

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION — BACK OFFICE STAFF

**743. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:**

Can the Premier confirm that there are 954 officers in back office roles in the Department of Education, and that, of those, the government is intending to cut 800 jobs, as reported by the State School Teachers' Union?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

It is true that we have a range of savings across government to try to address the debt and deficit legacy left to us by the Liberal and National Parties in office. In addressing the debt and deficit left to us by the former government, we announced during the state budget process that we will have a voluntary targeted separation scheme across government of around 3 000 positions. I note that the opposition has been very supportive, up until today, of some of the measures we have been taking. In fact, I have some information here of the opposition being very supportive—in fact, from the Leader of the Opposition on 13 September no less. I will quote it just so members are aware —

We are going to hold government backbench members to account for the government's commitment to the Treasury's exceedingly tight expenditure growth in health, education, police, child protection, mental health and all the other areas. We will hold them to the targets in the budget. We will support them if the government achieves those targets via efficiencies,

We are going out there and are attempting to rein in budget expenditure that is not front line, and the opposition is now criticising us, despite saying two months ago that it was supportive of what we were trying to achieve. The fact that in question time the shadow Treasurer, no less, stands up and leads the charge against the government trying to manage the budget says it all about the state opposition. My mind turns to the editorial on Saturday about the state of the Liberal Party in Western Australia and about the state of the WA opposition—about how it has no tactics, no ability and no prospects. I think the member for Cottesloe was being too kind in his commentary towards the Leader of the Opposition that came out last Thursday—way too kind. I would have been far harsher; and, if I were the Leader of the Opposition, I would not be so harsh back to him.