

Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr John Hyde; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper;
Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Joe
Francis

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND FOR TOURISM — ADMINISTRATION OF PORTFOLIOS

Motion

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Minister for Education and for Tourism for the poor administration of her portfolios and her failure to stand up for democratic principles in the house.

This is not a motion that the opposition moves lightly, but it is a very necessary motion to record its complete dissatisfaction with the way that the Minister for Education and for Tourism has undertaken her ministerial duties over the past year or so. The first signs that we had a poor minister were the budget outcomes this year and the number of cuts. The minister stood by and saw more than \$500 million cut from her budget. The It Pays to Learn allowance was abolished. An amount of \$250 used to be provided to the parents of every secondary school student and \$400 to the parents of other students to help meet some of the costs of educating older children. The minister also stood by and saw the \$100 secondary school subsidy allowance abolished. Although people might say that that is not very much, it is very significant when we consider the total number of students in this state. Of course, it is most significant in some schools in country areas and in low socioeconomic areas where the payment of school fees is poor. Contrary to some of the minister's assertions that there is a good rate of collection of school fees across the board, there is not. Ultimately, she tabled figures in this house that indicated that in some low socioeconomic areas, a much smaller percentage of school fees are collected. Most schools are not in the fortunate position of Churchlands Senior High School in her electorate, which collects a high percentage of school fees; indeed, it is an amount that is double, triple or quadruple the amount collected at many other high schools. How will that hardship be addressed and what will happen next year, because that is when the cut will be implemented? I know that many principals and parent groups are concerned about whether their school budgets will be sufficient for all the students at their schools. The fact of the matter is that that money goes towards courses, excursions and various activities that some schools—not all schools—will have to look at cutting. The minister's response to this is, "We're going to monitor it very carefully and we'll see how it goes. If there are particular problems, we'll act on them." Of course, there is no budget line that gives the minister any additional money to meet those costs. It seems to me that, at the very best, she will lobby the federal government to try to make up some of that shortfall in schools in low socioeconomic areas.

The minister has also abolished the community service funding. She said on radio, "These programs can still happen. We're just not going to stop people graduating as a result; that's all there is to it." Again, that is funding of a couple of million dollars that used to go to public high schools in this state that will no longer go to high schools to support those programs. The schools want to continue those programs. I venture to suggest that those programs are as important as ever, and perhaps more important, in some of the lower socioeconomic areas that are now struggling to provide the community service commitment that was provided under our government. Despite the minister saying for many years as an Independent in this house that school assistants were important, she has stood by and said to the Treasurer, "Yes, it's okay; you can axe 450 teacher assistant positions because they are surplus to the Department of Education's requirements." The minister tries to be cute in this place by suggesting that she will not actually sack 450 teacher assistants. She will not; she will just not give them a contract next year. Technically, the minister is correct because she will not actually sack them. Nobody will get the sack; the minister will just not renew their contracts. No thought will be given to how long those workers have been in their positions. One way or another, if the budget bottom line is to add up, this minister has agreed that 450 teacher assistant jobs will go.

Dr E. Constable: They're all permanent employees. They won't go like that. You don't understand the issue.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister should not tell me that I do not understand the issue. I will tell the minister that she does not understand her own budget. Unless she gets rid of the payment to 450 teacher assistant wages, she will not meet the three per cent efficiency dividend. The minister cannot have her cake and eat it too. She cannot on the one hand say that she is not cutting any jobs, while on the other hand say that she is going to make a huge number of cost savings by simply getting rid of 450 positions. Whether she loses those 450 positions because of so-called attrition over a period or whether she cuts the jobs, one way or another, the jobs and the money, will be gone.

Fifty school participation officer positions will also be axed. The minister will probably tell us that those positions will not be axed and that those workers' contracts will just not be renewed. An amount equivalent to 50 times the amount that a school participation officer earns has to be saved; otherwise, the minister will not meet her three per cent efficiency dividend. These are the cuts that she and her department volunteered. Under our government there were 100 participation officers. These officers perform a very important role in high schools.

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They were introduced by our government to assist in keeping 16 and 17-year-olds in secondary education. Although some old-fashioned people might see them as truancy officers, they are much more than truancy officers. Their job is to ensure that 16 and 17-year-olds continue to be engaged in the education process. The feedback that I have received from high school principals and teachers is that those 100 participation officers perform an excellent role, yet this minister will get rid of 50 of them. The minister will also axe 150 positions from central office and from district offices. A massive number of jobs will be cut as part of the budget process to which the minister agreed.

I will get back to this issue in a moment, but this minister cannot and does not tell us—she has not provided any information to the house—about the number of fixed-term teachers who will not have a job next year. We do not know the exact number because the minister says that she cannot tell us the exact number yet, despite the fact that previous Labor education ministers provided information at this time of the year and gave regular updates on the matter. What she has said is that about 500 teachers with fixed-term contracts will not have their contracts renewed next year. If we are to believe the minister, they will not be without a job—they will just not have their contracts renewed. Maybe they will still have a job; maybe they will not be paid; maybe they can still go along to the school. I do not think so, minister. The fact is that if we do not renew someone's contract, that person loses her job. It is a cut. That is exactly what the minister is doing.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What do you think the impact will be with the extra half-cohort in primary schools?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am happy to respond to that because I would like the Premier to provide that information to the house. It has been suggested to me that there will be very little requirement for extra primary school teachers in the government system next year.

Dr E. Constable: That is rubbish; there will be 700 more.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How many more is that compared with previous years?

Mr C.J. Barnett: You said it was insignificant; it is not insignificant.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This is the problem when there is a vacuous Minister for Education who provides so little on the record that speculation runs rife about what is occurring. The minister is largely unavailable to put the information before this house. She was not here all week the other week, and last week she was not here one day because she had to head off the day before to the ministerial council. She subjects herself to very little scrutiny in this house and provides very little to the house, and she does not make herself available to answer questions from the media. The general response of her office to the media is, "Go to the education department; get a spokesperson there because the minister is not available." In fact, the minister's press secretary says that she is sometimes not available to her and that she cannot get her to respond to media inquiries because she cannot get her to respond to her own inquiries. It is incredible.

Today, of course, we highlighted yet another example of the minister's lack of application to her job. Today the minister had to admit that, despite the fact that she called it a priority just a year ago, she had not really acted with any priority whatsoever in dealing with the issue of assaults on school cleaners. When a school cleaner was sexually assaulted while doing her job last year, the minister responded with a press release headed "Safety of school cleaners to be reviewed". I quote from her press statement of 22 December —

The safety of school cleaners will be reviewed following the assault of a cleaner by an intruder at a Perth primary school earlier this month.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Was it an intruder?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not know; it is the minister's press release. I can only take her word for it. If it was not an intruder, perhaps the minister should take the opportunity to correct the record. Was it an intruder or not?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I was wondering what you know about it. You are making these claims and relying on a press release of some time ago.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am not making the claim.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I imagine investigations have taken place.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Premier is very sensitive about the member for Churchlands. He is a great protector of hers; we know that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, I'm not. Rubbish!

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Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Perhaps the Premier will speak for her later rather than letting her speak for herself. I will continue quoting from the minister's own press release in which she said that it was an intruder at a Perth primary school. It continues —

Education Minister Liz Constable met with representatives of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union yesterday and has committed to forming a reference group to look into —

That is one of the minister's favourite phrases. She is always going to look into it. I thought I might buy her a mirror but I suspect she has plenty of her own. The statement continues —

the physical safety of school cleaners while they do their work.

In her own press release Dr Constable states —

School cleaners do a very important job ensuring our children have clean classrooms and schools.

That is deep! To continue —

They work outside of school hours and when schools are closed for holidays.

They often work in isolation because of the time, location and nature of their work ...

She says also —

We need to do our best in taking all practical and reasonable steps to ensure the physical safety of all school staff, including cleaners and gardeners.

Incidents such as the one at the northern suburbs school are not acceptable.

The safety of all employees in schools is important to this Government and I made it a priority to meet with the union following the incident.

The problem is that the minister has had no sense of priority since then. I understand that as part of wage negotiations—I will get to wage negotiations in a minute—the union involved, the union that actually represents school cleaners, asked what happened to the report. I can fill you in on a little of it, Mr Speaker. Apparently the minister made it a priority to set up a group. She did include a representative from the Liquor, Hospital and Miscellaneous Union. The group had some meetings and came up with a draft report by February. I am told that not everyone was happy with the draft report; nonetheless, there was to be a final report by May. I am told that the final report did not eventuate. It certainly has not been published. I have called upon the minister to table the report by the close of business today.

I am also advised that, in wage negotiations this week, when the matter of the safety of school cleaners was raised, the education department spokesperson said that the report was with the minister. As one of my witty colleagues interjected, clearly the cleaners report is gathering dust in the minister's office while she sits on her hands and does nothing about it. She stood today and made some glib comments about perhaps supplying cleaners with mobile phones. Some of my colleagues said that they were not aware that was the case in schools. We shall see, minister. Should the minister choose not to be forthcoming with that information, I will be asking questions about when she received the report and why she has sat on it for so long.

We have here a minister who is a little more than a post box for her department. She fails to take responsibility for the various issues in her department. Her general response to any issue is that it is a matter for the department. If we raise a particular issue she says, "I will look into it; I will get the department to respond." When an incident occurs and she says that she will respond and that she will establish a committee or look into it and so forth, that is the quick fix for the day. A week, a month or a year down the track we find that very little has changed because the minister simply has not got off her backside and done the work. I would call her an apologist for her department, but generally she is not prepared to face the media and even apologise for the actions of the department when it fails.

The issue of school assaults is another one that has been very topical. Indeed, last week I referred to the ERG report at Clarkson Senior High School and the minimal action that flowed from that. That ERG report actually highlights a number of assaults on staff there. There are considerable concerns there. As I pointed out last week, the report highlights also that the turnover of longstanding staff is an issue in terms of behaviour management and so forth. Yet we know that next year at Clarkson Senior High School, unless some intervention occurs in the meantime, there will be a significant turnover of staff. The minister has little regard for teachers on fixed-term contracts because she simply says, "Well, they're not permanent, and you had the system, your government employed teachers on fixed-term contracts." I say to the minister: during the past few years when we were in government, teachers on fixed-term contracts who wanted their contracts renewed generally got them renewed. That is partly because of the shortage of teachers over those years.

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The minister's response in terms of the 500 high school teachers is interesting. Whether the minister admits it or not or uses semantics or sophistry, those teachers will plainly be out of a job next year. Her response is: "It's your fault because when you were in government you did not put the money in the forward estimates; if you had put the money in the forward estimates it would have been there for us." Yet that stands in stark contrast to what the Premier said. When we pointed out that we had money in forward estimates for a number of projects, he said, "Gone. Those projects are gone. They're not part of our forward estimates. Everything changed the day we came to government. Get used to it. Get over it." I have. However, the government cannot have it both ways. If it will not deliver on our forward estimates, it must take full responsibility for its own forward estimates. That is the beginning and end of it. What is even more ridiculous about the assertion by the Minister for Education is that —

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You deliberately ignored us to make your forward estimates look better.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Has the Premier finished, because I believe I have the call and he will get the call later.

In the last few years that we were in government there was a shortage of teachers. In fact there was a shortage of workers throughout the Western Australian economy. In that environment we could not have possibly imagined, crystal ball or no crystal ball, that there would be such a large surplus of teachers in just a few years. We were struggling in the last couple of years that we were in government to find enough teachers, police, nurses and workers in a range of fields. To think that we might be able to keep on additional teachers or that it was even an issue for us that we should contemplate in the forward estimates, is just a nonsense. It is an issue that has arisen since the last election. The concept of having a surplus of teachers was a concept that was very much foreign to us in the last couple of years of our government. We could not have predicted that as a result of the half cohort that there would be an awful number of fixed-term teachers who would be out of a job; that is, would not be in a position to have their contract renewed.

We have heard a lot of predictions that the Western Australian economy will pick up and we will see a return to shortages in the workforce in many areas. The workforce shortages are likely to be felt much more in education than any other workforce. The minister knows that her department has done the work. Her department knows the age demographic of the teaching workforce in government schools in this state and it knows that in two years, or maybe three years, we will again have a teacher shortage. We also know that next year many schools, particularly smaller schools, will be struggling to offer the full range of subjects that they are offering this year. It is a difficult issue to communicate to the electorate. The minister knows what is the issue. Just because there is a half cohort of just year 8s, it does not mean that it affects just year 8s. It affects every year group in the school. It has been put to me that the year groups that could be most significantly affected are years 11 and 12.

I have been told, and at this stage I do not know whether it is correct, that, for example, the subject of physics might not be offered at Governor Stirling Senior High School next year. If that were to occur, it would be a huge loss. It was a premier school in this state and has had a gifted and talented program over many years, but next year it may not be able to offer physics. The nearest school is Swan View Senior High School and it has not offered physics for years. It is that kind of flexibility that is lost from the timetable with a reduced number of teachers.

Again we have weasel words from the minister. She says that she will look into it and probably something will be done to ameliorate things in small country high schools and maybe other small high schools. The details of what she intends to do are very thin on the ground. Yesterday we heard that maybe schools with fewer than 600 students might be given special consideration. What are the specific considerations? What staffing formula will actually apply next year to secondary schools that have a certain number of students or below? The moment the minister is specific, we will be able to do the calculations. If I were to be cynical, I would think that she will not put out the formula or the criteria that will apply because, if she did, every school could do its homework and determine how many jobs will be cut at their school next year.

Truancy is another issue on which the minister has really dropped the ball. Members may recall that just prior to the change in government the former Labor government made a commitment to look at income management in conjunction with the Rudd government as well as truancy. We were to have trials in the Cannington district and also in the Kimberley. Yet it is something this minister does not support. There has been a greater level of truancy this year, particularly in the Kimberley region. I hold the minister responsible for that. She made a lot of claims about wanting to support Aboriginal education, but we have seen the reverse. We have seen very poor school attendance at schools such as Fitzroy Crossing. The opportunities that the Rudd government was offering have simply not been taken up in any timely fashion by this government.

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While I am on the topic of Indigenous education, members might have noticed an article in *The Australian* today, the content of which is quite disturbing. The article by Nicolas Perpitch, who I might add I taught when he was at high school, said that it had been announced that the remote Gibson Desert community of Patjarr will have its school closed at the end of the year. There is only one teacher at that school and that teacher will be removed. This is a community in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands that was affected by Mr Ward's death. In closing the school, the community has been told they will be able to use laptops and the region's School of the Air. It is an isolated area. The parents there are largely illiterate and do not have the skills to be able to assist their children with their education or, indeed, in the use of computers. To suggest that some of the parents there could help the children is an insult. The article includes a quote from somebody who said there were very few students at that school and only one student was enrolled. The article also referred to two students being recently transferred from Perth. There is also reference to other students attending for short periods when they are in the area. It was alleged that 11 students had attended the school on Monday this week.

In any event, if this minister is serious about Aboriginal education she should not be withdrawing a resource like this from a school like Patjarr. The article also referred to some of the issues that have arisen following Mr Ward's death and the lengthy coronial hearing that took families in the community away from their land. Without doubt that has had an effect on the school numbers. I do not know how serious the minister or her department are in thinking that a child or children in that community can learn through School of the Air and the use of a laptop computer. To me it is a nonsense. It does not stop there. While an announcement has not been made, I have also been alerted to the fact that another school is facing an uncertain future. I would appreciate the minister advising whether she intends to close this school. It is the Ngurrawaana Remote Community School. It is also concerned that it may have to close in the future and that it will suffer the same fate announced at Patjarr. If that is so, it is starting to set a pattern of removing educational opportunities for kids who really need those opportunities. The Youngaleena community out near Munjina Gorge has already been put on to the School of the Air. I am told that there are incredible difficulties in getting children to learn basic skills in that community.

This is the kind of lack of management that there is in the education portfolio. This minister stands in this place and spouts support for Aboriginal people in regional areas but the reality is very different. Similarly, even in schools in some of the government's favourite areas, such as Merredin, the minister has a lot of problems. In fact in Merredin it is proposed to amalgamate the schools into a K-12 school.

Dr E. Constable: That's right.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How are they going to do it? They are going to do it with the Building the Education Revolution funds, we are told. There is \$4.15 million available from the commonwealth government's Building the Education Revolution fund. There is one slight problem. What the minister is proposing actually costs in the vicinity of \$10 million to \$14 million, as apparently that is the cost of a similar facility elsewhere in the state. Yet there is no real advice as to where that extra money is coming from. It is certainly not on budget. It is just going to happen. However, the thing that has upset the community the most is the high-handed way in which the minister and her department have approached this matter. One suggestion by the parents is that if North Merredin and South Merredin Primary Schools are to be amalgamated, they could be amalgamated on a separate site from the high school rather than being lumped in with the high school where a new trade centre facility is also going. The community has been expressing one view, yet the minister's department is not listening. The minister and her department really do not know where the additional money is coming from. The community has cited some examples of why it is not suitable to put young children on the same site to share facilities with older children, particularly those of 16 or 17 years of age or older. The minister has apparently alleged to that community that there are many successful operating examples of K-12 models utilised throughout the state. The community's simple question to the minister is: can the minister identify those schools? The community is not particularly keen to have the minister identify Guildford Grammar School, for example, which is a private school with the two facilities quite separate—the junior school at one end of the school and the senior school at the other end. However, the community wants to know: where are these schools and what are the specific examples the minister is referring to? Again, the community has found what I have found: the minister is very short on details and makes glib assertions, but she does not back them up with the actual facts. The community would like to know: where are those successful K-12 schools where the kindergarten children and the year 12s share facilities and the facilities are beneficial to their education?

Many of my colleagues want to speak on these issues. The member for Perth has been following the saga at Mt Lawley Primary School which is, frankly, a disgrace and could easily have been addressed by the minister. Parents at East Claremont Primary School are very upset with the way the minister has treated them in the issues that are occurring there. A wage dispute with cleaners, education assistants and gardeners has been going on for six months. Just a year ago the minister said that the teachers' dispute had gone on for too long, and there she

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was riding in on a white horse and sorting out the teachers' problem. Yet the same minister, who took full credit for sorting out the teachers' issue, is not interested in the gardeners, the education assistants or the cleaners. She does not care that they are being offered an increase in wages of only two and a half per cent. She did not care for two weeks while I raised the issue of their having their pay stopped; not just docked for a period of time but completely stopped. In fact she and the Premier did not believe it was happening until we produced the Minister for Commerce's policy. They then said that it did not seem fair and they would do something about it, but they still have not removed the policy, as far as I am aware. Perhaps the minister would like to provide us with some facts about whether the policy is still intact and whether in future the government will again stop the wages of education assistants, gardeners and cleaners.

I could talk for a very long time about the failings of this minister. Sadly I have had the opportunity to raise only a few. Before I sit down, there is one very important issue I want to raise. It is about Collie Senior High School, which currently has 56 teachers but that number will be reduced to 44 teachers. Those 12 teachers want to know what is going on. They want to know whether they will have a job next year. Double that number at Clarkson Community High School are fearful that they will not have a job next year, yet the minister says that no-one will actually lose their job, that these teachers are surplus to requirements and that this system has always prevailed. A Labor government would not put those skilled fixed-term teachers out of a job next year, but this government does not care. If I could refer to the member by her name I would say that Constable doesn't care.

MR J.N. HYDE (Perth) [4.36 pm]: The Minister for Tourism has been asleep at the wheel, as EventsCorp and other government departments have been funding One Movement Pty Ltd, the biggest scam in Western Australia since the Global Dance Foundation fiasco. The minister has refused to be transparent about how a cobbled-together company has been able to secure a \$2.7 million funding commitment for the One Movement For Music festival, with private promoters able to self-declare attendance figures to trigger access to each shovelful of more and more government cash.

It has taken continual questions on notice and research to finally piece together how the Barnett government and this minister have recklessly splashed the cash, with Minister Constable at the helm of this project. In question on notice 1457 the minister confessed that the trigger for payments of moneys to One Movement Pty Ltd was merely "written confirmation"—

Point of Order

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I understand that the question in this private member's business is the performance of the Minister for Education.

Several members interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: My notice paper refers to education.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Notice of motion 19 says "Minister for Education; Tourism" and this motion comes within tourism.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr J.N. HYDE: In question on notice 1457 the minister confessed that the trigger for payments of moneys to One Movement Pty Ltd was merely "written confirmation from the Event Holder". Therefore One Movement Pty Ltd tells the minister that 75 international delegates have "registered" and the minister gives One Movement Pty Ltd a shovelful of \$100 000. There was no external auditing and no rigorous vetting. One Movement asked, the minister gave—ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching. A \$2.7 million commitment later, with the money tapped, the throttle open and the dollars flowing, and the minister put out a press release claiming that 50 000 people attended the two-day festival. Prove it. The minister cannot. This is after performers on the Saturday told me that during their set they counted just 27 people watching them on The Esplanade. We know that a fair few people turned up on the Sunday and enjoyed the mainly eastern states' groups—good commercial concert fare. Unfortunately, the alternative Asian contemporary bands—some amazing violinists from Korea and Japan—were not as well appreciated by the freebie-soaked demographic. The whole point of One Movement was supposed to be positioning WA as a focal point for contemporary music in Australasia, not just a lightweight facsimile of the Big Day Out, A Day on the Green or other successful music gigs that already operate in WA. How did the minister get her figure of 50 000? It was not from an independent audit but from the people who only get the money if they tell her they have met the loosely worded agreement.

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By question 1822, the minister was forced to admit that “all complimentary tickets to the event will be included in the overall attendance figures”. This was after I revealed that all students and staff members at Murdoch University were offered unlimited free tickets to One Movement and even prospective attendees waiting outside the event on The Esplanade on the day were given free tickets. The minister misunderstood a lot of question 1822. It was not about touts trying to sell their free tickets outside the event; touts were giving away free tickets to people in the queue. But wait, there is more. The minister was still boasting that 50 000 people attended the event. She was forced to admit that freebie tickets were included in the total but she could not reveal how many free tickets went to Murdoch staff and students because “this information is held as commercial in confidence by the Event organisers”. The minister was not even going to make the effort to find out how many people really fronted. “Commercial in confidence” should sound alarm bells with any minister. This is the Global Dance fiasco re-visited.

In question 1621 the minister admitted that she was aware of the failure of the Sydney Pacific Circle Music Conference, which then morphed into the equally failed 2005 Australian Music Week in Melbourne. She admitted to being aware of the same personnel in those failed events being behind One Movement. By question 1912, the minister confessed that Eventscorp offered or agreed to “nil” expected attendance totals. On her watch Eventscorp has already handed over \$800 000 on the way to a commitment of \$2.7 million with no guarantees of authentic attendance figures. The minister failed to step in and demand an independent audit and to withhold payment until she was satisfied that this government has had a fair and just return on taxpayers’ investments. The City of Perth has confirmed to me, and the minutes of its 13 January 2009 finance meeting confirm, that Eventscorp secured an agreement with the event organisers to retain the event in WA for up to 25 years. A 25-year guarantee being given by public servants should sound alarm bells for any alert minister. It is also strange that in this City of Perth submission dated 9 January 2009, with input from Eventscorp, which had already locked into sponsorship, the expected audience for One Movement was listed as 7 500 people. The only two people, apart from councillors and staff at that 9 January meeting, were two One Movement representatives, including Saskia Doherty.

In answer to my question 1458, the minister stated that no staff at Eventscorp or Tourism WA declared any conflicts of interest with One Movement. The minister has not yet answered the questions on contact and lobbying with former employees. Saskia Doherty’s own linkedin.com website states that since October 2008 she has been event director at the One Movement festival. Immediately before that, she was the manager, event development at Tourism WA. Unfortunately, another web page states that she held the two positions concurrently. That could not be right. Surely the minister would know about it if it were. Ms Doherty was still at Eventscorp on 3 June 2008 when One Movement Pty Ltd parent company Sunset Events was in informal discussions with Eventscorp about taking over the previously allotted funding for the “In the City” festival.

According to travel reports tabled in Parliament two weeks ago, Saskia Doherty attended an Australian Recording Industry Association meeting on 16 July 2008 representing Eventscorp, among other trips overseas and interstate for Eventscorp. Because the minister has not answered my detailed questions on conflicts of interest and because at least one other Eventscorp Tourism WA senior officer also went to work for One Music, we do not know if the minister’s government has a proper conflicts of interest policy so that staff involved in assessing or granting funds do not jump ship to a company they have just funded without proper firewalls oversight or lobby former colleagues or people they have promoted. Once One Movement had a most generous all clear from Eventscorp and all the kudos that that entails, they hit as many public teats as they could.

In question 1811 I am told that Healthway coughed up a generous \$50 000, more than usual for this sort of event. At least Healthway tried to impose some auditing requirements and commitments to “maximise performance opportunities for local artists”. The minister committed \$2.7 million knowing full well that not one Western Australian musician would be paid a cent for performing. The minister will not answer any detailed questions on how she estimated that 50 000 turned up to One Movement, justifying its \$800 000 dip into the public purse this year, \$2.7 million over three years. As the minister’s answers to the questions rightly reveal, not a cent was handed over or signed off until she was in charge. She was the minister. She had the responsibility to determine that proper auditing had been undertaken after all the promises that she had agreed to.

At least Saskia Doherty, as event director for One Music, is letting us know how the money is being spent. In her One Music blog she writes of “Hot Asian Nights”, as the One Movement missionary movement sets off to conquer the Orient and get bums on seats back in Perth. Singapore, Seoul, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai! There is a picture with the touring buddies in Sinkers, including music promoter David Chitty, Sony BMG music managers and one of Australia’s richest and infamous entertainment promoters, Michael Chugg. Surely these people are not going to be counted in the conference attendance figures for Perth. Then the blog moves on to

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“Frantically France”, reporting a “genuinely positive response that One Movement for Perth received from each and every person I met with”. Sacre bleu!

Mr C.J. Barnett: Who wrote this speech for you?

Mr J.N. HYDE: They must have put on an extra Airbus A380 to bring all the French and European delegates to Perth.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Premier has asserted by interjection that the member is representing someone’s interests other than the public interest in making a speech. That is an unparliamentary interjection and I ask that you ask the Premier to withdraw it.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I certainly interjected. I asked who wrote the speech and whose interests the member was representing. That is a quite proper thing to ask in the Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): My advice is that it is not unparliamentary. I am going to allow the member to continue and ask the Premier to cease interjecting.

Debate Resumed

Mr J.N. HYDE: I think the Premier is aware of my tone and turn of phrase after eight years. He knows that there is only one person who could have written this speech.

Sacre bleu! They must have put on an extra Airbus A380 to bring all the French and European delegates to Perth for One Movement, each of them paying thousands of dollars while in Perth, hence justifying Eventscorp’s investment.

The next blog is “Troubadouring to Toronto”, written by the directors of One Movement—namely, Michael Chugg and David Chitty. It is stated that in Canada they “spread the word of One Movement ... with all agreeing (this event in Perth) would benefit all in the northern hemisphere”. Hello, minister! One Movement is about to garner the minister the Nobel Peace Prize! Perth Airport must have been chockers with arrivals for One Movement! Did the minister have to open the Royal Australian Air Force base at Pearce for the overflow of international visitors and the scores of jumbo jets bringing in these hordes?

Then of course it is off to “Talkin’ Texas” by Mr Chitty and, surprise, yet another One Movement director—Sat Bisla. Meanwhile, Saskia is busy blogging from Adelaide and the eastern states, and millions of converts to One Movement sign up to come to One Movement in Perth. Saskia blogs that this is “largely due to the fact it fills a massive void in the Asia Pacific”. Not only is One Movement going to get the minister the Nobel Peace Prize; it is now going to be bigger than the Olympic Games!

The minister handed over \$800 000 and funded all this missionary zeal to get millions of people to Perth; yet, what threshold did the minister agree to with One Movement to give it the money? Just 100 international delegates and 350 interstate delegates. The minister was quite happy to include the freebies in the totals. If I were the minister, I would have demanded to see the passports of those international delegates to make sure they were not staffers, mates and the commercial music “purple circle”.

On 3 June this year, the minister answered in a question from me that \$8.2 million in direct visitor expenditure was expected from One Movement. That is real money—not freebies, contra and in kind. Show us that money, minister. Through the unanswered question 1824, I am trying to find out how much value-adding the minister did as she was funding, feeding and entertaining all these interstate musical heavyweights.

Tomorrow night the Australian Recording Industry Association awards are being held, yet again, in Sydney. With all the ARIA bigwigs allegedly visiting One Movement, surely a canny minister would have made sure that they knew that WA wanted the ARIAs here and would use the might of her sponsorship largesse to get a commitment from them.

This issue is about ministerial oversight. Chuggy, Sunset Events and all the other brilliant live commercial music operators do their jobs really well, but they are commercial businesspeople. A much more prudent City of Perth has just funded Sunset Events—one-third of the troika behind One Movement Pty Ltd—to deliver an excellent Northbridge festival at a fraction of the cost the minister got suckered into. It delivered crowds of around 75 000. Unlike One Movement, for which not one local musician was paid, musicians got paid at the Northbridge festival.

If the minister understood her portfolio, she would have realised there are much better local proposals that would give WA music and tourism a much better, audited outcome for about a \$200 000 investment. The new

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government came into power in September 2008. The minister has changed a number of policies. She has not delivered on a number of commitments from the former government. She has waxed and waned on many, many things. If she was not asleep at the wheel, she would have been looking after this proposal properly.

The minister was informed and warned by me for several months before One Movement was held about the problems with this sponsorship. The minister failed to act. The minister is responsible for this mess. The minister asserted that this was somehow an agreement of the previous Labor government. Let us look at statements by the previous Labor government. On 28 October 2006, Minister McHale announced a commitment of \$500 000 for the “In the City” conference. This was supposed to be a WA-based music conference.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr J.N. HYDE: A \$500 000 commitment was made for that first year. It was expected to generate more than \$5.2 million in economic impact and 1 200 delegates by 2009. The event was postponed but still mooted as “In the City” until at least the change of government. We have emails from Mr van Ooran, the chief executive officer, to various people urging them to speak to Sunset Events about “In the City”. At some point in this government the minister became responsible for a bloated \$2.7 million One Movement For Music festival. The previous minister made public statements that “In the City” was to be based in WA, paying WA musicians. By the time the minister got to the helm, it had become One Movement For Music Pty Ltd, there was no local involvement and it was run by the troika that formed the private company. The three groups involved were Sunset Events, the Perth group; Chugg Entertainment, the biggest entertainment company in Australia—including Michael Chugg, who has just been announced amongst the top 50 entertainment millionaires in Australia; and the Los Angeles company A&R Worldwide.

Minister, do not try to flog this back on the previous government. The minister is the one signing the cheques. The minister was the one who put out the press releases praising One Movement For Music. She is the minister who put out the press release stating that 50 000 people had attended. The issue here is the minister’s inability to convince us that she is in control of her portfolio. The minister said 50 000 people were there. All the evidence that the minister has produced, through answers to questions on notice, prove that she did not put in place safeguards and allowed the handover of money without proper oversight. The minister is the one in charge. If that is not correct, the minister has misled the house in those scant answers to questions on notice. She has also not answered the existing questions on notice. The Premier needs to step in to guarantee a proper audit of government sponsorship of One Movement.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It sounds like Global Dance.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It reeks of Global Dance, especially since the Minister for Health was touched up for \$50 000, and the Minister for Tourism has been scammed for \$2.7 million and a 25-year commitment. I gave the minister all this information months and months ago. She has had the chance to deny it, to go to her bureaucrats to find out what was happening and to make sure that the Barnett government was not agreeing to what was being promoted.

In the minister’s role as education minister, I call on her to show —

Mr C.J. Barnett: When did the member give this information to the minister?

Mr J.N. HYDE: While the Premier was out, I referred to more than 10 questions on notice that detailed all this information.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is not information.

Mr J.N. HYDE: In the minister’s role as education minister, I call on her to show some leadership with the Mount Lawley Primary School out-of-school heritage building. The Heritage Council has acknowledged in writing to stakeholders that the —

Dr E. Constable: It is not a heritage building. That is the member’s mistake.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The heritage minister does not think so. He is not a stickler for heritage at all. He is not promoting it. The Heritage Council has acknowledged in writing that the out-of-school building—probably built around 1918—is an integral part of the heritage assessment of the whole site. Although the Minister for Heritage says that he will not prohibit demolition, he is encouraging relocation that is fit and proper. They would not advocate the relocation unless they acknowledged some of the heritage value. This is a great win for Mt Lawley heritage lovers and the school community. In modern heritage practice, moving a heritage-listed building can be justified. The original timber building has been moved before. If the only alternative to demolition is moving it again, I hope that the full heritage assessment underway will recommend it, as the letter I received from the Minister for Heritage today says. It is needless scaremongering for the minister to say that the new building

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works at the school—largely funded by the federal government—are under threat. The education minister needs to take the lead and agree that the after-school building is heritage and of value to the community and to simply move it. We need the education minister and the silent local member to state that the building will not be demolished and that an after-school centre will be guaranteed for Mt Lawley parents. Apart from the building's fabric, its cultural heritage over the years, including its modern use for after-school care, should weigh heavily in a full heritage assessment.

I have just touched on two major issues. I hope the minister addresses the intricate issues regarding One Movement. This is a most serious financial encumbrance on the government and it has been asleep at the wheel as problem after problem after problem was brought to its attention.

DR E. CONSTABLE (Churchlands — Minister for Education) [5.01 pm]: I find this a very curious motion because it is the first private member's motion about either education or tourism in 14 months. For 14 months the member for Midland —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We could have had one a couple of weeks ago but the minister was not here!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I was under an anaesthetic—thank heavens I did not have to listen to you!

Several members interjected.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That would have been 13 and a half months, so that was pretty good!

The member for Midland, the shadow Minister for Education, has had nothing much to say about education for 14 months.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We had a matter of public interest debate with the minister the other week!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It took the member 13 and a half months then!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members, please!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will go back to some of the basics in this matter. I sat and listened to what the member for Midland had to say and I do not think she used the word “children” once. In more than 30 minutes she did not use the word “children”. I thought education was about children.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The motion was actually about you—that's why—and your incompetence!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Education is about children and it is about —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: This motion is about your incompetence, though.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I will step back for a minute to make the comment that I believe that education is a fundamental tenet of any democracy. Unless people have the opportunity to be well-educated, they cannot participate fully in a democratic society. That is where we start from. We want to ensure that every child in Western Australia has that opportunity. That is where we start from. There is no question that if people are illiterate or semilliterate that they cannot participate in the way that they should be given the opportunity to participate. The role of government is to ensure that we have good schools and good teachers for children and that we provide them with the best education we possibly can. Without providing that, we are not doing our job. Therefore, it is a basic obligation of government to provide those things if we are going to have a decent education system.

In the 60 weeks since this government came into power on 23 September 2008, the member for Midland has asked 45 questions on notice. That is less than one question a week. The member has not been able to think of one question to ask for each week that we have been in power. That is how interested in education she has been. The member then came into this place making accusations about an attempted abduction that never happened and a permanent school lockdown that has never happened.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We cannot get to every minister at every question time!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am talking about questions on notice. The member could not even write a question on notice every week for the past 60 weeks. She is devoid of ideas about education.

Mr M. McGowan: One week you're complaining about too many freedom of information requests and now you're not!

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Dr E. CONSTABLE: I used to ask more than 45 questions on notice about education a year and I was not a shadow Minister for Education!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The minister has not answered about 10 of the questions that I have listed for her! I am still waiting for answers for about 10 of them.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Let us look at the record of this government in the past 14 months. It has a very strong record on education.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We have set out to improve schools and —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We have set out to improve educational programs, to improve the delivery of those programs, to improve educational outcomes for children and to value teachers. Let us start with valuing teachers.

For more than a year before the election, there were constant problems with our schools because the previous government was not able to come to grips with the teachers —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We set about first of all improving the conditions of teachers in our schools and we almost immediately gave them a six per cent pay rise in good faith saying to them that we value teachers and we want to settle this pay dispute so that we can all get on with what we do best—that is, providing good education for children in schools. Within 40 days of coming into government, we successfully negotiated a new agreement with the teachers that the previous government had been working on for more than a year in the most acrimonious circumstances.

What happened at the beginning of this school year? There was a full complement of teachers in our schools. There were problems with distribution and we know that those problems are looming in the future but this year we started with a calm set of circumstances in our schools and a full complement of teachers.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Poor old graduates sitting there without a job!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Labor in government, I might say, did not pay any attention to planning for the future workforce shortage that has been looming for a long time in not only Western Australia but also across Australia. We know that there will be a massive shortage and that shortage will be even worse than originally thought because it will be exacerbated by the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. These are major problems that need to be solved and the planning had not been done for that but we are doing that now.

In my early discussions at schools and also with the union it was raised that one of the biggest problems facing schools' improvement is school behaviour. I have certainly said before that the former government started some really good initiatives in that area, some of which we have continued and we have also put in place some new initiatives. One of the former government's really good initiatives was the behaviour centres. I think they were all set up in the city and we have taken the next step to fund —

Mr M. McGowan: They weren't all in the city; there's one in Kalgoorlie.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That is right, and we are putting a second one in Kalgoorlie, which I think is the secondary behaviour centre. The six behaviour centres that we will fund at the cost of \$18 million will be in Hedland, Geraldton, another one in Kalgoorlie, and Bunbury. Another initiative in the \$46 million behavioural management package includes providing schools with access to chaplains if they wish to have that access, and that was a \$10 million promise coming into the election.

An area that is very close to my heart of course is having a good school psychology service. The commitment is to appoint an extra 50 school psychologists over four years.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: How many has the government appointed so far?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think there has actually been only about half a dozen, which I am very disappointed with. We have been undertaking negotiations with the University of Western Australia to partner with it in ensuring that we can up that number. A recent advertisement produced 24 applications so I am very hopeful that

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we will be able to catch up very quickly in that area. We will fund school psychologists to undertake the mental first aid program, which is very, very important given what we know about the number of young people with mental health problems. A statewide school psychology service has been established and the new head of that service has been appointed with four specialist behavioural psychologists, so we have been definitely working to strengthen that. There are continuing problems that successive governments have faced with the distribution of staff including psychologists. It is sometimes very difficult to get psychologists and other specialist staff in rural and remote areas, as we know. We are funding the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies program for young children to help them adapt early. We all know that if we work with children at an early age, we are more likely to have success and they are more likely to be successful later in life. Of course, funds for CARE schools are a very important part of this program as well.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We all know—I will not go into a lot of detail—that there is a huge and comprehensive capital works program in place that is a partnership between the commonwealth and the state. The Building the Education Revolution money is very welcome in this state. We have certainly seen a catch up on maintenance—there was a huge backlog upon coming into government. That is a real plus for all schools. The other big plus of course is that all primary schools in this state have the opportunity to access Building the Education Revolution money over the next two or three years. I am very pleased that the federal Minister for Education has delayed some of that funding, because the time lines were tight. We have been able to keep up with those time lines until now, but as the economy of the state picks up, it may well become much harder to keep up with the deadlines that have been imposed on us.

Literacy and numeracy is the most fundamental area to which it is really important to provide funding and support. The key element in this area is the government's funding package of almost \$5 million to improve literacy and numeracy standards in our schools. Funds have been provided for resources and programs to support principals and teachers to provide for the needs of their students. Teacher resources that concentrate on grammar, punctuation and spelling are very important, as are resources that allow principals to develop, with their staff, a whole-school approach to literacy and so on. All these resources are really important if we are to make improvements in the state's results. We know that this year there was steady improvement in the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy results. I hope that we can incrementally improve those results in the coming years. That is our aim.

Another important area of literacy is the on-entry assessment of children. Next year we will pilot those on-entry assessments, so that children can start to be assessed at a very early age at preprimary school, and when they go into year 1, teachers will have diagnostic information so that they can help those children who need extra help. These assessments will also help us to identify children who are talented or gifted and to provide appropriate programs for those children.

There have been many areas in which this government has taken enormous steps forward and made enormous gains to assist teachers and children and to improve our schools. One of the central improvements and changes that we have made is to herald a new era in Western Australian schools with the independent public schools initiative. This initiative, which was announced earlier this year, will empower school communities and staff and principals to have more flexibility to be independent of the centralised education system. The top-down centralised system of education is no longer needed in the modern era. We need to empower school communities and principals to do what they know they do well. I did not expect to receive more than 100 applications in the first instance; I thought that about 60 or 70 would show that there was real support for this program. But 102 school communities have put up their hands and said that this is what they want. We know that the needs of a school in a remote or rural area are quite different from those of a large metropolitan high school. Thirty-four schools were chosen in the first round of this initiative and they will pave the way for large numbers of schools to come on board in the coming years. It has been a great initiative and has been embraced very much by the education community in Western Australia.

This government and I have looked at the issues in education that are really important if children are to learn and to succeed in life, and that is where we have directed our effort and our funding. We have supported teachers. We value teachers. Our teachers are the highest paid teachers in Australia. They deserve to be well paid, and they are well paid. We overcame that issue.

There are many other things that I could talk about, and I will mention just two or three of them. We increased the boarding allowance for secondary school students. We know that there is a real demand for children in rural

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and remote areas to attend both government and non-government boarding facilities so that they can have the best opportunities. We increased the boarding allowance for secondary school students. Some excellent partnerships were entered into before we came to office, and they have been continued under this government—for instance, with BHP Billiton at Hedland and Newman and with Woodside at Karratha. Next week I will be in Karratha to turn the sod for the early childhood centre that will be built at Tambrey Primary School. We have worked with the police. There is a police and citizens youth club at Gilmore College and police work with children with behavioural problems. We have dealt with and are encouraging myriad matters to improve our schools.

I will now make a few comments about tourism. When we came to government in September last year, we were just beginning to get a sense that there might be a real issue in the global economic downturn that would affect tourism. It became evident very quickly that that would be a major factor for this industry, which depends very much on discretionary spending. Although we have strong business tourism and some education tourism in this state, leisure tourism is fundamental to a strong tourism industry. We commissioned Geoff Carmody to write a report to give us some indication of the sorts of things we would need to do to support the tourism industry. This government has elevated the tourism industry to the position it deserves in our community. This industry is equal to the agriculture industry in what it provides in the community. Many thousands of small businesses, as well as larger businesses, are involved in this wonderful industry that is absolutely essential to this state, especially rural and remote areas. It is an industry that employs 80 000 people. Again, it is fundamental to the economy because it employs so many people. It was very important for the government to very early on determine how it could support the industry. With the assistance of the recommendations in the Carmody report, and in working with the industry, we have refocused our marketing activities to encourage more people to travel within Western Australia. We have targeted our marketing activities at interstate travellers and at our near neighbours in Singapore and Malaysia, because we know that those people look to Western Australia. We know that it is also very important to target high-spending visitors. Although we might have fewer of those visitors, they spend a huge amount of money within this industry.

We established the tourism round table, which included members of the tourism industry and Tourism WA and its board. They worked together on, and monitored very closely last year and throughout this year, what was happening in the industry. That was an important aspect of how we targeted our marketing activities. The Holiday at Home campaign came out of that round table. That campaign was meant to run from January to March, but it was so successful that we extended it to May. The many hundreds of people in this industry I have met around the state have said that the one thing they need the government to assist them with is marketing. Two hundred and sixty tourism businesses partnered with the government during that Holiday at Home campaign. That is a very good example of how government can support this great industry of ours. During the year, because I knew it was such an important year due to the economic circumstances, I made a point of moving around the state as often as I could to meet people in the tourism industry, as well as those people in Perth, some of whom I have met more than once. There were a few key messages from that: one is marketing; one is events because that supports marketing; and another is please be involved in cutting red tape so that we can move ahead with infrastructure. They are the sorts of things that this government will continue to do. One of the highlights of the year in tourism I think has been the launch of the Naturebank program. This is something that has been in the making since Hon Norman Moore was the Minister for Tourism way back at the beginning of the 1990s. It was followed through and reviewed in the seven and a half years of the previous government, and we have taken it on knowing that one of the most important areas in tourism in Western Australia is the promotion of our landscape and making sure that not only Western Australians, but also visitors from interstate and overseas have the opportunity to learn about it and visit it and to stay in environmentally sustainable accommodation within our national parks. Naturebank will be a key area as we move forward and it is being embraced by the industry as well.

I would like to finish with a comment about trading hours. As we know, extended trading hours are really important to this industry.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I hope the minister will address the One Movement argument.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Members opposite have not supported the tourism industry at all in this regard. It is one of the biggest issues that the tourism industry faces.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Are you going to fund One Movement next year? At least answer that.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Members opposite do not support the tourism industry because they do not support extended trading hours.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Answer the arguments that have been made. What an abysmal performance.

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Dr E. Constable: They were not arguments; they were fantasy from the member for Midland and gobbledegook —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What about Aboriginal schools; what about the school cleaners' report; what about the One Movement in tourism? You didn't answer any of it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members!

MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley) [5.22 pm]: I rise to speak against the motion. I will speak about the education component, and I do so from two positions: firstly, from education within my electorate and, secondly, from my experiences in education personally. I thank the minister for supporting the schools in my electorate and for taking the time to visit my electorate on a couple of occasions so far this year. I have really appreciated it and I know that the people involved in education in my schools certainly also have appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with the minister and have her listen to them rather than have to go through other channels. Firstly, there was an education forum with principals, deputy principals and the parents and citizens association represented by either the president or the chairman, which was a very informal chat. There were no formalities; it was a great opportunity for those people to speak directly to the minister. I commend the minister because she did not try to tell them things; she listened to what they said. That does not often happen with ministers, so I appreciate that very much. A number of concepts were floated and discussed, and that demonstrated the minister's willingness to look at things differently rather than do them the same way that they have always been done. This subsequently resulted in a site visit to two of my schools recently and incorporated a visit to the intensive language centre. As I said, this developed out of the minister being willing to listen to a different way of delivering education and how we might consider its future. I appreciate that and look forward to an educational precinct in the Greenwood area being progressed.

I acknowledge the progress that has been made since the election and the commitments given because of that. Following a number of issues we have had to deal with, the Greenwood primary school is now under construction. It is envisaged that students will be in there in term 4, 2010. That is an exciting prospect because it has taken a long time. Construction of fencing around Woodvale Primary School will commence very soon. That does not mean very much, but that school has spent so much money on removing graffiti and fixing vandalism that the fence will be worth a great deal, not just financially but also in the way it is perceived by the students and teachers. Those sorts of things are immeasurable and we must progress them. Woodvale Senior High School has received lots of funding because the maintenance was far behind and there is more development to come.

I also took the opportunity recently to spend half a day working at one of my local primary schools. It was good to go back and be part of a school. I did not do it as a teacher, even though that is my background; I did it as an education assistant. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to be among the students, to sit with them and to listen to and spend time with them. Today I want to speak about the move to create and develop independent public schools because it is a fantastic initiative.

Mr P. Abetz: Hear, hear!

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: It should have been introduced and supported a long time ago by the Department of Education and by previous ministers. I believe it will make a considerable difference to the education of our young people because I believe that education has been stymied. I have a background in education, as many members are aware, although I have been out of the teaching profession for a great number of years. It is interesting that in my previous employment in regional Western Australia, a lot of my involvement was with schools, and education remains part of that involvement. I have come into this role and realised that it very much involves education. I certainly appreciate it and have watched how, in some cases, things have not changed much at all over that incredible length of time. One thing that has concerned me is the perception that teachers cannot do anything; that they just have to comply with what the department wants. That is why I believe this initiative for independent public schools is outstanding. Many teachers have some great ideas but they do not know what to do with them. Through this initiative, they will be given those opportunities.

I will give members a couple of examples of my own experience. I will go back a fair way—to the late 1970s and Kwinana Senior High School.

Several members interjected.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I am sorry; I have declared it! Yes, it was the late 1970s. I was a young teacher at the time, but we all know that Kwinana Senior High School is now called Gilmore College. I must admit that I learnt a great deal in my first couple of years there. I was with some great teachers, and often at those sorts of schools we learn some interesting techniques. We wanted a better outcome for those young people so we decided to stream our classes according to ability. It was before the days when streaming was allowed. We actually did that.

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I have to say that the teacher satisfaction was much better and the student satisfaction was much better, and we felt that we were achieving something. But guess what? We were told we could not do that: "That's not allowed; you can't do that; you've got to go back to the way it was." We experienced that and returned to what we had to do. We were not prepared to stand up for our ideas in those days. It was interesting because not long after that, levels came into lower school and people were using that system. But by then we had probably moved on to other things.

At a later time in my life—in the big 2000—I was in the Kimberley and we were working in Derby and Fitzroy Crossing. Indigenous education and participation was an issue. I had taken with me a gentleman who had come over to Perth from New Zealand because I was very impressed with what he had achieved there. I will explain that a bit later. We were speaking to the principals and teachers of Derby Senior High School and Fitzroy Crossing Senior High School, trying to assist them to overcome some of the issues they were dealing with. We had a concept that had a great deal of merit. They were quite keen to know how to teach it, and we talked about it. I was using sport and recreation to achieve these outcomes, which is why I was there. It was through this vehicle that we could achieve a decrease in truancy and increased educational outcomes. But do members know what was disappointing? Firstly, one principal said, "We don't have a problem and I don't want to deal with any." Other principals looked at us blankly and said, "We can't do that; we're not allowed to do that." I could not believe it. We were a long way away and I felt like saying, "But the education department would not know what you were doing." Nonetheless, there was that fear that we cannot do that because we have to do what the department says, even though the curriculum was not relevant and did not fit. At that time, they could not even engage the kids, let alone teach them. The system might have been good in one or two areas but it certainly was not relevant in regional Western Australia.

Mr T.G. Stephens: It is one thing for the minister to display such emotion, but it is another thing altogether for you to then follow on and do exactly the same.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I thank the member for Pilbara, but I am talking about the value of independent schools in which people can undertake refresher courses to make their education relevant.

I will refer to the concept that we were embracing. I will also refer to another example in which somebody did something different after going to the education department in New Zealand, and then came to Western Australia. He went to the education department in New Zealand and after establishing that he was the principal of a low socioeconomic school in Auckland he said, "I'm wasting your time; I'm wasting your money. I think you should shut this school down." The department asked him what it could do. He said, "If you give me free rein, I will do it." Guess what he did? He had students graduating, students getting apprenticeships and students getting jobs. He introduced a new regime for the school community. He came to Perth because his family was here, and went to the Department of Education and Training and was told to apply for a job like everybody else. We need to embrace people to give them an opportunity. We now have that opportunity through this concept of independent public schools.

Education is one of the most important issues in our state. Without education and the ability and willingness to learn, our state will not progress, Western Australians will not achieve their potential and this state will be a follower of other states rather than creating its own future. There is much to do in education and I believe we have started to do some of those things. I do not support this motion.

MR T.G. STEPHENS (Pilbara) [5.31 pm]: I find it extraordinary that we have before us a serious motion moved in condemnation of the Minister for Education.

Mr P. Abetz: Do you think it's serious?

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: It is very serious, because there have been issues raised in this house that are important and to which there should have been answers delivered by the Minister for Education, who is the subject of this motion. Instead of being given those answers we were given a prepared delivery of unrelated press releases that had been rehashed and redelivered to the chamber in an attempt to respond to the shadow Minister for Education and the shadow Minister for Tourism.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members!

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Both shadow ministers raised serious issues that warrant response.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

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Mr T.G. STEPHENS: This house is entitled to be given a response by the minister to the issues that have been raised.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members. I asked members twice to keep quiet. I call the Minister for Mental Health and also the member for Carine to order. When I call members to be quiet, it does not mean that they continue to talk.

Mr P. Abetz interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Is the member for Southern River canvassing my ruling? I saw both members talking, but if the member for Southern River has a different opinion he may take the chair.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Serious charges—serious complaints and concerns—have been made against this minister. I will reiterate to the house the reasons that this motion should be carried, particularly in the absence of any response from the minister. The minister had the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised by the shadow Minister for Education about school cleaning contracts. A response was not forthcoming. She had the opportunity to respond to concerns about the issues of Aboriginal education and the future of remote community education for Indigenous people, but she did not respond. She had the opportunity to respond to concerns about the tourism portfolio, but she did not respond.

In reference to an article in today's *The Australian*, serious issues have been raised by journalist Nicolas Perpitch. He expressed concern about the future education of some Indigenous students at the Patjarr community. The article indicates that a decision has been taken to close that school and withdraw the teacher. The shadow Minister for Education put to the house that this is another set of circumstances that deserves a reply from this minister. Instead, the minister was silent on this issue. This house is entitled to know what is the intention of the minister.

This is a minister who in the past few years, before she became a minister, was a bleeding heart in respect of issues of Indigenous education. However, when she has the opportunity to respond to the challenges of people who are in need she shows heartlessness and will not respond to the legitimate issues raised in this motion moved by the shadow Minister for Education. I think she deserves to be condemned for her heartlessness and failure to respond.

Those individuals at Patjarr community and also the other communities referred to by the shadow Minister for Education—the Ngurrawaana community and the Youngaleena community—are entitled to hear, through this debate, what the education minister is intending to do to respond to the educational challenges with which they are faced. Instead she is silent.

When the minister was on this side of the house and my colleagues were in government, she would strongly join me in holding Labor government ministers to account. I do not care whether a minister is of my political persuasion. I took the opportunity when I sat on the government backbenches to raise serious issues with ministers. I had that conviction and I will not drop my concerns or convictions because I am on this side of the house now that there is a coalition government in place.

I am consistent in the expression of my concerns on the issues of Indigenous and remote and regional education. I took the fight up to my colleagues when they sat on the ministerial benches and they were forced to respond and so, too, should this minister. She has not and she will not. She will not even raise her head in the debate to respond to the challenges confronting remote and regional communities. She did not respond to the issues raised by the shadow Minister for Education; she has not responded to the serious issues and concerns that have been raised.

This house has the opportunity to do something serious about this minister, and if it is not done by carrying this motion—the bully boys opposite, with their numbers, will defend this minister despite the fact that she does not warrant that defence—there is the opportunity for committees of this house to look more closely and more thoroughly at what is going on in this portfolio. The member for Kingsley, who sits behind the minister, failed to raise a single issue in defence of the minister and instead related some story from ancient history before the Peloponnesian War to illustrate what was occurring in education in the 1970s. She ignored the current issues facing the education portfolio. It is all very well to know what went on in the Peloponnesian history of ancient Greece, or whatever it was she was talking about.

The member for Kingsley managed to put me to sleep and the minister managed to put me to sleep. Now the house has the opportunity to come to life and hold this minister to account. She is required and obliged to respond to the charges that have been laid against her in this house for her failure to respond to the challenges

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that face the education portfolio. What did this minister do? Absolutely nothing. She showed incompetence, heartlessness and a complete inability to handle her portfolios. The minister is protected by the Premier, despite the fact that he has plenty of talented people on his backbench from which he could draw if he wanted to replace her.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr M.P. WHITELY: The member for Pilbara indicated that there was plenty of talent on the government backbench. He has misled the house. I insist that he withdraw.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I withdraw. I am sorry to mislead the house.

Debate Resumed

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: There are some members on the other side of the house who, during question time, try to strut their stuff and prove that they have the capacity to be ministerial material, and could take the place of this minister who has displayed her incompetence through her failure to address the arguments put to her by the shadow Minister for Education. I have never before seen a debate like this in this place in which a minister seriously charged with complaints, concerns and issues ignores all the complaints, concerns and issues and then puts the chamber to sleep. I fell asleep. Did she reply to any of the concerns that were raised? I was told that not a single response was made to the issues that were raised.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members!

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: The member for Wagin can laugh. Does he know that I am a pleasant bloke? I am a cordial sort of a chap and I do not take offence lightly.

Mr T.K. Waldron: But how do you know if you were asleep? How do you work that out? I can't get it.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I had to go and check. Did the minister answer any of the concerns that were raised? I was told that she did not answer one.

Mr T.K. Waldron: Who have you been listening to?

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I think I would have woken up if I had heard her say something that resonated with the issues concerned.

I can say this in a friendly and light-hearted way: it would be an all-time low for the Parliament if this minister gets away with this. If the next speaker on his feet is the Premier and he rushes to her defence, it will compound the insult that has been delivered today to the Parliament and to the community. Instead of addressing any issue that was raised, there was silence, there were red herrings and there were ancient press releases rolled out in a prepared speech that had no regard for the serious issues and concerns raised. I am telling members on both sides of this house that it will be an all-time low if they allow a minister like this to get away with what she has just done. It would never have been allowed nor tolerated by the minister when she sat on this side of the house outside government attacking government ministers. She would typically attack Labor ministers. Occasionally she would express concern about some of her fellow travellers, but on this occasion she has failed her own standards as she articulated them from this side of the house. We once thought that she was an ethical person who would stand by the ethics that she articulated. Instead of that, since she has moved to the government front bench, she has dropped the ethics that she previously protested about.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: She has dropped her standards and is now advocating to this place that a minister can ignore a serious motion like this and simply not respond to any of the issues that were raised. What do I tell the kids out at Patjarr in reply to the issue?

Dr E. Constable: There aren't any. I have been there. It's one school that has 10 kids.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: There are in fact. Today I have been on the phone and I have found that there are some kids out there in that community and they want to know what will happen to their education. It may well be that there are not enough children to justify a full school or a school teacher. There may be another response from the government to the needs of these children, but why did the minister not deliver that response? There might be some plans that the minister has for the Ngurrawaana community and the small number of students there or for the students at Youngaleena. However, as the issue has been raised in this place, surely those children, their families and the community are entitled to an answer; or do people only in places like Churchlands get an answer from this minister in response to their needs? I have the task of championing and representing these people and I

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was pleased that the shadow minister raised the issue that was published today in the national daily newspaper, *The Australian*, about the Patjarr community. What do we get from this minister? Silence. What do we get when we lobby for those communities to get some support from the minister for the One Laptop per Child program that might give them some opportunities for responding to the challenges of education? Silence. Do they get any funds out of the minister in the education portfolio that might equip them with the information technology that might be able to be rolled out around that community? No. Instead of that, I have to rely on a national charity to fund the One Laptop per Child program to roll through the Martu communities of my electorate to meet the IT challenges and needs of those communities. What do I get from this minister? Deafness, silence and heartlessness. Now in this debate she does not respond to the challenges and the tasks laid before her.

I am sorry to the member for Girrawheen if I am a bit noisy.

Ms M.M. Quirk: That's okay.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Perhaps the house would be open to a suggestion to suspend so much of standing orders to let the minister have another go. Perhaps the next member who rises to speak after me will move that so much of standing orders be suspended as to allow the minister to have a second crack at a response to this debate.

Mr P. Papalia: She couldn't do any worse!

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I would certainly like to hear from her again to see whether she is prepared to respond to anything that has been raised by the two previous speakers in this debate. They are serious issues. They are important issues. Instead of that, this minister, with the shield of protection from her patronage of the Premier, thinks that she can avoid accountability to the community of Western Australia by not responding to the challenges and needs of people in remote areas, the needs of school cleaners, the needs of the education portfolio and the challenges facing the tourism portfolio. It is not good enough. This style and approach should not be tolerated by this government. It is not a standard that is expected of members of this place. The current Premier and current Leader of the House have talked about raising the standards of parliamentary accountability in this house. Instead of that, the Premier appears to be about to protect and defend a minister who has shown the worst form of standards in this debate to date by not answering or responding to a single issue raised. When have members ever before seen that happen? In which serious debate in a Westminster Parliament have members ever before seen that happen? I have never seen it. I have always seen ministers at least respond, even if it was a response to only one or two points in order to keep good form. On this occasion not a single response was forthcoming from the minister to the serious issues raised. That would be an all-time low. If members on the government side of the house are going to tolerate this type of response from their ministers, heaven help them and heaven help Western Australia. The people of Western Australia and of regional Western Australia deserve better from their ministers, this minister in particular.

Mr D.T. Redman: Regional Western Australia has got some of the best outcomes it has had for a very long time.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: It must be from the legacy of the previous government, because it certainly has not come from this Minister for Education. It has not come from the translation of any compassion and concern she raised when she was outside power. Now that she is in power there has been only heartlessness, deafness, and a failure to respond. The only things on display from this minister are arrogance and insulation. She is protected and shielded by the Premier.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You were here but you can't remember either.

Mr A.J. Simpson: You were asleep.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I confess that she put me to sleep, but I would have woken up if she had responded to any issue that was raised. I am sure I would have woken up, or someone might have nudged me, if she had come close to saying something that was relevant to the debate. Did anyone hear anything?

Mr E.S. Ripper: You are absolutely right there.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I thought I was right, and I think that is exactly what happened. I am told that absolutely nothing happened. Instead of that, she rattled off press release after press release. I am thoroughly disgusted at the minister's response today, and I am concerned about the arrogance she has continued to display in her time as a minister. She has not risen to the standards that she articulated when she was on this side of the house. She was part of the process that I was part of then in holding ministers to account. I am serious about the task of being a parliamentarian. I am serious about the concerns, needs and interests of Western Australians. The minister should do better than she has done in this debate today.

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MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot) [5.50 pm]: I consider any censure motion against any minister or member of this house to be very important and something that should be considered in all seriousness. Before we make a judgement on the behaviour of any minister —

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The member for Rockingham can laugh, but he is at the top of my little list. The point I was making is that before we condemn anyone —

Point of Order

Mr M.P. WHITELY: My point of order relates to relevance. We are not discussing a censure motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Before we move any motions condemning anyone, we have to look at the standards that were set by the former government in comparison with the standard that is being set by this government. In all fairness, every member of this house, regardless of politics, should seriously consider that.

I will not go into ancient history, but over seven and a half years the former government had three education ministers—Hon Alan Carpenter from 16 February 2001 to 10 March 2005, Hon Ljiljana Ravlich from 10 March 2005 to 13 December 2006 and the member for Rockingham from 13 December 2006 to 23 September 2008.

I will start with one point that the lead speaker for the opposition made in criticism of the Minister for Education. She said that the minister had not released a report. I have one word for the member for Rockingham—he knows what I am going to say—and that is “Twomey”. I refer members to a newspaper article dated 26 April 2008—this is the member for Rockingham’s legacy as education minister—with the headline “Teachers angry as McGowan hides report”. It states —

Education Minister Mark McGowan came under renewed pressure yesterday to release a five-month-old report hailed —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, we are talking about the current Minister for Education. You are getting off the track. I hope this is leading towards supporting your minister.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: When members opposite were speaking to this motion, I am glad they referred to their legacy and their track record because this is why I am also going to refer to their legacy and track record as I speak on this motion.

The member for Rockingham sat on a report for five months. He was asked why the government spent \$480 000 on a 12-member task force that was charged with investigating Western Australia’s teacher shortages by assessing teacher salaries, teacher workloads and regional concerns. When he was the education minister, the member for Rockingham blamed the five-month delay —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I hope you are getting on to the motion. Members on either side of the house, I do want to hear what the member is saying.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am starting to lose my voice. The former minister blamed the five-month delay in releasing the report on the fact that it had not been considered by cabinet. My comments are relevant because it is very important to compare the achievements of this minister with a former minister if the opposition is going to condemn her.

The other great hallmark of the member for Rockingham’s tenure as education minister is the fact that WA public schools had their poorest showing in the tertiary entrance examination in eight years under his watch. It does not end there. Parents of students voted with their feet. Public school enrolments in WA plunged to their lowest level as a percentage of overall enrolments in almost a decade while the member for Rockingham was the education minister.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They left in droves.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Yes, they left in droves. In 2006 there were 209 000-odd year 1 to year 12 public school students—66 per cent of all schoolchildren. In 1998 there were 200 206 public schools students, and 72 per cent of kids went to public schools. The figures on the Department of Education’s website only went back to 1998. Under the former minister’s watch, enrolments reached a record low. What was the member for Rockingham

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doing when he was the education minister? I make this comparison because we have not seen anything like some of the great things that he achieved when he was the education minister from the current education minister. His legacy as the education minister is that he hid reports, he could not negotiate pay rises, he had the lowest percentage of school students in government schools in a decade and the lowest showing in the TEE. He was too busy worrying about recruiting Reece Whitby to run against the member for Morley, he was too busy worrying about his family's emails to Brian Burke, he was too busy to apologise —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, will you get back to the motion, otherwise I will sit you down.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The former minister was also too busy to apologise for ethnic slurs. He left it up to the Premier to do it. I make these comparisons because that is the member for Rockingham's legacy as education minister.

I will turn to my observations of the current Minister for Education. I think it is worth weighing up the achievements of the two. I inherited Atwell College in my electorate from the member for Rockingham. When I went through the budgets of the former government —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, please. I want to hear this.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I do not have to say much. Members opposite are so easily amused.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, please. I want to hear what the member is saying.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: When I inherited Atwell College in my electorate, it amazed me to learn that it had been built to accommodate students up to year 10 only. Why would a major tertiary high school be built in metropolitan Perth to accommodate students up to year 10?

Mr J.R. Quigley: The Premier built one in Kinross when he was education minister and it's a good one. Ask the Premier why he built one in Kinross. It's a good institution.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mindarie, I am sure you would love to talk to the Premier, but you will have to do it outside so that I can hear the member for Jandakot.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Atwell College was built to accommodate students to year 10. The parents said to me that if we do not build a school to years 11 and 12, they will have to pull their kids out of that school and send them somewhere else to finish years 11 and 12. I thought that no government in its right mind would have built a school without funding years 11 and 12. It did not take long for the education minister to come out. Lo and behold, there was \$33 million in this year's budget to finish Atwell College. If ever there was a population explosion that was moving faster than the Minister for Education's own foresight, it was in my area. The member for Cockburn knows this as well as I. He knows about the number of people who have moved into Success in his electorate and into Auburn Grove in my electorate. Those suburbs are absolutely booming. There was absolutely no provision whatsoever from the former government —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, I will call to order the next person who opens his or her mouth.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: There was absolutely no provision whatsoever —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for West Swan to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGowan: He opened his mouth first.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for Rockingham to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Absolutely no money whatsoever was allocated for any further primary schools to be built in the area. It took one visit from the current Minister for Education to see that this was a problem and, lo and behold, in this year's budget, \$15 million —

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm