

EDUCATION — FUNDING IMPACTS

Referral to Education and Health Standing Committee — Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore) [4.07 pm]: I move —

That the Education and Health Standing Committee inquire into the Labor government's cuts to education, announced 13 December 2017, to determine —

- (1) the educational impacts of the closure of Moora Residential College, closure or privatisation of six camp schools, cuts to the Western Australian agricultural colleges trust fund and increased fees for VacSwim; and
- (2) the appropriateness of the decision-making process behind the cuts, including any consultation that was undertaken.

There are two key areas of importance for consideration here. First of all, the first point refers to the educational impacts. We would like to examine exactly what these decisions will mean in order to understand the costs or the benefits, if any, to educational outcomes for students right across Western Australia in both the —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, member. Members, will you please stop conversations in the background. Hansard cannot hear.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Very good. I cannot hear myself think because there is so much noise at times. It is very important to assess the educational impacts and exactly what these decisions will mean for the students in not only regional areas, but also the metropolitan area. Cuts to programs in the metropolitan area will also affect students. Some of the cuts—for instance, to the Western Australian agricultural colleges trust fund—will affect the farm schools and those schools that have a farming program, such as Landsdale Farm School and others, in the metropolitan area.

It is very important to understand exactly the effects of these decisions on educational outcomes. Given the chaotic and rushed nature of decision-making and its emphasis, pretty much, on agricultural, regional and a few programs in the metropolitan area, we would like to get an understanding of how some of these decisions were made; how it was that they were then overturned; what criteria was used to come up with both the original decisions and the pushbacks, if you like, that subsequently occurred; and the motivation behind some of the decisions. We have chosen to seek to refer this issue to the Education and Health Standing Committee, which I think is the appropriate course of action. I understand that the committee structure is set up to do exactly what we are asking to happen. Having looked at the parliamentary website to gain further instruction as to appropriateness of referring this issue to the committee, I have gained a clear insight into the functions and powers of the committees. I will quote a little from the Parliament of Western Australia website because it is important that members know exactly what we are seeking to do here. The website states —

Committees can address, in an appropriate level of detail, matters that are the business of Parliament but are not suitable to be dealt with in the environment of a House. Committee proceedings are more intimate and less likely to be adversarial than proceedings in a House.

It is important that we have a very collegiate atmosphere to really get to the bottom of some of these issues. The website continues —

Party politics are often less prominent in a committee than in a House. It can be useful for a committee to review a complex or contentious matter —

Certainly these are contentious and complex matters, Deputy Speaker —

and to assist parliamentary debate by clarifying issues and establishing common ground between members of different parties.

We all know that there is precious little common ground between the parties at the moment, so it would be good if we could establish some common ground and perhaps come to some understanding. Other matters addressed on the website include that committees are a good avenue of communication between Parliament and the Western Australian community. Consistently coming from all this is that members of the Western Australian community, certainly in the areas I am familiar with, feel that they have not been communicated with well, there has not been a good deal of consultation and that they are being kept in the dark and decisions are being made without any regard to their needs. I think the committee undertaking an inquiry would go some way to restoring public confidence in the processes of Parliament and the processes of government. I think that is important for, if you like, the good governance of the state, not just in terms of education, but in a general sense. In my electorate at least, people feel very, very frustrated with government at moment. They feel disappointed and let down, and that they are not valued. A thorough exercise of inquiry by a committee may well help to undo some of that damage.

The Parliament website goes on to state —

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

The committee forum gives different sectors of the community the opportunity to participate in law making and policy review by airing their views on a matter and having those views reported to Parliament.

Yesterday, the Moora community and its supporters were in the metropolitan area—it was not just people from Moora but many, many people travelled from Moora for that event—and at the start of this Parliament, on 13 February this year, the Country Women’s Association of Western Australia put itself into a political rally for the first time. Being in politics is not a comfortable position for the CWA to be in; it is not the place it volunteers itself for. In fact, by memory, the mantra of the CWA alludes to being nonsectarian and non-political. The CWA did not see this as a political issue, but as a fundamental issue for communities and the wellbeing of children.

Mr V.A. Catania: They’re not just tea and scones.

Mr R.S. LOVE: No, they are not just tea and scones.

Of course, as a women’s association, the CWA has a very long history of involving itself in matters to do with making families more comfortable in country areas and ensuring that students—that children—have a supported lifestyle in country areas.

Earlier we had decisions around Schools of the Air and the energisation of the more remote areas of the state. My colleague, the member for North West Central, was instrumental and helped to work with the Isolated Children’s and Parents’ Association and the Schools of the Air parents’ associations to organise a series of rallies that took place in most of the regional centres Schools of the Air is located. I congratulate him for that work. In the case of Meekatharra School of the Air, that rally took place in Geraldton. Geraldton is now the centre of the Meekatharra School of the Air. That makes some sense because it is located right next to the Geraldton camp school, which I will talk about later. Certainly the level of community concern demonstrated then, just after Christmas and during the Christmas period, led to the government reconsidering that outcome. I suppose it also quite clearly demonstrated how deeply country people feel about the education of their children. The feelings of people involved in Schools of the Air are no different than the feelings of people in my electorate involved in Moora Residential College. Indeed, it is important to understand that many people involved in the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association live in my electorate. I think most of the executive are my constituents. Surprising as it might be to some people, my electorate is quite large; it even covers some pastoral areas. Many people in the more remote farming communities have very limited access to education as things stand now, let alone if any threats of cuts to those services come along.

Although the Schools of the Air decision was overturned, I think it would be instructive for the committee to look at that situation as part of the second tier of this investigation into the government’s decision-making process. Although it will not be necessary to examine the effects of the closure, I think it would be very instructive to get an understanding of why Schools of the Air was an area of education in Western Australia, especially in regional Western Australia, that was targeted by those decisions and to see not only how the targets were selected, but also how the costings would affect the budget. Where the savings would be was very unclear throughout the whole discussion on Schools of the Air. The aim was to remove Schools of the Air. I think there are five schools. Is that right, member for North West Central?

Mr V.A. Catania: Yes.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The aim was to remove five schools and replace them with the School of Isolated and Distance Education, but not as the school operates at the moment; to change SIDE’s operation fundamentally and make it replicate the things Schools of the Air does. Exactly where any savings would be after those changes had been made is pretty difficult to find. I suspect that was not envisaged when the decision was made. I suspect it was expected that the children would simply enrol in the SIDE program as it stood at that point and that as part of, shall we say, the spending that goes on trying to deal with a difficult decision, the government came up with the idea of changing the School of Isolated and Distance Education to more closely reflect what Schools of the Air does. I do not think that decision was planned and it probably was not costed. It would be a very important issue for the committee to examine.

Mr V.A. Catania: That’s a good point, member, because no-one knows the amount of money that SIDE needed to bring it up to a particular standard.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I know it is a good point; that is why I am making it, member.

Would there have been any savings by the time SIDE had been brought up to standard? That may well be the reason, apart from the very, very strong reaction from Schools of the Air and the hits the government was taking on a daily basis in the press and in the public arena on its decision on SOTA. It may well be that the government finally recognised that it was not going to save any money. Maybe that was part of the reason; I do not know. We probably will not know until we actually have this inquiry so that we can get to the bottom of exactly what went on with these matters.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

I will return briefly to the website. It is very instructive. I must congratulate the Parliament on having such clear outlines on its web page. It allows the public, and people like me, when talking about these matters, to understand exactly what the committee's functions are. I again quote —

As discussed, a committee is charged with the task of investigating and reporting to the relevant House on matters referred to it. This involves seeking information, assessing its significance, and then reporting findings and recommendations to the House.

Committees:

- will seek information and comment from Government departments and agencies relevant to the inquiry, as well as appropriate experts;

I think it does need the gravitas of a committee to be able to go to the public servants and seek that information. Certainly as an individual member, I made plenty of inquiries to the department and the minister for information about the decisions being made. That information never arrived until some information was released yesterday in the other place. I had been seeking that information since last year. Going back to the web page, it says that committees —

- may cast a wider net, seeking submissions from individuals and groups likely to be interested in or affected by the issues under inquiry. Where an inquiry is on a large scale a committee may advertise for submissions from the general public;

When we look at the number of people who got involved over this whole issue, it is quite clear that individuals and groups, much wider than simply parents, wanted to be involved in the discussion and got behind the rallies and other actions that were put together to try to demonstrate public concern about the decisions made. Again, going back to the rallies organised by the member for North West Central, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association was also involved, along with the Isolated Children's Parents' Association. Can the member recall the other groups?

Mr V.A. Catania: There were people from camp schools right across the area.

Mr R.S. LOVE: A whole range of people were getting involved. Committees can actually bring all of that into their purview and look at those wider views and look at how the wider community also sees these decisions and the effects.

Going back to the appropriateness of this committee, the Education and Health Standing Committee is the committee that we are seeking to send this to. The Education and Health Standing Committee is a standing committee of this house and has the portfolio responsibility, according to the web page, of the education and training portfolio. That is certainly the appropriate committee for this particular inquiry to be sent to. We see that the matter falls within the ambit of the committee. It is entirely appropriate for that committee to be involved in this. I think the public would expect this type of inquiry to be one that the committee would get involved in. Matters of considerable weight need to be considered not only for the education of the children who are immediately affected, but also it is entirely important for the wider community and the families. All these decisions that were made affect not just the current students and the groups who might have booked a camp school spot for 2018–19, but they also affect future generations of students right throughout the state. It had the potential, before the backflips especially, to fundamentally change the dynamics of education in regional Western Australia. They were very, very far reaching and very damaging in some circumstances, in my view.

As I said before, the community's concern and demand for this is the reason we are seeking this to go to the committee. It is not just a matter for debate in this house and it is not just a matter of cheap political pointscoring. Real community concern has been exhibited not only through the rallies and the social media posts, but also through the testimonials of real family distress. Many of the families that the member for North West Central, the member for Roe and I, and others, deal with are quite private people. They are not the sort of people who wear their heart on their sleeve and tell everybody how they are feeling. They often do not like to share their private views and concerns. Many of them have come forward in the last few months to do things they never thought they would do—tell stories about the effects these changes would have on their families and children, on their businesses, and on their hopes for the future and for the future of their districts. Even yesterday, we saw mothers talking, including the president of the P&C at Central Midlands Senior High School who has been instrumental in organising quite a bit of the response to the government decision to close the Moora Residential College. She is not someone who likes to be in the public eye. Yesterday was the first time that I think she has spoken publicly for a very long time. She did a remarkably good job. The reason she did so was not that she enjoys public speaking—I can tell members that she does not enjoy public speaking—the issue was fundamentally important to her and to others in her community. She felt that the injustice and the concern that she had for the future of her school and the future of her community was such that it overrode her natural reticence to speak publicly. That story has replicated throughout.

I recently received an email from the CEO of the Shire of Dandaragan with a number of stories about local people within that shire who attend Moora Residential College. I spoke yesterday about one family next door to me. A single father with two daughters had taken the time to put down in writing his feelings and send them to that person for them to send on to me. I have known that man for 30 years. I do not think he is someone who would normally write down such feelings or outline such concerns to anybody. That again goes to show how important this is to regional people and to others. I have heard members in this house who have metropolitan seats also express concern about some of the changes especially to the environmental program, I think at the Herdsman, which runs for very little money and has had a great impact on educating children for many, many years, but it will disappear. It will not be available anymore. It is part of the landscape for children's education in WA. It will just disappear; it will not be around anymore. That is the nature of what has been decided. It is a very, very short-term budget problem but it will have very, very long-term effects on people. State debt will take time to pay off, but what we are talking about here is the budget deficit. The budget deficit problem is, even by the government's own forecast, expected to correct itself in a few years, yet these decisions will hang on. These decisions will continue to play out. These decisions will continue to affect families, children and educational outcomes right across Western Australia.

I am looking at the two arms of this referral. The second arm is all about the decision-making process behind the cuts, including any consultation. I want to know why the regions seem to figure so prominently in the cuts. Why does regional WA seem to be disproportionately affected by the recommendations that were put to the minister? Was that something that the minister called for? Does the minister feel it is important to actually reduce educational opportunities in regional areas? Is there someone in the department who somehow feels that people in regional areas are unimportant? Why were those recommendations made? There is absolutely no evidence that I can see that there is a disproportionately good educational opportunity in regional areas that needs to be reduced to equalise it with that in the city. Far from it; in fact, it is just the reverse. People in regional areas are far less likely to have high educational outcomes than are people in the metropolitan area. They are far less likely to go to university than are people in the metropolitan area, yet we are seeing a reduction in the investment in regional education. I cannot see why, as a matter of good public policy, that would be advanced by a public servant with the good of the state at heart. I think it is very important that we look at the decision-making process and find out exactly who called for these cuts to savage regional education. Did it come from some person in the department who is running their own agenda, did it come from the minister or did it just come from a complete lack of care and understanding by both the minister and the department? Someone certainly made those decisions to put those recommendations forward to the minister and the minister certainly accepted them. Somewhere in all that some questions need to be answered, and a committee could go a long way to trying to understand that. I do not want to delve into the idea that some sort of class warfare mentality is involved in all this, but maybe there is; I do not know. I think this needs to be examined, because whatever the colour of the government, it needs to make decisions for the good of the whole of the state and not just for areas held by the party that happens to be in government at the time. We know that a directive went out to fix the budget because apparently there was a failure by the government to sell the need for a gold royalty. It seems to me that the call went out to get some money back in because of the gold royalty. That was never actually going to happen. It was not ever agreed that it was going to happen. The government never consulted with anybody before it announced it was going to do that.

Mr V.A. Catania: In fact, prior to the election, it said that it would not.

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is right. The Labor Party said that it was not going to take such measures and then it took such measures and wondered why they were opposed in the Parliament. They were opposed in the Parliament because the government had no mandate to bring them in. Is that also one of the reasons that regional areas were particularly targeted? Gold comes from the regions, so perhaps there was some sort of a simplistic view that there should be some disproportionate pain visited upon regional people, because their gold—not necessarily their own gold, but the gold that comes from regional areas—was not going to provide that extra royalty increase the government had hoped for. We may never know why those decisions were made and we may never know why the regions were so disproportionately targeted—my people are now saying “victimised”—but I think we owe it to the public of Western Australia to find out exactly what happened.

As I said before, regional education is an issue that has spurred concern from not just parents themselves, but also a wider group of people who understand the value of education. I think it is interesting that the whole discussion has spurred a lot of sympathy and concern from city-based people who understand that education is important for everybody. It is not just regional people who are concerned about these matters, who are voicing their concern about Moora and who are voicing their concern about Schools of the Air; it is people from all over WA. I think the general community understands that education is very important, that a well-educated population is the key to the future and that anything done to reduce that educational opportunity is, by its very nature, anathema to all people who would like to see this state become an even better place to live than it already is.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

Some of these decisions have very badly affected my electorate, so I have spent some time in this house trying to outline my concerns about not only the Moora Residential College, but also the issues of camp schools. Although the Geraldton camp school is not in my electorate, my electorate surrounds it. Many, many children from the schools in my area go to the Geraldton camp school, particularly those in the midwest educational district. That, too, is an important matter to me, as is, of course, the agricultural colleges trust, because of the situation of the College of Agriculture Morawa, which is one of the outstanding educational facilities in the electorate. It needs to be enhanced and built upon, not penalised and reduced. We will talk in some greater depth about those individual matters pretty shortly.

I will just get back to Moora for a moment. If the Education and Health Standing Committee assessed the educational impact of the closure of the college and the other matters, such as the cuts to the colleges et cetera, it would also need to understand the current general education outcomes in those areas so that we can understand whether decisions made are in the best interests of the area. It would be really important for the committee to get a really thorough understanding of the particular challenges that face regional families in getting a decent education for their children and then to ask whether any of these decisions were made with a view to improving those educational outcomes. I for one certainly do not think they were. In the case of Moora Residential College, the former government had announced a program. A cabinet decision had been made to fund the Moora Residential College to the tune of \$8.7 million. At the time that that decision was made, the then Minister for Education, Peter Collier, along with my colleague the former Minister for Regional Development, went to the college and made the announcement. They also spoke about the need to improve Central Midlands Senior High School and intimated that they would be willing to look at investment in that school in the future, after doing some planning and investigating, to improve the whole opportunity for education in the area. Now there is a threat to the residential college. As I have said in this house before, the residential college is an integral part of the population, if you like, of Central Midlands Senior High School. If those students are removed now, they will be removed for generations to come and the size of Central Midlands Senior High School will be forever diminished, its budget will be forever diminished and the course options available will be forever diminished. That will lead to more and more families perhaps making the decision not to send their children there. Often, when a decision like that is made, because of the very high cost of boarding elsewhere, unfortunately—I personally know this happens—the mother will leave the area and find accommodation in a larger centre or the metropolitan area and take not only that child, but also younger children, if they have them. The effect is quite severe on the whole region. It affects the high school student, who probably does not come from Moora—perhaps they come from Eneabba, for instance. When that family goes to accommodate the year 7 student, they will take the year 5 and year 4 students with them. That then also affects the Eneabba feeder school, the primary school there, and that then affects the community in the whole area. The effects of this are insidious. They are ongoing and they will be generational. They are not going to go away next year because the kids have found somewhere else to go. They are going to be around for very long time. As we learnt today, that college will cost about \$580 000 plus contingencies to actually make it fire safe. Numerous reports in the press have been attributed to senior members of government, saying that it will cost \$8 million or \$9 million to achieve that. That is simply not true. The reports are there, and it will cost far less to do that. Those same reports put the full replacement costs for the college at around \$19 million, so if we wanted to build that college as a facility, it would cost about \$19 million. If we wanted to refurbish it to the same standard, it would cost \$8 million or \$9 million.

I am sure that the community there would dearly love to have such an investment, but it knows that that is not going to happen. However, it would like to see that \$580 000 spent to keep the college open. Bear in mind that we have a facility, the replacement cost of which is around \$19 million, that will sit idle and empty and provide no educational opportunities for anyone. It will sit empty for want of just over half a million dollars of investment. For me, that is a bit of a no-brainer. I really think that these decisions that are being made need to be questioned and examined because they really exhibit a very short-term view of their own effects and a lack of understanding of just how far-reaching and fundamental those effects will be for the community, the children and the school that that residential college services.

As I said before, my electorate takes in quite an extensive area, including the WA College of Agriculture, Morawa. I took the time to consult with members of the Morawa community on their concerns about Morawa ag college some time ago, after these decisions had been made. The agricultural college trust fund has been used for many years to help build the infrastructure on some of those agricultural colleges and to provide some support to other farming and agricultural programs throughout the state. Removing that 20 per cent of the budget will make very little difference to the Western Australian government's budget; it will probably disappear in the price of cups of tea and coffee in the committee rooms across the road. In fact, I was flabbergasted to learn today that the sausage rolls provided over there are imported from Adelaide, so perhaps when we are looking at local jobs, we could look at the sausage roll situation in the committee rooms! I am told that they are the best sausage rolls. I am told that by the staff; I do not stand by that, but that is a diversion. We should look into that, because local jobs are important

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

and I am sure that within a five-kilometre radius of the South Perth area, where the member for Roe lives, there is plenty of acreage that could provide that service! He lives in the country, but he has a residence here in South Perth.

Getting back to the agricultural college, this is very serious.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I can smell it from here!

Mr R.S. LOVE: So can I; it is not very nice!

The 20 per cent cut to the trust budget is quite damaging because it is a disincentive to the people who get involved in the ag colleges. Many people give a lot of time to those colleges, in the farm advisory groups and in the community, to make sure the kids get a really good experience and an understanding of modern farming practices. In order for them to do that, they need to have up-to-date equipment. It is no good having kids in Morawa being given a grey Massey tractor and a three-rung combine or something and telling them to go and put the crop in. They need to have skills relevant to the industry that they are going to work in. The industry is changing rapidly. In the time since I have no longer been involved in the day-to-day running of a farming operation, having been in Parliament for the last few years, the skills needed to actually run the farm in the way that it is being run at the moment by lessees and the like have changed and I would have to do a fair bit of upskilling to catch up. Things have changed dramatically in the last few years. The equipment has changed dramatically and the scale of operation has changed dramatically. The understanding of the business as part of the economy has changed very rapidly. The agricultural colleges need to be able to remain relevant, and that trust money helps keep them relevant because it is invested back into the business side of the ag colleges. Yes, the government pays some of the ongoing costs as part of its budget; sometimes it pays a little bit of capital, but quite a bit of —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister is great at interjecting on people, but he does not like it when it happens to him.

Acquiring these skills provides a unique opportunity for students who want to go into an area where they will have strong, hands-on skills, both in agriculture and in some of the associated trades. Some of those students are also doing Australian tertiary admission rank courses at the college, specifically in agronomy and soil science and those types of subjects. They are then able to take the opportunity to go to university, so we have students coming out with very strong hands-on skills matched with academic ability. I think it is very important for the future of agriculture in our state to have people who are skilled at doing things and who have an understanding of science and economics and everything else behind what they are doing. Again, the trust budget means that there is something between \$200 000 and \$400 000 a year, which that 20 per cent take will represent. In terms of the state budget it is nothing; it is not going to pay back state debt and it is not going to fix the budget overnight. In fact, as I said, it will probably only match the cost of the sausage rolls over the road. Why are we setting up to change a system that has been around for years and years and has worked very nicely to reinvest in Western Australian government property? It actually reinvests back into the farm schools, which belong to the Western Australian government, and will provide future opportunities for students. The fact that it is owned by the Western Australian government does not mean that the Western Australian government should be looking to take a dividend from it. This is a self-sustaining situation that will enable —

Mrs R.M.J. Clarke interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: No, I did not say that. I clearly did not say that.

Mrs R.M.J. Clarke: No, you just said self-sufficient.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I said that the trust funds are self-sustaining because they will be reinvested back into productive activities that will then return money back into the trust. For instance, at the moment the Morawa college is trying to renew and expand its piggery; I have spoken about that before in this place. If it is successful, it will make a substantial return to the trust fund. That money will then be available for future purchases of land somewhere else and to provide for the farm school experiences in some of the metropolitan areas, and it will be available to help make sure that the students have equipment that is relevant to the modern workplace. It is not the case that without those funds the colleges would have programs that are relevant in all circumstances to the current agricultural working environment.

It is essential that the fund continues in its current form. By taking a 20 per cent slug out of that, we are breaking the hearts of the people who get involved. They are not getting involved to make money for the government; they are getting involved to make sure that their local ag college has a great program for the industry. These people are interested in the future of their industry and of young people. They are not doing this for their own profit but to improve education for students and ensure that the Western Australian agricultural industry has a well-educated

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

and thoroughly engaged workforce. We need young people to come into the industry. We know that the average age of farmers in many areas is quite advanced in years. We need those younger people coming through, but we also need people to understand that a career in agriculture is well supported and will be well rewarded. It is a dynamic area, not a stationary and static one where people spend their lives in never-ending drudgery and toil, doing the same thing day after day. People need some excitement and a feeling that their college is expanding, just as the businesses around them are expanding.

I will move on very quickly to another area of concern—the camp school at Geraldton. When the decision was made to close the camp schools, there was plenty of chatter around. I even heard that the department was looking to sell the schools, but I have not heard anybody back up that view. That was the word around at the time, but it certainly spoke of the closure of the schools. Again, since the original announcements were made, we seem to have had a bit of a change of heart, and we are now talking about finding other ways of running the schools. Non-government organisations, for instance, will become involved.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Excuse me, you can get up and have a go later.

Mr P. Papalia: You're a bit touchy, aren't you?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I have limited time, and these are fairly complex matters.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister; members.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Listen, and take some notes.

I have forgotten where I was and may have to restart.

Mr D.T. Redman: You were talking about the NGOs taking over.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes—the NGOs taking over the camp schools. Geraldton camp school is, I understand, fully booked for 2018. These are not underutilised facilities; they are being fully utilised. Why was the decision made to close the camp schools? Where would the students from the schools that use the six or seven camp schools throughout the state then go to get that education opportunity? How would the schools booking the camps pay for those opportunities? At the end of the day, all of this has to be paid for. If the government felt that there were plenty of other places for the schools to go to, I would like to know exactly where those places are, how much it is thinks they are going to cost, and who is going to pay for the schools to use them. None of that is very clear to me in spite of some questioning and discussion. We do not really know the answer to those questions. A committee would perhaps be able to get to the bottom of exactly what happened and when. When the original decision was made, what actually was the decision? It is not very clear what the decision actually was. What were the costings? Did the department feel that this was not an important thing and schools would not bother? Maybe that is what it was hoping would happen. Maybe the department was hoping that students would not miss the opportunity to go on a school camp; it would all just go away, and that would be that.

Then came the announcement that the camp schools were to be retained, but they would not be kept in the same form; they would not be camp schools, and some other person was going to come and run them. Has the department had any discussions with anyone? Have there been any discussions with any NGOs that indicated they might be interested in taking them on as a business? Has there been any discussion about price? The announcement after the change of heart, as I recall, also stated that there would not be any increases in costs to the schools. We are trying to create a situation in which we retain the same facility, with someone else running it, for the same price, and we are making a saving. I am scratching my head; I do not understand where the saving is.

Mr V.A. Catania: Creative accounting.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is very creative accounting. I am just a simple farmer, not a banker or something like that, so maybe there is some science to all of that, but I think that the committee could inquire and find out exactly how these decisions are being made. They do not seem to make any sense. The minister is in a very bad position if she is being fed information from a department that is not assessing the effects of the decisions it is making. Where are the business cases being put forward to ascertain exactly what the effects will be of these closures?

While all these decisions were being announced, what thought processes were put in place for the staff? Who cared less about what they felt on being told that their place of employment was going to close down, and then, miraculously, it is not going to be closed down? Someone else is going to run it but we do not really know who, and we do not know whether the existing staff will have jobs. At the same time, there was some program of voluntary separation, so if they did not step forward and take a redundancy now, they may not get one later. I understand that that has changed again and they have been given an opportunity a bit further down the track to

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

enter that voluntary separation process. Those things should have been thought of when the decision was made, but they were not.

These camp schools were designated at one stage as schools. My understanding is that the government goes through a process when it closes a school. The process involves notice of at least a year that that school will close, and arrangements are firmed up for the buildings and for the staff and the students to make sure that they have opportunities elsewhere. When Buntine and Latham schools closed down in my electorate, I remember some of the difficulties caused to the families and the staff, who did not really understand what was happening in that process. When we have this situation in which the department closes the lot—the whole arm—we must ask what the decision-making process is. It is my understanding that at one stage these camp sites, as they are now known, were actually schools. They had the designation of a school number and they were recognised by the Department of Education as camp schools. The department should have followed the process that is followed for any other school that is closed down, but that does not seem to have happened. I understand that their designation as schools was simply removed by some administrative stroke of a pen, so the department did not have to go through all that process. That is a bit underhanded, and it is not fair or right to do those things. In the case of the Geraldton camp school, I think 10 staff did not know what was going on in the future.

The motion also refers to a number of other things, one of which is the increase in fees for VacSwim—a program that is very important in educating young people to enjoy the water safely. At the end of the parliamentary year last year—it might have been the last sitting day or the day before—the Ombudsman had a briefing here in the committee room and released a report on drownings and safety.

We know that drowning deaths are a real concern. The VacSwim program has, for many years, provided families with an opportunity to make sure that their kids are skilled up. The more skilled kids are, hopefully the less likely they are to have an unfortunate event, the worst case being losing one to drowning. That is a terrible thing for a family to go through. Two of my cousins drowned in a farm dam and the effect on my aunty for many, many years was severe; it is ongoing and something that a family never really gets over. Nobody wants to see that sort of thing happening, yet we know that that program also suffered cuts. Why? When we have an Ombudsman putting out a report that highlights the dangers, why would a government do that? I do not understand why these things would be thought of; it makes no sense to me whatsoever. I wonder whether there is something structural in the department and maybe that is something that the committee could look at. It could look at the very structure of the department to see whether there is adequate understanding. I know this is not just a regional program, but swimming is very important to regional kids as much as anybody else because of the matter I just outlined about my family.

Is there a bias in the department? Is there some sort of change that has taken place recently within the structure of the department that has led to a lack of understanding about the effects of these changes on regional education? Maybe the recent machinery-of-government changes in the department is behind what has happened. Maybe that is part of the problem and is something that the committee could look into, because it would point the way, not just in the Department of Education. It could potentially point to problems that the government will face in a range of departments as it slashes from the department the positions of those people who know what they are doing and leaves people who provide advice of that calibre to ministers of the government. Surely the government must be worried about it. On the basis of that, the very least the government should consider is to support this motion to refer these matters to a committee. The committee would certainly be the ideal place to do it.

Due to the committee structure, we could take some of the politics out of it, because it is a government-controlled committee, so the government would have some certainty that it was not set up as some sort of lynch mob to get the government or to score some cheap points. It is being proposed by our party because of our genuine desire to see good government delivered to the state and to see that the education department understands at least that regional people value education greatly. Education to all people in Western Australia is important. Education is one of the fundamental activities of government. If the government is making poor decisions in education, that is very worrisome indeed. Maybe it is just a sharp point for us because as regional people we have been so badly targeted and so unevenly victimised, if you like, by the current government and its decision-making that we are feeling a little defensive.

In these matters, we are highlighting to the government that there are some systemic problems in the department and in the decision-making between the department, its advice, the minister and the acceptance of that in the community. We do not often see trucks from Moora driving up and down St Georges Terrace. We do not often see some of those people who were here yesterday speaking in public. I can tell members, trucks in wheatbelt areas at the moment are flat out carting lime sand to spread on paddocks. For those trucks to have shown up here yesterday would have been a real cost to every one of those truck drivers and the owners of the trucks if the driver was not the owner. There would have been a real cost for each of the participants at that rally, at the Country Women's

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

Association rally, at the rally on 30 January in Moora, and at each of the rallies that took place for the Schools of the Air, put together by the member for North West Central, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and others, to demonstrate country people's real concerns about this government and its decisions that affect regional areas.

All of this started even before these decisions because the previous government made the decision not to fund the \$8.7 million at Moora. That in itself showed a lack of concern for regional areas. It was a decision of the previous government to fund that. It was not an election promise as has been said in this house; it was a decision of cabinet of the previous government of Western Australia to fund that college and I would have thought that in normal circumstances an incoming government would have honoured those types of matters. We have heard this government talk about state agreements and how sacrosanct they are, yet cabinet decisions are not treated with the same level of protection. Whilst it is sacrosanct not to change anything that might affect BHP and Rio Tinto, it is fine to punish the community of Moora by taking away its college upgrade and then finally by taking away the college itself. That is not acceptable to me or to my party. It is not acceptable to the communities I represent. As demonstrated by articles in *The West Australian* today by Paul Murray, by the support of journalists in Perth such as Jane Marwick, by the general uprising and groundswell of community outrage from people in the Schools of the Air, like the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and Tracey Errington from Central Midlands Senior High School Parents and Citizens Association, it is not good enough. We want some answers and the best place to get those answers would be in a committee with a referral to that committee. I hope the government sees fit to support that, because we know it will not happen unless it does. I suspect it will try to hide behind its numbers and not do that, but I remind it that as a government-controlled committee there is nothing to fear by putting it to a committee and getting a proper examination of the decisions and the effects on education in regional WA. I thank members for their time.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [5.07 pm]: I want to make clear my commitment and support for the motion that has been read in by the member for Moore and highlight once again the importance of this referral. This government owes it to anyone who is linked to rural and regional education in Western Australia to have a little light shone on this issue to understand the deliberative decision-making process and why these decisions have been made, which in our view are ill founded, short-sighted and fundamentally attack the rights of children in regional Western Australia to get a quality education.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, members, could you please keep the backchat down. Thank you.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: This is not hard for the government to support. This is not a motion that condemns it; this is not a motion that states it has to change it and put it back the other way. It simply asks to be referred to a committee that is government controlled to have a closer look at the decisions and the comparative effect of the educational outcomes that are impacted by these decisions to give people, and regional communities in particular, confidence that there has been good reason and basis for these decisions. The sorts of things I am sure the committee could look at include cost savings. What are the realities of cost savings that are made by these decisions, highlighted in the question that the member for Moore put to the Premier today? Is it true that in fact the government can keep Moora Residential College open for the simple cost of \$500 000 versus dealing with the fire risk issues in that college for something like \$8.5 million? There are discrepancies made in the public forum about what actual cost savings are there. Cost savings is one agenda that the committee can have a closer look at.

I will expand on the decision-making process in a minute, but I make the point that a range of decisions were made at the end of last year that would impact on regional and rural education, and a number of savings were pushed and booked in that budget. Since then, there have been backflips. What is the nature of the reasons that some decisions have been considered less significant and still remain as cuts but others have changed and will now be funded? I will expand on that in a minute.

There is also an issue of the educational benefits that are lost. What are the educational benefits that are lost? These other relative intangibles are sometimes not fully comprehended in some of these decisions that have been made. The government has clearly got some of that wrong and has admitted that. What are the educational benefits that are lost from these decisions? What are the impacts of the alternatives? If the Moora Residential College or camp schools are taken away, what are the impacts of the alternatives that students might or might not be able to access in order to gain the educational outcomes that they rightly deserve and are entitled to? What level of consultation occurred in making these decisions? This motion would simply refer this to a committee to have a closer look at these issues and these decisions which, quite rightly, would give regional people confidence that the decisions should or should not stand and that, in fact, they are sound in nature and have been thought through. One reason this is important is that the government has not given us confidence that these decisions have been through a proper deliberative process. Why? Simplistically, it has backflipped. It made decisions at the end of last year and said,

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

“These are things we’re going to cut.” Since then, under significant community pressure, it has backflipped. It has backflipped and has said that it will now go back to funding the Schools of the Air.

I will quote from an 11 January report from ABC online. When the minister made that decision she stated —

“You ... need to get the timing right and ... you absolutely need to bring people with you.”

She went on to say that the cuts went too far. The minister has said that the government got it wrong. That backflip by the minister and the Premier does not give us confidence in the decisions they made on the other issues that remain cut in this current government’s budget. Why was the Schools of the Air put back in and re-funded? The minister said that they got it wrong, that they went too far and did not bring people with them.

Let us extend that to the gifted and talented education program. The original decision was to make a 25 per cent cut to the gifted and talented education program. Why was that reinstated? Why was that picked out of the pile? Why was it not Moora Residential College or the camp schools? They have equal impacts on educational outcomes. The fact that the minister, the Premier and the government by extension have backflipped does not give anyone any confidence whatsoever that there has been a proper, thought-through deliberative process to have some of these cuts still stand. In my view, that is the key issue and why it needs to go to a committee to put a level of assessment over the decision-making process.

I will give members an example. The gifted and talented educational program is very important. We have some gifted people in our education system. We need to find good processes to give them the necessary extension to achieve their full potential. It is a really good investment. That was reinstated because it seemed to have some sort of value and the minister announced that she got it wrong. There is a focus on the gifted end of the educational spectrum. I would argue that the educational value that camp schools offer to enrich the educational life of people—even in metropolitan areas who can visit those sites—is arguably of just as much value as the extension of the gifted and talented people that exist in our school system. How is it that one has been backflipped on and has been re-funded but the other one has not? We have seen that there is quite a strong focus on the lower socioeconomic end in the camp schools. Access to a fairly priced educational enrichment process to add value to their education to the school system has value.

As I have said in this place before, I come from a history of being in agricultural education and I have seen firsthand the value of exposure to the outdoors, the working environment and to a style of education that is not normally offered in a normal mainstream school and what they can do to enrich a child’s educational opportunities and therefore, by extension, their vocational opportunities when they leave school. I have seen what the ag colleges can do. If it is not 100 per cent, it is about a per cent short of all the students who have graduated from agricultural colleges in the state either get employment or go into further education—100 per cent. Let us think of what that does for their future employment opportunities. They are not on any sort of welfare. They make a fantastic investment. I know the value of that, so I ask why we have made the choice to support a gifted and talented education program at one end but not support camp schools that have a level of enrichment that supports the educational process. That is a very simple assessment of something that, in my view, is not fully understood and, therefore, a committee could give it some assessment.

Also, why was the decision made to reinstate the intake of level 3 teachers, which was to be put on hold until 2020? I suspect that that one is probably a bit more union focused than focused on educational outcomes, but it is an interesting decision and people in regional Western Australia can ask, “Why was that picked out of the pile to be backflipped?” What is challenging for people in regional and rural Western Australia who have a focus on educational outcomes is that a decision was made about a range of cuts to be put in place to save \$64 million against the budget and in January there were backflips on three of those items. That does not give them any confidence whatsoever that the right decision has been made. The simplest answer here is for the government to support putting this to a committee to put the ruler over the process to measure what is lost and what is gained. It will give people confidence that, in fact, they are either right decisions or they are not and should be changed. What confidence is there that there has been an appropriate deliberative process? Those backflips came on the back of a change with the Perth Modern School. Again, the minister got it wrong. It is not one lot of backflips; it is two. Two strikes! It is two lots of backflips. We can see why the conclusion may be reached to have no confidence whatsoever in the decision-making process. How do these decisions get arrived at?

I will go through some of the key issues with the particular decisions. They are short-sighted. I will look at the case of Moora Residential College. In question time today and in previous questions that he has asked, the member for Moore has highlighted the inconsistency in government commentary on the issues around Moora college, the amount of money that is needed to maintain it, the actual costs, the impact on students—or the lack of understanding of what the impacts are—and why a decision like that was made. The most isolated kids are attending these boarding schools at a cost that is consistent with all the country hostels, which is a fair and reasonable cost to be able to access an education. As the member for Moore mentioned and I want to highlight

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

again, there seems to be a public commentary that the previous government did not do anything about Moora. We went to a cabinet decision, I think it was in August 2016 if I have not got it wrong, which was quite some time before the end of the government's term. Governments have to keep on making decisions. I expect this government, as it approaches an election, not to stop making decisions in anticipation of whatever the outcome might be. We made that decision and announced it; it was funded. Not only is this government now choosing to shut the school, but also the first decision it made was to not fund it. There must have been a deliberative process in last year's September budget not to fund it and to pull that out.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: When did we allocate it? It is in the budget.

Mr T.J. Healy: Where did you put it? Was it the next year?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It was in our last budget to fund it. A cabinet decision does not get made unless the government is ready to fund and start building.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The government makes a decision and starts building. If members want some lessons on what is happening with the royalties from regions program, I am happy to give them those. There is a broader issue there. I am sure members opposite are being kept in nice silence at the back of the caucus room about what is going on in that space.

I also attended Swanleigh Residential College as a boarding school, and one of the reasons I went to Swanleigh is that the cost of —

Mr P. Papalia: Who shut that?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: We did not shut it. It is owned by the Anglican Church. The minister is highlighting his ignorance when he makes comments such as that. He has to stand, representing the minister in the other place, and make some sort of *compos mentis* debate about why the government has made the decisions it has made, and he comes up with a comment such as that. "Who shut it?" he said. I even got married at St Mary's Church, Middle Swan, so I know a bit about Swanleigh. Some serious issues have not been addressed.

I refer to camp schools. I talked in a previous debate today about camp schools enriching the educational process and giving people in metropolitan Perth and people who are geographically isolated a chance to be exposed to other parts of the state. People managing those facilities have educational backgrounds and are able to drive an educational process that value-adds to the normal curriculum. I see significant value in that. The government made the decision to close the camp schools. A later decision happened to sneak out when the government said it would see whether someone else might like to take on the camp schools. That was a late call. The government thought it would get into trouble, so it wondered what it could do to help soften this. It decided to see whether there is anyone else out there to run the camp schools. As the member for Moore mentioned, there has been no tender process or process to say formally who is out there to do it. This has been put through the media as the platform to see who is around who might want to run the camp schools.

Mr P. Papalia: You shut it in 2010.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: That is how it went. The first media release did not state that the government was going to look for people for these schools. I did not see that come out. As the member for Moore said in the last part of his speech, if the government is going to ask a not-for-profit organisation to look after a camp school and deliver the same services, how will it do it? The Premier said that will happen. He said that this is the service they provide and students can go to a camp. He likes to make the point that it is not a school; it is a site, and the same sort of programs will be run. The two camp schools in my electorate in Bridgetown and Pemberton raise about \$300 000 in revenue from the fees that they charge schools that come through. That comes pretty close to covering their operational costs for the year and food and the like and some minor works, but they cannot fund the six or seven staff in each facility. If the government is going to ask a not-for-profit organisation to take on these camp schools for it, so that it can book the savings from not having to pay for 15 staff in those schools, what will the not-for-profit do? The government thinks that the not-for-profit can take on the camp schools and it will bank the savings from no longer having to fund the staff. The not-for-profit organisation can either up their fees to cover the same number of staff to deliver the same program or the camp schools simply become caravan parks. I argue that this is a loss.

If that is the compromise position that the minister is chasing and anyone out there is half-interested in doing this— I cannot see how they can fund it, but if someone can do something—there will be a cost and they will not be able to achieve it. There are smokes and mirrors going on with the minister and the Premier's comments about an alternative group that might run camp schools. He even said today that his son is at a camp school or a camp site

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

or whatever he wants to call it. It is easy for the Premier of the state to have a child there, but what about the cost-effectiveness of others in some of the lower socioeconomic groups who may want to access an opportunity to enrich their education program? That is what the camp schools are able to offer.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.T. REDMAN: There will be a cost here whatever happens. Either the camp schools are shut or they will be run by an alternative body. If the government is going to bank a saving, it will have an impact on what those camp schools do. The minister and the Premier are undertaking a little smoke and mirrors campaign.

I refer to the VacSwim program. Would it not be good to have a committee look at the impact of the fee changes in the VacSwim program? In Australia, and Western Australia in particular, we pride ourselves on kids being able to swim and having a level of water safety in pools and at the beach. It is the environment in which we live. What impacts will flow through from changing the VacSwim program? A committee should look at that to understand, in my view, the short-sightedness of a decision such as that and the flow-on effects it will have on the number of kids who can have the necessary swimming and water safety skills that we all desire and want them to have.

I could talk about Landsdale Farm School. I knew that school quite well when I was in the agricultural education system. That offers exposure to agriculture for some very disadvantaged kids in many cases, but also metropolitan Perth, but a decision has been made to close that school.

I want to talk about the agriculture colleges system, because I did not get a chance the last time I spoke. I talked about schools having ag advisory councils in place well before the legislative requirement to have a school council was in place. It might have even been the current Premier who put that process in place when I was first in this place in 2005. The school councils, of course, are involved in the growth, development and the future of the schools and where investment should be made and the focus that it should have. For decades, these ag advisory councils have been involved with agricultural colleges. Leading farmers, scientists and community members volunteer their time to make a difference and drive a unique system in our nation. It is a magnificently unique system. I mentioned some of their names and they should be rightly proud of the commitment they have made.

The agricultural schools started a trust fund in the mid-1980s. That gives schools some commercial incentive to make money off the produce that they sell and pool that money and support the educational program. Of that, 60 per cent stays in the school. There is a commercial incentive because we need to educate these kids in a commercial environment. That is the uniqueness of these schools. It is not only an agricultural wing or a plot at the back of the school where they are growing a few veggies. These are commercially run farms that incentivise commercial outcomes and set students up for the work environment in an industry that this government is promoting, and we alike promoted, as the second-most significant industry in Western Australia. There are significant opportunities in this industry. Educating kids to go back into the workforce to support this industry is critically important. Of the funds raised by the six schools, including Esperance, 40 per cent goes into a fund. Now the government is going to take 20 per cent of that. As the member for Moore mentioned, the fund is used for machinery replacement. It is important to have contemporary equipment and machinery. The fund is also used as a drought buffer or in case some sort of event affects the income of a farm. Those resources are used to support that. I think some of the trust fund even goes into supporting insurance and licensing costs.

I am sure that the minister will talk about the consolidated funds to support the school program, because he has his shopping list of notes that he is going to roll out. Consolidated funds support the running of the farm, but this self-generated income from the schools supports and value-adds to the schools. That is unique in our nation. Very significantly, those trust funds go into supporting the smaller schools around the state that have an agricultural program, including Landsdale Farm School—although it is closing—Kelmscott Senior High School, Kiara College at Lockridge, Merredin College, Mount Barker Community College, Margaret River Senior High School, Manjimup Senior High School, Kojonup District High School, Coodanup College and Pinjarra Senior High School. They all run agricultural education programs supported by the funds that are generated from the bigger farms in the state that have the capacity to generate those funds. They roll out and support those schools. That is a really significant point because, in my view, the combined advisory council that will be making the decisions on the distribution of those resources will have to consider the impact if those resources are cut.

The first and most obvious point is that it will not happen quickly. It will take time because the equipment that the schools have now will take time to become old. It takes time to have impacts on safety and the like. Therefore, yes, we can get away with this for a couple of years but issues will emerge. One of the first issues is that the smaller schools will miss out because the bigger schools, rightly, need to draw resources for equipment replacement, insurance, and managing safety issues—which I will come to in a second—which are contemporary issues that cannot be compromised if we are going to develop quality agricultural education in this state at the secondary level. Sadly, smaller schools missing out is likely to be a consequence of these decisions.

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

I remember when I was in the agricultural education system that a couple of issues on safety equipment emerged very quickly. One issue was the importance of having chemical sheds. There is a tremendous amount of chemical storage on school farms. Chemicals are stored as one might see them stored on a lot of farms around Western Australia. Having proper chemical storage is significant and the trust fund funded building the necessary equipment to cater for chemical storage and, therefore, make it safe. The schools have little wash-down areas with showers that a person pulls a lever to wash their eyes out if they happen to have something on them. All those things were funded in a timely way in response to changes occurring within industry either through government regulation or other factors that had a flow-on impact on safety equipment in schools.

Silo ladders was another issue. There was a time when the little property we had in Mt Barker had a couple of silos—I am sure the member for Roe would be aware of this—and we used to fleece up there, open the top, put the auger in and do our bit. Of course, now all the silo ladders are required by law to have protected climbing areas—I do not know what they are called, member for Roe—and they were also funded out of the trust fund. Again, a decision to shift that funding is a fairly significant compromise over the medium term in ensuring that schools have contemporary safety equipment and that they maintain that equipment at a level that does not put students at risk. There have been accidents on school farms. We still have school farms because there has been investment in these areas. When accidents occur, the issues are worked through and changes are made. It is a deliberative process to ensure that necessary practices and procedures are put in to ensure that students remain safe.

I do not have recent data, but there is an interesting trend in agricultural colleges that some members may not be aware of. In recent times there has been a significant increase in the number of girls attending agricultural colleges. For much of my time in the agricultural college system about 30 per cent of students attending were girls. This year, for the first time, the WA College of Agriculture Denmark campus has more girls than boys attending. How good is that!

Mr D.A. Templeman: Where's that?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: More girls than boys are attending Denmark ag college. The trend in the agricultural sector for women to get necessary training to go back into the sector is an absolute strength. The agricultural colleges probably remain some of the few schools that have the trend of kids moving from the city to the country. We have this trend of centralising into the city but students in the agricultural education system are going the other way. Students are also going from private schools to government schools. That trend has probably changed a bit in recent times. I know government schools have been seen as very attractive and have taken kids out of private schools, but certainly for a period of time, when government schools were not the flavour of the day compared with private school options, the ag colleges were taking students out of the private sector. In my view, those trends highlight what those schools have been doing, perhaps ahead of their time. To me, these decisions, albeit that sound fairly minor, will have fairly significant impacts on industry decision-making to support investment in a unique school system that supports \$9 billion of gross value-added production in our state. Agriculture is the second most important sector in Western Australia, and one that we have all identified—including the current government—will provide significant opportunities to grow our economy in Western Australia. That hits at the core of that.

This motion is to refer this issue to a committee. It is not a motion that condemns the government or that asks the government to make a decision today; it is simply a motion that states that there is no confidence that the minister, the Premier and the government by extension have made the right decisions on rural and regional education, because they have already changed decisions and backflipped on some areas. For that reason alone—I think there are other reasons to put this issue to a committee—members can understand why there is a lack of trust and confidence in the community. One way to build that trust and confidence is to support our motion to take this issue to a committee to have a closer look at the cost savings, the decision-making process, the educational benefits that will be lost and the impact of alternative measures if students do not have existing services available to them, and, albeit interesting, the level of consultation that has occurred to get to this particular outcome.

The member for Moore touched on a couple of other points. I would like to think that we will have a win here and the government will see the error of its ways on these decisions. A lot of people who feel aggrieved and that have not been brought along with the process were outside Parliament yesterday. There was a massive meeting up at Moora and the same issues apply. I know 2 000 signatures on camp schools came out of Bridgetown alone. Down the track, there will be a protest on that issue. A lot of angst sits out there. To add insult to injury—I guess this is another reason why we think these issues have not been thought through—letters went out to staff at the camp schools asking them to signal their interest in voluntary severance by the end of February. They were also told that they needed to register their interest by the end of March if they were going to take a voluntary severance.

Mr P. Papalia: Have you got one of those letters, so I can see —

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I am not going to give that to you because of the name of the person sits on —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

Mr P. Papalia: Are you making it up?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: No, I am not making it up.

Mr P. Papalia: If that were a real letter, you'd have a copy of it.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I have information but I will not—hang on, let me take this a little further. Signals and decision have been made by the department to say that it is going to head down the road of a voluntary severance process.

Mr P. Papalia: Who in the department?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I am not going to give you that name either.

Mr P. Papalia: So, how do I know you're not just making it up?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: You can go and ask a question, because it would not be hard. I can justify it with the information I have. Let us leave it at that. Members need to understand that decisions have been made. Can I say, part of the advice that went in an email from the Department of Education to one of the people at a camp school when they asked a question about severance said that if at the end of that time they chose not to take a severance, within six months they could be involuntarily made redundant.

Mr P. Papalia: Have you got that email?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Yes, I have that email.

Mr P. Papalia: Will you table it?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The member knows as well as I do that if there is someone's name sitting on the top of that, it can be tracked right back.

Mr P. Papalia: Then redact it!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The member knows how it works. As a member of Parliament —

Mr T.J. Healy: Cut the top off it!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I could probably cut the top off it, but, again, the member could probably do a quick search and find out where it came from. The challenge is there. I am telling the house—this is not a place in which someone stands up and misleads because they will hold the Parliament in contempt, and I am not going to do that.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.37 pm]: I rise to speak on the motion on referring the issue of rural and regional education to the Education and Health Standing Committee. I refer to the member for Moore's comment that this could be a real opportunity to have an impartial look at cuts to the education system, the backflips and so forth. I want to refer to Labor's policy prior to the state election that every child regardless of where they live deserves a decent education. I am sure that all Labor members in this house would agree with that, but what I see here does not really flow that way. This is an opportunity to have a level-headed discussion at the committee level. These issues are vital for both rural and metro Western Australia. I look forward to the opportunity. As the member for Warren-Blackwood pointed out, this is a really good opportunity for all members in this house to vote for an impartial committee to look at this scenario.

I want to discuss the closure of Moora Residential College. We had the protest rally yesterday. We had the closure and privatisation of the six camp schools—we are not sure what that means. There have been cuts to our agricultural colleges trust fund and increased fees for VacSwim. I might even flow into our KidSport program now that the member for Collie-Preston is in the chamber tonight. I know that is one of his favourite subjects. To me, that fits into this backflip-type category—a cutback for no particular reason. I will talk about that shortly.

I will read out a quote that I think is quite appropriate. It is from Hon Darren West, in the other place, when he was at the Lancelin Primary School end-of-year assembly on 13 December 2017. He said, "Minister Ellery is no longer my favourite minister." Hon Darren West stated that. He is out there in public saying, "These education cuts, they're there, I'm not in favour but I'm just going to go with the flow." A real worry for me is the regional members of the Labor government, and there are 13 of them. Hon Darren West often talks about how the Labor Party is the regional party and that it has the most regional members. I do not see its regional members standing up for regional education. That is my real concern, member for Bunbury. When I look at it, prior to Christmas the Minister for Education and Training was just told, "Find \$64 million. We've got our new school over here, a couple of hundred metres away from Perth Modern School, find \$64 million; I don't care where it comes from." Some advice was given somewhere; I do not know how this was decided. I think this is a good opportunity for the committee to have an impartial look. Was it the Department of Education or was it the Minister for Education and Training just going through line items in the budget? Where did that advice come from?

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

This is a real opportunity for our committee to have an impartial look, which, I might add, is government controlled, so that will be fine.

I would like to congratulate the Moora community on yesterday's rally. I thought that was a fantastic show of passion. It was really excellent to see the kids up there, including the Indigenous families who are very much affected by this. It was a real opportunity to see the strength of the whole community. Those drivers who spray-painted their trucks and drove up and down St George's Terrace now have to go home and repaint their trays, which will come at a large expense. As the member for Moore said, it is the expense of having a driver, but to me it was also the words of Tracey Errington, the P&C president, and Louise House, the deputy president of the shire, which I thought struck home. I would like to quote from Paul Murray's article in today's paper. One quote stated —

“Politicians and bureaucrats show no respect nor understanding of the capacity, intelligence, integrity and resourcefulness of country people.

“Limited education quality and choices now see men left alone on farms, their wives and children leaving their homes for a rented house and a good education.

This is exactly the scenario that is happening right around regional WA. The actions of this government are leading straight into that. It is exacerbating it. That is an issue that is already there. This type of scenario at Moora is exactly what we are seeing. Another quote in Paul Murray's article states —

“Suicide amongst rural men exceeds the road toll. Loneliness and isolation at its root.

That sums it up. We are now seeing this phenomenon where regional families are broken up, the father stays home looking after the farm or the family business and the mother is forced to take the kids to education far afield. I can absolutely guarantee that the closure of the residential college will lead to the gradual demise of the Central Midlands Senior High School—the only high school between Perth and Geraldton. Next thing it will be a district high school. You can bet your life that in a year or two's time, the numbers will drop. It will be a district high school and that will gradually dwindle and we will be back to K-year 6. I am sure we will look back in a few years and say, “Look at that.” We have Yanchep, that is fantastic, on the edge of the metropolitan area. Once again we have overseen the demise of one of our regional schools. Paul Murray's article quotes Louise House when she stated —

“A school is the hub of the country community. It is at the bottom of the pyramid. No school, no community.

It is quite bizarre that today the Premier spruiked that Labor supports Westpork, carrot farms, Moora citrus, mineral sands, and is telling us we have to talk up Moora, but what is he doing? His government is wiping out Moora Residential College. What encouragement is it giving to families to come to Moora to work on those farms: “Sorry about that, we've messed up your school and your education”? Who do members think will turn up to work on those farms? One of the most bizarre things that I heard was when the Premier criticised the member for Moore and told us to talk it up, yet he is in the process of closing down the residential college and overseeing the demise of Moora senior high school.

I am sure that I will stand here in a couple of years to talk about the Moora district high school and then, a few years after that, the Moora K-6 school. Mark my words, I think Pandora's box has been opened. I cannot understand it. When I look at some of our regional members here, I am really concerned. I see a pattern developing where, unfortunately, the party room of the Labor Party is not taking any notice of its regional members. They are outnumbered.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I must refer to the member for North West Central the other week, when he spoke about a three per cent swing, which would see the loss of eight members from the government side. I am afraid the member for Pilbara is one of those!

Mr K. Michel interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If I were him, I would be advocating very strongly.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I really do like the member for Murray-Wellington and I am sure that she is very concerned about her regional constituents. I worry for her as well because she is part of that three per cent. I am sure she is strongly advocating in the background; I really hope she is. I am very worried. I was also concerned for the member for Murray-Wellington when I saw the Court Grammar School, which will be opened very close to her electorate as well; whether there will be any pushback from that.

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

I want to get back to the matter at hand and talk about residential colleges in the towns of Esperance and Narrogin, which are part of my electorate. Through royalties for regions, both of those colleges have been fantastically upgraded. The member for Warren–Blackwood mentioned the \$8.7 million that was approved in cabinet last August. Unfortunately, that has been reversed, so I am very disappointed. I am also disappointed that the government is not looking at the \$500 000 option that the member for Moore mentioned today. The Esperance Residential College was a \$14 million investment and it has been a terrific result. Esperance Senior High School, under the leadership of Cathy Bamblett, is going great. The residential college is full. That was one of the best investments I have seen. Narrogin also falls into that category, and under the leadership of Steve Quartermaine over the last six years, it has gone from strength to strength. That is what I am talking about. A residential college is such an important part of the whole package. I would appreciate the committee having an impartial look at the issue and assessing how strong support for a senior high school from a residential college can work.

I want go on a bit more about Moora, because an economic assessment done by the Moora council that indicated that 19 jobs would be lost and \$2 million would be wiped from the local economy. I think that says it all. It is about the outlying part of the community as well. It is about the families and local businesses that I was talking about last night and the flow-on effects. I cannot emphasise that enough. I applaud the Moora Shire Council for commissioning the report to identify for members of the government the effect this will have. It is all very well for people to stand up here and say, “Send the students off to Yanchep or Northam; that will be fine.” How would the Premier like to send his kids, who are in Rockingham, to Yanchep? It just does not add up to me. As far as I am concerned, this is one of the most disappointing performances I have seen in the year I have been here. I can understand why the member for Moore is so passionate in supporting his school and his electorate.

I would like to go on to the raid of the agricultural trust fund. We are looking at 20 per cent in funding being cut from budget of the agricultural education farm provisions trust. It is unprecedented that the state government will take money generated by a public school. As the member for Warren–Blackwood enunciated, there are so many elements to that. It is a network of all of those schools pooling their resources and putting their money into keeping their equipment up to speed with the likes of air seeders—the equipment the kids are using and will be using when they go into the workforce. It enables them to be up to speed with the current farming environment. On the list of agricultural schools there are Narrogin, Harvey, Denmark, Morawa, Cunderdin and, of course, the Esperance Farm School. I went to the College of Agriculture Narrogin open day in, I think, October, and it was a fantastic day. The enthusiasm of those kids, the parents and teachers on the day was something to behold. When I was at the Wagin Woolorama last week, I saw an example of that. Today the Leader of the Opposition talked about when he was at the Wagin Woolorama and the optimism that is out there with wool and sheep prices going up and cattle going well. When I was presenting one of the prizes for the wool, the whole grandstand was full of ag college students with their uniforms on looking fantastic and enthusiastic. It was just great to see agriculture going so well, but what are we going to do? We are going to pull money out of it. I just cannot believe the short-sightedness.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The thing that got me was that we had a steady stream of people coming in to the Nationals tent at the Wagin Woolorama and what did they want to talk to me about? They wanted to talk to me about the disgrace of the cutbacks in regional education. We had a petition there about the ag college trust fund and they could not sign that quickly enough. In fact, I had to send someone over to the photocopier. I had Murray Williams from the advisory committee coming across to take copies to the cattle section. That just emphasises the issue. Not one person could not sign those petitions quickly enough. When I look at the flow-on effects of the ag college sector, the thing that really gets me is that some of the schools are in the electorates of some of our regional backbench members. Very appropriately, the member for Girrawheen has just walked in, and she has the Landsdale Farm School in her electorate. I thought the member for Girrawheen would be a great advocate of the Landsdale Farm School, but, no, obviously not. The member for Armadale, Tony Buti, MLA, has Kelmscott Senior High School. Kiara College is in Bassendean, the electorate of Dave Kelly, MLA. Merredin College is in the electorate of Hon Darren West and Hon Laurie Graham. Mount Barker Community College is in the electorate of Hon Adele Farina and Hon Sally Talbot, along with Margaret River Senior High School, which those two also cover. There are also the schools in the likes of Manjimup, Kojonup, Coodanup and Pinjarra. That just re-emphasises the lack of push from the backbenchers of the Labor Party.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I know the member for Moore has noted it, but I would imagine that the constituents of those —

Ms M.M. Quirk: There is more than one way to skin a cat, member. Being a blowhard and griping about in this chamber is not the only way to get an outcome.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I look forward to seeing the fruits of the member for Girrawheen's labour. It will certainly be interesting.

I want to talk about the camp schools. I am appalled at the treatment of the camp schools, because we are unclear about their future. How many members of this place have mentioned them? The Premier, I think yesterday, mentioned how his kids had been to the camp schools and that they are a real highlight. The concern for me is that there has been absolutely no consultation. The minister has spoken about non-government organisations and the Department of Sport and Recreation. Are the schools closing or are they opening? We have absolutely no idea. The member for Moore has spoken about the Geraldton camp school. He is not sure what is going on. The employees at the Geraldton camp school are not sure what is going on. I have also heard that Goldfields camp school is closing. I know the member for Kalgoorlie had a rally up there, which the member for North West Central also attended. The community there is very concerned and very confused. I want to give a bit of a time line here. On 11 January, the minister backflipped with no mention of camp schools. On 17 January, the minister said that that decision would not be reversed. She said the decision that will not be reversed is the one taken to close camp schools. Then on 2 March, Hon Kyle McGinn said —

“The general consensus seems to be that we want to close the camp schools outright, which is incorrect.

I am in a state of confusion. The Geraldton camp school is fully booked for 2018. Bridgetown and Pemberton camp schools are nearly fully booked for the year, so where are we going? Are they open or are they closed? Is it a non-government organisation or is it the Department of Sport and Recreation? I really look forward to some clarification. I am sure members opposite will see the light and realise that the committee scenario is the one way in which we can get to the bottom of this.

I would like to briefly talk about VacSwim. Thirty per cent of participants of VacSwim are in regional areas. I would like members opposite to note that a regional child is 3.7 times more likely to drown than a metropolitan child, which is a terrible statistic. It really concerned me when I was in Esperance prior to Christmas and I heard about the increases in VacSwim costs. It is a 122 per cent increase, from \$13.50 to \$30. Many of the families I spoke to there were most disappointed. Of course, there is a flow-on effect from that to KidSport, which I put in the same category as VacSwim. The minister made the decision to reduce the funding to \$150. The classic of all time for me is that Girl Guides and scouts now have to prove that they are a sport to allow their participants to get KidSport funding. I think I have said in this place once before that the Minister for Sport and Recreation wants the scouts to put out a drug policy because that is what they have to do to be regarded as a sport. I feel sorry for the scouts and the Girl Guides on that one.

Mr M.P. Murray: Don't you think troop leaders should go through the same hurdles as other people who work with young people?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am sorry, but I am quite disturbed about the reductions to the KidSport funding and I find the lack of consultation with our Scout groups and Girl Guides quite disappointing.

I will move on to the boarding away from home allowance, which should also be included in the committee's assessment. In the last budget, the boarding away from home allowance was cut from \$2 105 to \$1 477 over four years. That allowance is all about geographically isolated families, and it is also complementary with federal funding. Some members opposite have no understanding of being geographically isolated and how important that funding is to our families. I quote the Premier from the budget estimates hearings in September 2017 when he said —

There is not an unlimited amount of money. I grew up in a regional community and I did not go off to boarding school.

I am sorry, but that demonstrates that the Premier has no real understanding. It is not about everyone going off to a boarding school; it is about isolation and about a lot of people having no choice. Ask someone from Marble Bar or Laverton about boarding schools and all the rest of it; a lot of them have no choice and, I might add, some of them are attending Moora Residential College, but not for much longer, the way things are going at the moment. Once again, this goes to a total lack of understanding of regional and remote Australia.

One final point before I close, about regional education professionals. This came about in the last budget. I find it quite bizarre that of 35 positions cut in the regions, 23 of them related to Aboriginal education. One in 12 of our kids in regional schooling in Western Australia is Aboriginal, and this government saw fit to cut 35 positions, 23 of which were Aboriginal educators and assistants. That is one of the most bizarre things. Now, of course, the government is spouting that it is re-employing all these teachers' aides and so forth. It is a bit like the one about, “We have to make sure that every child in a primary school speaks another language.” The only problem is, we have 269 schools in Western Australia that do not have anyone with the ability to teach another language, yet the

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

government is somehow going to enforce this. I look forward to seeing that. Just returning to Aboriginal education, there is one person in the Kimberley, while the Pilbara, the midwest, the wheatbelt, the goldfields and the south west do not have one person between the lot of them. I have no understanding of where the government is coming from there, but I look forward to strong support from those opposite for our recommendation to take this to an impartial committee and investigate the cutbacks. I come back to what the member for Moore said earlier and I strongly support him.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [6.05 pm]: I obviously support this motion moved by the member for Moore. I refer to a question asked today in the other place by Hon Jacqui Boydell to the Minister for Education and Training. Quoting from the uncorrected *Hansard*, she asked —

I refer to the minister's education cuts announced in December last year.

- (1) Will the minister list all the organisations affected by the cuts that she has visited since 11 March 2017, and the dates of those visits?
- (2) For any organisations that the minister has not visited, will she commit to visiting them before they close or are sold?

Of course, the upper house has a bit of a strange system in which members give notice of a question and the minister reads out the answer. The Minister for Education and Training would have stood there today and said, according to the uncorrected *Hansard* —

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) I visited Goldfields camp school on 2 March 2018 and Tuart College on 27 July 2017 and 23 January 2018.
- (2) Where and when I can visit, I will.

I thought that was a pretty good question. If I recall back when all this debacle and the shame that the Labor government has brought on regional people by trying to take away their regional education began, the minister went on radio and we could hear the backpedalling. She said, "I'm going to go and visit everyone affected by the Schools of the Air cuts and consult with everyone." I thought to myself, "Maybe she hasn't got a map in her office." Maybe the map has only the Darling Scarp and the metro area, and all the seats that belong to the Labor Party because, as a factional warlord, the Minister for Education and Training would have all the numbers in red and colour coded with all the factions: "This is United Voice, this is someone who doesn't belong to us, so we won't concentrate on them." If she looked at the rest of the map, she would have gone, "Oh, adviser, bring me the map!" The map comes, she looks at the map and says, "Did I say what I said? Am I going to go visit everyone affected by the Schools of the Air cuts?", backpedalling as she does; a bit of a backflip going on. The Minister for Education and Training would have said, "Premier, I know that you're on holidays but I think we'd better talk, because I made a commitment to go and consult with everyone who is affected by the Schools of the Air cuts, and I just realised how big regional Western Australia is and how vast, and how hard it is to actually get there!" There is not a jet service that goes into every pastoral station; one cannot do that. They have dirt airstrips, and sometimes those airstrips may be very short. So the minister says that if she cannot get a jet service in, she is not going, so we should actually reverse these cuts. That is clearly what happened, judging from the answer that the minister gave today—that where and when she can visit, she will. This is the whole problem. There was no consultation with people in regional Western Australia or with Schools of the Air about the proposed cuts before Christmas. Now we are seeing Moora college and school camps being cut. She has visited only one school camp. I have visited the goldfields camp school, and it is an amazing place, when the people come in from the stations to hold a camp and have their school get-together. I have gone to the goldfields camp school. The Minister for Education and Training conveniently has not bothered to go to Dampier, Geraldton or down south to consult with the communities affected. That just shows a lack of care.

We can dress it up and say that it is only \$8.5 million, or it is \$500 000, but that is beside the point, because it is regional education being cut from the regions. I have said this in this place before. The Premier gets up and says that it is budget repair—remember we have 40 000 million dollars' worth of debt that has been caused—and blames us, yet let us go and spend \$3 million on a terminal in Fremantle for the cruise ships; let us go and spend \$120 million for a marina in Perth; let us go and spend another \$50 million or \$64 million on a new school in Perth—the list goes on. The hypocrisy of the Labor government justifying the cuts to regional education is shameful. I know the government is saying that it will never win the seat of Moore, and the Premier and the Labor government are right—they will never win the seat of Moore. Their actions to date prove that they can never win it.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

The government has so many hungry mouths to feed that are under that three per cent mark—those eight seats that will disappear at the next election. That is what the Premier needs to feed. He needs to keep the backbench happy. He needs to be able to cut off regional Western Australia, because there are no votes there for him. That is the reality, and the public is starting to see that. The people of Moora, and the people in the electorates of Moore and North West Central know that. The people of Kalgoorlie and the Mining and Pastoral Region know that. Every regional community knows that. The problem is that the Labor government has already made a decision to cut the funding in those towns and regions, particularly for those who do not vote Labor—for good reason, because of those cuts and things that have happened in the past years of neglect—because he has too many mouths to feed in metropolitan Perth. He has to keep the backbench happy so that he does not have the revolts that we generally get as governments go on. I keep saying three per cent because I suggest that the government will lose eight seats off the back because of these education cuts.

When the Minister for Education first announced these cuts—as I said, just before Christmas—we held rallies in Karratha, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie to start the process of saying that it is not on. The member for Pilbara, who is absent again—the silent one—defended the actions of the Minister for Education and Training and the Labor Premier of Western Australia, saying that there will be more and more cuts. Then Hon Darren West stood up in Geraldton and defended the cuts. He must have travelled through the night to go to Kalgoorlie the next morning, because he had one eye open and one eye closed as he was trying to speak. I do not think he has seen the map of Western Australia and how big it is. He says “I’m not going to travel around to every protest in regional Western Australia because I’m buggered. Minister for Education and Training, do a backflip, please.” That is the credit that he is taking. After defending the Labor government’s position on cutting regional education, the Labor member for the Agricultural Region, Hon Darren West, is suddenly claiming victory. Hon Kyle McGinn, the member for Mining and Pastoral Region, was also defending the cuts to regional education. Suddenly, it was all about them, and how they convinced the Labor government to reverse the cuts to the Schools of the Air. Then the member for Albany said, “We won with the Schools of the Air, and we going to do the same when it comes to Moora college and camp schools.” How is that going?

Clearly, the Premier cannot backflip on this again, and neither can the Minister for Education and Training, who I think should have been moved on from the portfolio because people have zero confidence in her. The only confidence that people of regional WA have in the Minister for Education and Training is that she is going to take a great selfie post, because that is all we see. Most people now have been blocked from her Twitter and Facebook pages, because the minister wants to avoid the scrutiny that people are putting this Labor government under because of the absolute neglect and hoodwinking by this Labor government.

We talk about royalties for regions. I think the member for Moore summed it up perfectly, as did the members for Roe and Warren–Blackwood. I cannot understand the Premier saying in one sentence that we need budget repair, and that is why we cannot fix the Moora Residential College, but in the same breath, he will have a crack at the Liberal Party, some of whose members do not want to see royalties for regions, which is disappointing. What is more hypocritical is that the Premier says that royalties for regions is still there. We still have \$1 billion a year. Where is that \$1 billion a year? If royalties for regions exists under the Labor government, where is it? Why is \$8.5 million of royalties for regions funding being taken away from the Moora college? Obviously, that \$1 billion is not there; it is being used for something else. Those Country Labor members who say that they support royalties for regions are part of a political party that is clearly motivated to get rid of royalties for regions. They are clearly motivated to ensure that the three per cent that the member for Pilbara is under does not get returned. The motivation is not to look after regional Western Australia, because there are no votes there. We all know that. The punters know that. The Premier says that there is \$1 billion of royalties for regions. Where is it? I have lost hospitals in my electorate that were going to be funded by royalties for regions—at Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Meekatharra and Mt Magnet—and aged care in Carnarvon. The list goes on. Where is it? Where is the royalties for regions? I think we will start a campaign saying, “Where is it?” Show me where that money is being spent. We all know that the government is putting it into power and water, and saying that it is looking after the bush because it is making sure that the price of power and water does not go up in regional Western Australia.

We know that the government is taking that \$1 billion out and saying it is going into utilities, syphoning it through projects in Perth. We know that and we have three years to keep prosecuting that the government does not care about regional Western Australia because it cannot take \$8.5 million—if it is \$8.5 million—out of the \$1 billion because where has it gone? It is saying it is there, but it is not there. That is the problem. The member for Bunbury will find that that is a problem as he gets closer to the election, because people will ask, “Where is the royalties for regions? Where has it gone?”

Mr D.T. Punch: They will know it is being spent very wisely in the bush. People tell me that every day.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, and who did it? Under what government? What we see left being opened up by the Labor government are royalties for regions projects that were funded by the previous Liberal–National

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

government. There are budget repairs and savings, but the government is announcing all these things in Perth; I do not think the public is falling for it. The member for Moore said it right about yesterday's protest and we had trucks from Moora with drivers probably taking two days out of their working life to protest. That shows us how important funding Moora Residential College is. People are prepared to take the hit in their own hip pocket to say to this Labor government, "We care." The Premier says that these students do not come from Moora. Of course they do not come from Moora. Why would we have a residential college and people who live in Moora go to the residential college? They are in the town already. It is for people who live in places close or far away. People who utilise Moora Residential College live in places such as Marble Bar, or in Sandstone in my electorate. It is for regional people. To say that there are alternatives shows a lack of understanding. Perhaps the Premier has not seen a map of regional Western Australia and how big it is. I know that the Minister for Education and Training has. It is clear that there has been no consultation because it is all too big. It is all too far and too hard. "There is nothing to see here; I will do another backflip."

It is quite clear that nothing has changed in the views of the Labor Party. Today the member for Cannington mentioned one vote, one value. Hon Darren West mentioned one vote, one value and how we need to make it a fairer playing field in the political system. What is one vote, one value? Is it taking another seat out of regional Western Australia? We all know the government's game is to keep reducing regional representation. The member for Cannington talked about one vote, one value today.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Minister, please!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is interesting how we know what the Labor Party is doing. It is going to suck all the money out and call it democracy. It will reduce representation in regional Western Australia. It will probably take two seats out of the Mining and Pastoral Region, the biggest area in regional Western Australia. The area that they are trying to reduce contains a lot of the educational cuts. We can see the game plan: "Take the people out of regional Western Australia and reduce the representation. No-one here will know and we will keep the people of Perth happy because we will keep on increasing our number of members of Parliament." That is what we are seeing.

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Democracy, is it?

Mr R.R. Whitby: That is democracy, yes: one vote, one value.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I just want to pursue this a little more. The member for Cannington is saying that we should have one vote, one value and the member for Baldvis wants democracy. Democracy in the Labor Party's eyes is to reduce the representation of regional Western Australia. We can see the game plan here. Start off in education, slowly close the schools, close the camp schools, slowly take people out of regional Western Australia, and let us take out members of Parliament because, you know what? We are too noisy and we cause the Labor Party problems. It will stick with metropolitan Perth and make sure that it has as many members there as possible. It is outrageous. I look forward to the government bringing that legislation in, because I know the member for Cannington is doing it now; I know he is getting it ready.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It's bullshit!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What did you say? Sorry?

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I heard unparliamentary language from the minister. I ask him to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr R.S. Love): I think I heard a remark from the member.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If I said something unparliamentary, I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. Johnston: I have no legislation about one vote, one value; none. I have not asked for any to be prepared. There is no proposal.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No proposal?

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But the system that we live in is undemocratic? We know what you are up to!

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Everyone settle down. We have heard from the minister, I think he has finished. You hop up and talk now, please.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. It is quite clear that there is no motivation by the Premier to fix the situation with Moora Residential College. He has said, “No way.” I do not know whether camp schools are being sold or leased; the uncertainty exists. In fact, I was talking to someone who has a business and does charters, especially when schools go to Karratha and stay at Dampier camp school. He has that much uncertainty because no-one is booking the camp school anymore. At the end of this year and next year, because there is so much uncertainty —

Mr K.J.J. Michel: That is wrong. That is a lie!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is actually true. I was in your electorate, I was in Karratha last week.

Mr K.J.J. Michel: I was at that meeting!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Do not worry, they tell me all about you.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Member for Pilbara, I do not think that you have called for the attention of the chamber, so the member for North West Central is making his contribution.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: People are quite concerned about Perth schools not making bookings to go to Dampier camp school. That is a real problem. It is creating uncertainty in the member for Pilbara’s electorate. I was in Karratha last week and people were coming up and saying, “Jeez, buyer’s remorse. We got this one wrong.”

Members, the uncertainty and lack of motivation is quite clear. We can understand the Premier’s lack of motivation in not reversing the last education cuts. The way the School of the Air protested and campaigned resonated strongly with the community in Perth and the metropolitan area and we knew that was going to have an effect on the Premier. I say to the Premier: do not underestimate the people of Moora, do not underestimate the people of Karratha, Dampier, Kalgoorlie and the other camp schools right across regional Western Australia, because the people who use these camp schools are not just School of the Air people; they are schools and organisations from Perth. It covers the whole of Western Australia. Let me tell government members that this is going to have an impact on their ability to get re-elected in 2021. I firmly believe that this will impact them because the government is not putting regional students first. It is absolutely absurd when Labor members use the excuse that Parliament has not passed the gold royalty increase. We have seen in the paper that the Premier said, “We need new revenue.” There are options to fix the budget but the government lacks the intestinal fortitude to take them on. A member said to me, “Why would we take on the iron ore industry when that makes up 86 per cent of the resource sector and gold makes up only 6.8 per cent of the industry?”

Mr P. Papalia: Who said that?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It was quite clear. The minister should ask his colleagues that.

He said, “We’re not going to have a fight with the iron ore industry, but we’ll have a fight with the gold industry.” It all becomes clear. It is a numbers game for the government and that is all it is. It is a numbers game to not fund regional WA projects. It is a numbers game not to fund regional education. If members are not in United Voice, I can say that they are slowly not going to be in the game. The member for Pilbara comes under that three per cent. The people of Dampier are upset. The people of Karratha are very upset. They think that the member for Kimberley has done her job because they have kept the Broome camp school. They are happy with her. They would rather she move down to Karratha. This should be referred to a committee to have a proper look at it because that is what we should do in this place—that is, make the right decisions and reflect the people we serve. That is the people of Western Australia. Whether members are city MPs or regional MPs, we all represent Western Australians. In this house, it is our duty to make sure that we come up with the right way forward and not play the political games that the Premier likes to play at the moment. He is creating the city and regional divide. No-one else is, but he is.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [6.31 pm]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Have you changed that letterhead yet, son?

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: No. I was waiting to shift offices. The Labor member for the Agricultural Region is taking a long time to move out of the office that I want to move into, so I have not changed my letterhead. Just cut it off the bottom.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Labor took \$80 million out of the Mid West Development Commission.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

I want to endorse these issues being put to a committee. In particular, I want to talk about Moora Residential College. The government has said that it is 12 jobs, but 12 jobs in a town the size of Moora has a huge impact and it flows on. It may result in another service being withdrawn. I have seen this in the town of Mullewa, which is just east of Geraldton, where there is a continuous downward spiral. One service gets withdrawn then suddenly another service is under threat. It flows on to the number of police and right on through the community. It is called the downward spiral. The beauty of residential colleges is that they are set up in such a way that virtually anybody who lives in the country can afford to use one. The various living away from home allowances and other forms of assistance will cover most of the fees, which means that they are a viable option for someone who is living out in the regions and not earning very much money. They can still get a decent education for their kids. I am really annoyed about the line to be positive about the Moora community. Surely, being positive about the community is fighting for every job and every facility that is in the community. It is not just rolling over and allowing people to take away what they want to take away.

It is absolutely critical that this community keep the year 12 school. It is unusual for a town the size of Moora to have a year 12 school. It is the only year 12 school between Perth and Geraldton, which is a big stretch of country. There may not be a huge number of students, but it serves a very large catchment area. The residential college enables the school to have more teachers and to offer more courses. The downward spiral will be seen in the school itself. It will lose income, teachers, courses and then more students.

It is a good thing that the government is talking about new industries in Moora. I am aware of the irrigation for oranges, the new piggery and the other new industry it was talking about—I think it was sand mining. That makes it even more important to keep that school as it is, to keep the numbers up and to keep the courses up so that it is a viable option for people who live in that area.

There is a range of figures on what needs to be spent. I have to say that I do not have much confidence in the low one and I do not have much confidence in the high one. I think that having an outside person have a look at it could give us a realistic figure to spend on the college—not the gold-plated Rolls-Royce model, but a realistic figure. The other day I was talking to people from one of the agricultural colleges at Woolorama. They made the point that when they go to get something built at the college, as soon as it is known that it is government, the price goes up by a factor of two or three. I have no doubt the quote that has been given for the work at Moora has gone up.

I will briefly touch on the others. People are pleading for some kind of certainty around camp schools. Geraldton has one, which is already fully booked for this whole year. People deserve an answer. Once again, bringing this back to the cost, it would be a real pity if it is decided that they have to be self-funded and the camp school itself has to cover the full cost of the labour used in it. The people who miss out will be the ones who have the least means to pay. It is special for kids. They come from a pretty poor background. One of the special things that they can do as a school is stay in one of these camp schools for a few days. For the kids, the time they spend at the camp school becomes a highlight of their education.

I repeat what I said previously in a grievance. It is unfortunate for people who cannot afford to have their kids in scouts, guides or find the money for swimming lesson fees. I have advocated that they should be able to access KidSport in those circumstances. Finally, the agricultural college trust fund needs to be left alone. It keeps those schools up to date in technology and safety and is quite an important block of money. It is self-generated off the farms. It is a good system and I do not think it should be interfered with.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [6.37 pm]: It is my role as minister representing the Minister for Education and Training in this place to respond on behalf of the minister. I will note in exactly the same fashion as he did himself earlier on—perhaps against protocol and good practice—the absence of the member for North West Central, as so often is the case. I think that is the phrase that he used.

I worry about the member for Roe because he has adopted a stance that is far more aggressive than his natural stance. It is not in his nature. He is a very gentlemanly chap and is very reasonable on most occasions. I noticed that his contribution this afternoon was pretty aggressive. Possibly we could attribute it to his proximity to the member for North West Central. Maybe that is what has done it. The member for North West Central, like myself, is a bit of a robust character. He is willing to engage in a bit of what Hon Alannah MacTiernan would have termed argy-bargy in the chamber. It is something that he often engages in. I think the member for Roe has been sitting too close to him for too long. It was an interesting contribution earlier on. I will say something else about the member for North West Central's contribution. He suggested a couple of times that perhaps members on this side of the chamber had need of a map to find their way around the regions and that perhaps the education minister had found that it was a long way away and she was in need of a charter aircraft to get to some of these people that he claimed she had committed to visit. All I would say is that if there is anyone in Western Australia qualified to refer to the requirement to get charters to get around the country and to get charters to fly from the city to the country, perhaps, it would be the member for North West Central. Perhaps I am wrong, but I am pretty certain that he has

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

never lived in the country. He flies there a lot; he visits via aircraft. I think he referred to camp schools as camp sites. I am pretty certain he never went to one as a child. The reason I am pretty certain is that he was never in a state school, and, when he was a young fellow, most of those camp schools were used by state schools. I know what they are like because I have been to one. I only ever went to state schools—state primary school and high school—so I am familiar. Interestingly, they are in the country, by the way. I am pretty sure that the member for North West Central —

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the relevance of this diatribe that is coming from the minister.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister is responding and can respond in any way he wishes to this motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order and I am perfectly capable of making that decision.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am pretty certain that the member for North West Central never attended a camp site—what they are calling camp schools but they are camp sites. I know what they are. There is no school there. It is just like a dormitory. It is a nice place to visit and get a break from school. We used to go there in the holidays and get a break with the other students and I recall it as a child. I regaled the chamber with a story about watching *Alvin Purple* as a child at the camp site. We had a very liberal teacher. It was a very interesting evening watching the old reel-to-reel at the Point Peron camp site in the 1970s. But I am pretty certain that the member for North West Central never went to a camp school. I am not sure that I give too much credibility to any of his views or observations regarding camp sites. Similarly, I do not think I credit him with any knowledge of state schools in the regions and the difficulties associated with getting to school in the country, other than what he has read in newspapers. I credit him with a lot of knowledge about getting charter flights to the regions and the challenges associated with that. I know he does a lot of that. He flies out of the city into the country on a regular basis, so that is a reasonable thing for him to comment on.

With respect to this motion, we reject the call for an inquiry. An inquiry is not needed. If members want to determine why these decisions—particularly those in respect of Moora Residential College—have been made, we need only go to the document that was tabled by the Minister for Education and Training only yesterday. It is publicly available. Look at the size of it. For the purposes of *Hansard*, I might point out that it is probably two and a half centimetres thick. It is comprehensive and gives all the information regarding the project definition plan report for Moora Residential College, otherwise known as the Moora hostel. It is significant to note that there have been some claims in this place by Nationals WA members and other members, such as the member for Geraldton, who just made the suggestion as well, that some cheaper version was available to the government to make this hostel capable of continuing to operate. There was some suggestion that somehow the government has been exploited in some way through people giving us unfair quotes for the tasks at hand. If members think that, they should get the document, which is available now because it has been tabled, and look at it. It is a comprehensive document.

The costs associated with the various levels of repair that would be required are shown through cascading levels of quotations. Option 1 is a light refurbishment costed at \$7 233 500 million. Option 2 is a major refurbishment costed at \$8 529 600. Option 2A is a major refurbishment costed at \$8 701 000. Option 3 is a new build costed at \$11 228 800. That is not the government making it up. It is not the council commissioning a report and constraining the outcomes by virtue of giving some guidance to the people it has paid for the report. It is a significant body of work. The work done that determined the costings has been provided by a range of contractors, all of which are listed. It lists the specific scale of the works required and the outcomes of each option. When we heard the claims made by those who were in government until March this year that they put aside or budgeted or had a cabinet meeting and assigned an amount of money for repairs at this hostel, we investigated and found that it was \$8.7 million. It is not a coincidence that \$8.7 million accords with one of the options here, which is the one that has been publicly referred to by the Minister for Education and Training. It is a very clear document. It is disingenuous and borderline dishonest to continue to claim that this hostel could be repaired for \$500 000. That is an outrageous claim. It costs \$360 000 or thereabouts to run it every year. That is its operating cost for maintenance on an ongoing basis. The Minister for Education and Training has allocated funding as necessary to make the hostel safe for the remainder of this year so that the students who will be residing at the hostel will be safe.

Mr R.S. Love: How much is that?

Mr P.J. Rundle: It is \$59 000.

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. From memory, it is \$60 000, but do not quote me on that one. That amount is assigned for the purposes of making it safe for the remainder of the year, not for the purposes of repairing it for ongoing use of the facility, which would be required and, as determined by the very significant body of work that has been tabled in the public domain so that everyone can look at it, would cost millions of dollars. We have heard the obvious argument for why this decision was made: the former Liberal–National government racked up forty thousand million dollars’ worth of debt and thereby constrained the new government to deal with the imbalance in the budget process and get to the point at which we are not spending more than we are getting. We are doing that to achieve a balanced system in the budget so that we can be in surplus by the last year of the forward estimates. Had that not been the case, there might have been an opportunity to assign funding. Beyond that, as members are well aware, there is another reason, which has been referred to on many occasions. Not only did the former government destroy the state’s finances, but, when the plan to repair them was put before the state in the form of the state budget, a significant amount of potential revenue was blocked by the members on the other side. An amount of \$400 million over the forward estimates is not to be sneezed at. As a consequence, unlike our predecessors, when we lost revenue, we had to return to the budget process and determine how we would deal with it so that we did not assign even further bad outcomes for the state into the future. That is what happened. Those constraints were placed on the government by our predecessors; we understand that. These decisions are not fun. I know that the Liberal and National Parties are not familiar with making hard decisions.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: For members who want to get their comments in *Hansard* for their constituent base, it will not do to be yelling over the top of the speaker who is on his feet. Ask whether you can interject, put your point and then get an answer. It goes for both sides of this house.

Mr V.A. Catania: Minister, can I interject?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, I want to —

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Come on boys; it is not as though I get upset about interjections during question time. To suggest that I do not take many interjections is not really fair.

Deputy Speaker, I want to get on the record some of the response provided by the Minister for Education and Training, specifically, her response to the students of Moora Residential College, because I think this is important. While the National Party, in particular, continues to exploit this situation in an effort to get a bit of near-term traction politically —

Mr R.S. Love: Is that what you think I’m doing?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, that is exactly what I think—not the member for Moore. I am not saying that National Party members should not campaign; I am saying that what they are doing, I suspect, is delaying the families. I feel for them; I understand that it has a significant impact and people will have to shift schools. I understand that, but whilst they are encouraged to continue down this pathway, they are not necessarily engaging, as much as they should, in planning and preparing for that situation.

Mr V.A. Catania: We’re going to fight you all the way!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Who does that help in the end, member? Does that help the kids who will have to shift schools next year? Member, consider what will happen.

Mr D.T. Redman: I can’t believe that you are saying go away and don’t worry about defending the people who are being affected by this. That shows massive ignorance.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Not at all. I am saying that I would encourage these families to engage with the Department of Education, as has been offered, to ensure that they are prepared and planning for next year. That is what I am saying. If members opposite suggest to them anything otherwise, I am worried that they may not be encouraged to seek out assistance and they will leave doing that to later in the year, when it will be more traumatic. I hope that the families will seek out the assistance that has been offered, because the minister has said that parents will not be out of pocket as a consequence of attending another residential agricultural college or residential college in the region or the state. This will include costs associated with fees, uniforms, books, school charges and contributions, and travel. Priority will be given to families with children currently in year 11. I hope that families are seeking that assistance. I hope that families are seeking every bit of assistance that they can get and planning for as far in advance as they can. I hope that is the case, because I think that would be a better outcome for those families.

I think the claims that Central Midlands Senior High School will not retain its current status are scurrilous, wrong and have been refuted entirely by the minister. The minister has consistently said that funding by the one-line

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

budget to Central Midlands Senior High School will not be impacted by any reduction in enrolments at the school in 2018. There are no plans to change the status of the school from a secondary school to a district high school. Support to the school and the families affected will continue throughout the year to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Boarding options and capacity are available at the department's residential colleges in Northam, Narrogin, Merredin and Geraldton. Members opposite know, despite the nature of their rhetoric, that many of these students come from places far from Moora, where they currently board. Members opposite know that kids from as far away as Marble Bar, Eighty Mile Beach and Lancelin board at Moora. Not all the students are from the Moora region. I know that there are some from the Moora region. It is not a decision that we would have made had we been given the choice. It is a sad outcome.

Mr V.A. Catania: But you have been given the choice to make. You are the ones making the decisions.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have to make a lot of hard decisions. We have been confronting the challenges that the former government left us with since the day we took office. All that members opposite have done is hinder our ability to help people like these people in Moora. Members of the National Party opposed it. They stood there across the chamber and did it for bold-faced political gain. There was no intent on their behalf other than to hamper the government in its attempts to fix the budget. There was no other motivation.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There can be no other motivation. What I would worry about now is that when members opposite go back into opposition, as is always the case in between stints on the treasury bench when the budget has been wrecked, National Party members slip into their cloth of ensuring that every effort is made on every possible occasion to set the country against the city. As a member of Parliament from the party that holds the greatest representation of the regions in Western Australia—the Labor Party —

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As a member of Parliament from the party with the greatest representation of the regions of Western Australia, I am saddened to see this happen because I saw it happen the last time we were in government. The last time Labor came into government, having inherited deficits —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Having repaired the budget, having moved to surplus and having set the state on a solid fiscal path, we were subject to a constant stream of attempts by the National Party to turn the country against the city and vice versa. It is a tragedy that Western Australians are encouraged to dislike each other by a political party that occasionally ends up in government by accident.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How can we bring this to a vote, because we need some mercy here!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think that is enough from you. That is not a point of order. Thank you, minister; go ahead.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: As a member of the political party with the greatest representation in the regions and the only political party in Western Australia that can defend and guarantee royalties for regions —

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As the only political party that has stated it will defend and guarantee royalties for regions, I am proud —

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Madam Deputy Speaker, members of the National Party seem to have erased from their memory what happened only last week when the Leader of the Opposition—the Leader of the Liberal Party in Western Australia—said he would get rid of royalties for regions if the Liberals were to get back into power. He called on us to get rid of it! He called it a slush fund. As everyone in Western Australia knows, the entire time since Federation—the entire time that this Parliament has existed in its current form—the National Party has never once formed government with the Labor Party, so the only way to defend royalties for regions is to vote Labor! Everyone knows that!

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Seniors and Ageing) [6.58 pm]: In the very short time that I have, I have a very important thing to say and I am sure that members will let me have these few words. I have just been notified that Collie's blind disabled athlete, Shaun Pianta, who is competing in Korea's

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 March 2018]

p744a-768a

Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Paul Papalia;
Deputy Speaker; Mr Mick Murray

Paralympics in the giant slalom, has finished fourteenth overall after having had a knee operation only a short time ago. I think that is just tremendous.

In the last minute, can I now get on to it? Members of the National Party have short memories. In the 2013 election, Collie Senior High School was going to get an \$8 million upgrade. What happened? They did not produce the goods. The National Party went missing. They went out the door, out the back and were gone! Where were they? Did they stand up for country people? No, they did not. They did not have the guts to do it then and they do not have the guts to do it now! They are just a lot of loose geese; I just cannot think of any other words!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Everyone, it is late in the evening. I could not even hear what the minister was accusing them of being.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Members opposite say that it is our fault because the National Party lost the money and did not have the money to spend on those country areas. But it wasted money hand over fist. The Langoulant report states that and it is about time they fessed up—owned up—that the real problem is that the National Party causes its own problems. That is where the problem is. How about taking some responsibility for that into the future? There is a real problem with the National Party's management of this state!

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
