballajura of course is a new school. We made a decision, which we announced a few weeks ago, about Willetton Senior High School, to allocate \$32 million as stage 1 of what will ultimately be an \$80 million redevelopment. That is the same as is happening at John Forrest Senior High School and other schools. These are big projects to redevelop these schools. The opposition is clearly not interested in this issue anymore, because a lot of work has happened, particularly if there are issues of occupational health and safety. However, I take exception to that principal.

**Mr M. McGowan** interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I knew I would get the Leader of the Opposition's attention!

It is quite the correct thing for a principal to draw to the attention of the department or the minister, if he or she wishes, issues that concern him or her. And indeed, a master planning exercise has been done over the last six months or so at that school looking towards a redevelopment. But I do not believe that it is open to a principal to send an item of correspondence on school letterhead that is clearly inflammatory and clearly has a political tone to it; that is not appropriate. It is not appropriate; it is not the standard that this government accepts.

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** No, because it is not up to a principal to go out publicly with a politically charged document like that. It is up to a principal —

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** You're embarrassed, aren't you?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** No, I am not.

It is up to a principal to raise those issues with the director general or indeed the minister, or indeed the Premier, but it is not up to a principal to go out publicly with a letter such as that. That is a difference between the standard of this government and the public sector, and the Labor Party.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, I formally call you to order for the first time today.