

## EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

### *Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson)** informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.51 pm]: I move —

That this house expresses concern at the state government's handling of the education portfolio and undermining the quality of education for Western Australian children.

I want to make three arguments. Firstly, the government is politicising and misallocating both capital and recurrent funding to the education system, both for its political aims in marginal seats and to help its union mates. The government is also, through stealth, winding back the independent public school system.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** There is no other area of policy that the Liberal and National Parties are more proud of than our work on education. Let me go through it: independent public schools —

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes, we will go into that.

I continue. There was the student-centred funding model, moving year 7s to high school, a new Western Australian Certificate of Education system, vocational education and training expansion, \$3 billion worth of additional capital investment in schools, 46 new schools and 15 other schools—we upgraded them. That is twice the level of the previous Labor government. There were 1 890 additional full-time equivalent teachers and 2 500 additional education assistants.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** That is 2 500. That makes the ratio of students in need to an EA 50 per cent higher than the national average.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Water!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I know that the Labor Party went around and told a bunch of porkies about education assistants. The fact is that we expanded the number of education assistants by 50 per cent, or 2 500. We also focused on reducing administration costs. We reduced head office FTEs by over 600 people. The proof is in the pudding. When we came into government, many public schools did not have teachers, and students and parents were fleeing the public system for the private system. We turned that around, with the share of students going to the public system expanding year on year in recent times. We turned the rot around in the educational system. We also did not allocate capital spend according to politics like this government is. We spent and put the money into a long-needed reform of Hamilton Hill and South Fremantle Senior High Schools—something the people opposite claimed, but that we did.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** There were two schools in Ellenbrook —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, could you talk through the Chair, please. Members, I want to hear this in silence.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We invested in two schools in Ellenbrook and one in Armadale where student demands and needs were, rather than the politics and the union demand.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Sport and Recreation, I call you to order for the first time.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will go through staff cut policies in the public sector. During the election campaign, Labor said there was about \$200 million of unallocated money in the education budget, particularly for primary schools. The Liberal Party has a long history in education to ensure, especially with a fast-growing state, that schools are allocated according to growth areas and demand for students, particularly primary schools. That was about \$271 million. The Labor government took the money that was designated for certain schools by the Department of Education, as outlined in the budget, and reallocated it to marginal seats. It was not necessarily allocated to areas of educational need—some, but not all—it was allocated and used as a political tool to gain favour in marginal seats. That was done for both primary and secondary schools. In this year's budget, the government increased the overall capital expenditure on schools but it took the money from other allocations and reallocated it for political purposes. Over time, it is misallocating resources in the educational system and as a result schools in need of maintenance or construction will increasingly come to opposition and government members to illustrate the misallocation. I highlight that, but it may take some time.

One of the government's major initiatives was 300 additional education assistants. The Labor Party claimed the former government cut the number of education assistants. The fact is that there were 2 500 additional education assistants in our public school system. By a long margin, that was the highest staffing level of any state. So, it was a false claim. The Labor Party identified no need for the additional education assistants, which will cost in the vicinity of \$40 million. The government will have to raise more taxes to cover that, and that is not the only thing. The first motivation for the additional education assistants was that they are necessarily members of United Voice.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** That is true. It was giving United Voice 300 new members. It also introduced a wages policy that shifts their increase from 1.5 per cent to \$1 000. As a result, the government gave the education assistants \$12.5 million worth of additional wages. Its wages policy was skewed to help United Voice. Not only that, the government has hired United Voice to provide induction training for the 300-plus EAs that it hired. What it is doing, of course, is taking government money and giving it to one of the largest funders of the Labor Party—United Voice—to hire it to do the induction training for 300 people who the taxpayers are paying \$40 million a year to hire, and who are not needed. What does United Voice do with that money? It funds the Labor Party!

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** No, that is the truth.

The second motivation is independent public schools. The State School Teachers' Union of WA is quite clear that it never liked the IPS model. The Labor Party initially did not like the IPS model. Publicly, it came out and said that it was a good idea. The reason for that was it got mugged by reality and by the parents. The model was overwhelmingly popular and successful under our leadership. Pat Byrne has made it clear in the negotiations the government is having with her union—I think the enterprise bargaining agreement is up for negotiation now, or very shortly—that the changes this government put in place are, I quote her, “the first step of winding back IPS”.

Firstly, the government has indicated clearly and directed that principals must seek to hire staff from the pool. One of the most fundamental aspects of independent public schools is that principals have the right to hire staff.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** They choose their staff according to the needs and character of their school. It has been overwhelmingly popular and successful.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, last warning.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Last warning! The edict from on high from the new Minister for Education and Training is that principals must seek to take people from the pool of redeployment in the first instance. The Premier said that a large number of those people in redeployment are women coming back from maternity leave. That is false. When women have to and choose to take maternity leave, they do not get fired to sit in the office of redeployment. They take maternity leave for the period required and the school gets a temporary fix. Their position is maintained and they go back into substantive positions. That is just another illustration of the former Minister for Education either misleading Parliament or not understanding his former portfolio. Principals of IP schools must seek to find staff from the office of redeployment and the assessment must focus on the staff member's ability to undertake the role—that is, the staff member must have a degree in the appropriate area and a level of seniority—not competitiveness. The edict from on high states that it is not appropriate to compare the competitiveness of staff referred from the redeployment pool with other staff. In other words, they must take staff from the office of redeployment even if they are not the best and not competitive. They also say that if the person from the office of

redeployment needs further training—they must not necessarily be competitive—training must be provided to them. This is a clear attempt to undermine the core benefit of the IPS—that is, to give the principal of the IPS a one-line budget to choose the staff that they need.

Another attack on the IPS is that the government requires principals to provide permanency. In the past, principals have been allowed to hire staff for temporary purposes for whatever person they think is appropriate and necessary. The edict from on high is that they must now hire for permanency. Also, the agreement with the 300-plus education assistants is that they must be given permanency not to the education system but the school so that when most of the education assistants are hired to provide services to students with specific needs, when those kids move on, the EA stays, irrespective of the requirements. The government has done two things: it has told the principals who they can hire and it has forced them to hire with permanency. It is undermining two of the most important aspects of independent public schools, and this is being driven by the government's negotiation with the State School Teachers' Union of WA. The State School Teachers' Union has made it absolutely clear that in the negotiation of the enterprise bargaining agreement, it intends to systematically undermine independent public schools. It made that clear and the signs are that it is working quite effectively. One of the major reasons we have had regeneration and an increase in the market share to the public school system is that we have had growth, reinforcement and improvement in some of the larger secondary public schools—about seven or eight of them; actually, more than that—in which the numbers have grown dramatically and parents are choosing —

**Ms S.E. Winton:** They can't afford it!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** —to send their children to these excellent public high schools rather than to private schools. They are doing this for a reason; the schools are high quality. They have gifted and talented programs, diversity, and the scale to provide a range of educational experiences for kids across a range of educational abilities. In government, we reinforced and rebuilt many of these schools, expanded the GATE programs, and put in a student-centred funding model to add money for special needs students, and it paid off. This government is systematically pulling money away from those major high schools—both capital and recurrent—reallocating some money to other schools and allocating other money to reduce expenditure. The result will be—we will watch over the next four years—that those leading schools will increasingly struggle to compete with the private sector school system. As many members know, two of those schools are in my electorate, but there are many around. They are the cornerstone of the regeneration of our public school system and the government is hammering at them, taking money out of them, curtailing the ability of their principals to hire the best, telling the principals that they must have permanency and taking away flexibility. It is removing from all those schools over \$1 000 a child in excess of 1 200 students.

It has removed \$1.3 million from Willetton Senior High School, \$1 million from Rossmoyne Senior High School and over \$2 million from Churchlands Senior High School. Those schools have excellent principals and they will try their best to adapt, but it will mean fewer teachers, fewer courses offered, less variety and less ability to compete with the private school system. One member yelled out, "They can't afford it." Those schools provide education to children from families who cannot afford to go to private schools. They are the primary gateway for children from poorer families to go up the educational aspirational elevator. They provide the access to education for children from families on lower incomes and provide access to university and beyond. They are a major pathway and the government is chipping away at them steadily and purposely.

Independent public schools were probably the jewel in the crown of the Liberal–National government. It was a successful reform. The government inherited a system that had been reformed. It was well funded, well invested in and structured properly. It was the envy of all other states. Now, just a few months in, it is undermining that. We warn the government that we are watching it and the public will too.

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.08 pm]: I, too, rise on this matter of public interest. I think it is really important that we get on the record what our government inherited in 2008. Members in this house will no doubt remember the OBE disaster. Do members remember outcomes-based education? What an absolute disaster! It caused confusion —

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Member for Wanneroo, you are more annoying than crows around a dustbin! Quit it with your inane interjections!

We had the outcomes-based education debacle.

**Ms R. Saffioti** interjected.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** We had the now Premier, who was then the Minister for Education, presiding over a regime that saw Western Australian teachers as the lowest paid teachers in the nation.

**Ms R. Saffioti** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The Minister for Transport continues to interject on the member for Scarborough while she is on her feet and I ask that we be able to listen to the member in silence.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I do not think that is a point of order. It might be annoying, but it is not the basis for a point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** We had the lowest paid teachers in the nation. We started 2007 with 270 classes without teachers. We could not get teachers because they were not valued by this Premier, and we are headed down the same trajectory with this government. In 2008, 1 000 classes across 320 schools had more students than the Department of Education guidelines recommended. The State School Teachers' Union of WA and parents were going ballistic about that. The Toomey report that was commissioned by the now Premier gave the government advice on how to correct the disaster and the crisis in education. The former Labor government paid \$480 000, but the now Premier refused to release it under a freedom of information request until, finally, there was a gas crisis and the entire metropolitan area had a blackout. Then in the dead of night, in the middle of darkness when people could not turn on their TVs because they had no power, the Toomey report was released. What an act of absolute skulduggery. We had the lowest paid teachers in the country.

The now Premier came to a meeting of parents and teachers at Deanmore Primary School in my electorate. An entire block at Deanmore could not be used because every person who walked into those classrooms ended up with headaches and nausea. It was full of fungus and no-one could work in it so an entire school block was closed down. The principal of Deanmore Primary School was sitting at her desk and a chunk of concrete fell out of the wall and onto her desk. That was the state of the education system that the Liberal-National government inherited in 2008, and look at where it is now.

To give members an idea of where we are up to, in 2012-13 there were 20 583 teaching staff. Now that figure is at nearly 23 000. When we embarked on a scheme to improve efficiencies in the Department of Education, we looked at reducing the number of administrative staff. We ran a program so that from 2012-13 to 2016-17 we reduced the number of administrative staff by about 10 per cent.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It is interesting that the Minister for Tourism interjects about education assistants, because the number of support staff, which includes clerical staff and education assistants, went from 9 885 in 2012-13 to 11 127. It is a bigger number, member. That is not a cut; 11 127 is more than 9 885. When a number gets bigger, it is not a cut. This government says it will achieve these savings in education by reducing the number of administrative and clerical staff in head office. Let us look at who they are. The administrative and clerical staff component comprises 1 174 full-time equivalent positions, 693 of whom are looking after schools. They are on the front line, so they cannot be cut. That leaves 954 FTEs in central strategic and corporate services. We have to lose 800 of the 954 jobs from corporate services. That will leave 154 people in central strategic and corporate services to support our entire school and education system—154. Gee, I hope the government pays them well. But guess what? It will not be paying them well. Who is bearing the brunt of the wage freeze? We are heading back to the dark days of 2008 when our teachers were the lowest paid teachers in the country.

We had a wages freeze for teachers. Guess how much that will cost? Guess how much money the government is taking out of the pockets of teachers over the four years to 2021? It is \$153 840 000. Thirty per cent of the savings from the government's wages policy are going to come from our teachers—\$154 million out of the pockets of teachers over the next four years. We are heading rapidly to the dark days of 2007-08, which the now Premier presided over when he was education minister, when we were desperately advertising in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria for retired teachers to work in Western Australia—for anyone to come and stand in front of a classroom in Western Australia—because there were 270 classrooms with no teachers. At the opening of the 2008 school year, 18 teachers were absent from one high school—18 classrooms in one high school without a teacher! If we do not pay people properly, they will not want to stay in the system. Let us have a look at this absolute folly.

Several members interjected.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Let us examine —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Which school were you at, member for Dawesville?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** That interjection is really interesting. The member for Bassendean talks in this place about discrimination and equal opportunity, but all we get from those opposite when our outstanding member for

Dawesville gets on his feet is they call him a boy! How condescending and appalling! He is a member of Parliament in this place.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The member for Dawesville has been elected by the people of Dawesville and he deserves to be treated with respect as a member of Parliament in this place. The condescending remarks of the member for Bassendean demean him, but we have become used to him behaving in that fashion.

[The Speaker took the chair.]

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** What have I said?

**The SPEAKER:** You have said one word too many. I call you to order, Minister for Water.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** We now look at the folly of this government in thinking that it is going to achieve these redundancies through a voluntary separation scheme. Underpinning the government's return to budget surplus is a voluntary redundancy scheme, so let us look at the process for someone who wants to seek redundancy in the public sector. I will go back a bit. Only 282 individuals in the Department of Education took up the offer of redundancy of the 800 that were required. I would have thought that is a pretty slow uptake. If the government wants to achieve 800 redundancies by 30 June, it will have to come up with something else. The Minister for Education and Training in the other place has said there will be no forced redundancies. She may or may not be accurate, but if the government needs to go to a forced redundancy scenario, it will not achieve that number by June next year. The forced redundancy scenario requires, first, an offer of voluntary redundancy. An employee has to be declared as surplus to requirement. The employee then has to be notified of the date on which they will become a registrable employee, and voluntary severance must be offered. If the employee declines that, the department has to request that the Public Sector Commissioner register the employee for redeployment. They must then be registered for redeployment and pursue redeployment options. If unsuccessful, at six months from registration they will receive a notice of involuntary severance. That is a very truncated, minimum process of about eight months for a person who wants to embark on the involuntary redundancy process.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Water!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** We know clearly from the uptake of the voluntary redundancy scheme so far that the government is not going to achieve the 3 000 job losses from the public sector that it needs to balance the budget books. What will that actually mean for education? I am gravely concerned. I see a government that was elected on a promise to look after education and teachers, to look after police officers with a pay rise of 1.5 per cent that they will not get, and to ensure that there would not be any public sector job cuts. The Labor Party was elected to govern this state after it went out to the community and said a whole bunch of things that it was and was not going to do. It then got into government and thought that if it took the trash out and got all the hard stuff done in the first year, people will have forgotten in four years' time and it might get another gig and another crack at it. But people in Western Australia are coming to realise that they were sold a pup. Teachers know that they are on a trajectory to be the lowest paid teachers in Australia, because it has already started to happen, with \$154 million coming out of the pockets of teachers over the next four years. If the government reduces corporate support staff in the Department of Education down to 154 people, schools are not going to have the administrative support they need to be able to run and the schooling system will collapse and fail.

We know from the past actions of the now Premier that he does not respect people who work in the education sector; we know that from the way he treated people when he was education minister. I will never forget the day I formed my view on the now Premier. It was the day he visited Deanmore Primary School in my electorate. Instead of standing there and listening to my community and my teachers at my school, which was falling down and full of fungus, and saying, "Yes, you have a problem here", he stormed off in a huff and jumped into a vehicle, with the P&C president and a dozen teachers and students running after him. This was after he had actually said to teachers, "You want to be careful about where you're seen protesting."

That is what he said at that time, and that is my lasting impression of what the now Premier thinks of education. When the government for months and months sits on a report that provides solutions for bringing the education system in this state up to the standard at which it should be, and then releases it in the middle of a gas crisis, we know we are seeing a very sneaky way of doing business. We have seen that with the government's broken promises and we have seen it with the ridiculous urgent bills that have been brought through this place so that the government can get a media sugar hit when it has a problem it needs to cover up.

We will watch and make sure that the Western Australian community understands every single one of this government's broken promises. It promised not to increase electricity prices and not to cut the number of public

servants. It promised it would not affect education and sack teachers, but it is embarking on this strategy to the detriment of the community of Western Australia, contrary to what it told the community to get elected.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [3.22 pm]: I would like to make a few points in my contribution to this debate. The member for Scarborough just claimed that the Premier attaches no value to education. He appointed a standalone Minister for Education and Training, and I think it is the first time in a long period that we have had a standalone Minister for Education and Training; that is the importance he attaches to the education portfolio.

To put this into some context, I am a former schoolteacher and I sit on the boards of eight of the schools in my electorate, so I think I have a reasonably good knowledge of how schools are operating at the moment. I sit on the boards of five primary schools and three high schools, including the Armadale Education Support Centre. I have sat on those boards for a number of years; I have seen them operating under the previous government and under the current government. Many of the allegations or accusations that have been made during this debate by the two speakers on the other side about how our schools are being driven down just do not hold water, from my own personal experience.

I want to talk a bit about education assistants, which the Leader of the Opposition spent some time on, and independent public schools. If we think about independent public schools, yes, the previous government brought in IPSs. The government supports IPSs and I support IPSs but remember that the jury is still out on the educational attainment of independent public schools. There was a committee report in the previous Parliament about that. We are not going back. The people voted in support of independent public schools and I think we have to try to make the situation even better, but we must not think that IPSs are a panacea for all our educational problems. Of course, principals love IPSs as they generally allow them more autonomy. Nothing in the minister's statements or the government's policies since the election undermines the autonomy of IPSs. Principals of independent public schools still have the ability to select staff who best suit their school. They still have that ability—they do, Leader of the Opposition. However, we also have to remember that not every school in the public system is an IPS. We need to look after non-independent public schools as well. What do we want? Do we want to say that IPSs are the gold standard; we are worried only about IPSs and we will not be concerned about teachers who go to non-IPSs? There are a number of independent public schools and a number of non-independent public schools in my electorate and I want to ensure that they are all treated fairly and equally, and that the non-IPSs can also attract very good teachers. Let us not try to argue that the IPS program is a panacea for everything. The minister has done nothing to reduce the ability of principals to select the best staff for their schools. The minister is also trying to ensure that we have very good teachers at non-IPSs. That is what we should be doing; we should be ensuring that we have good teachers at all our public schools.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the need to ensure schools, especially in lower socioeconomic areas, are properly funded and resourced, and that policies will assist them and their students to obtain the best possible educational outcome. I could not agree more with the Leader of the Opposition because, obviously, many schools in my electorate fit that bill. The Minister for Planning; Transport and I are graduates of Kelmscott Senior High School so we understand the importance of public schools and we know that they can be used to improve oneself. Members can be assured that those on this side of the house immensely value state public schools.

I want to get the issue of education assistants. This government has, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, put education assistants back into the classroom. We made an election commitment that we would put 300 additional education assistants into schools. I should add that we also put 50 more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers into schools to work directly with Aboriginal children and their families. That is fantastic. A school in my electorate, Gwynne Park Primary School, has a 25 per cent population of Aboriginal students. I think it is the largest proportion of Aboriginal students in any metropolitan primary school. The Leader of the Opposition made some assertions that the reason the Minister for Education and Training put 300 education assistants into the classroom is to appease the union. How ridiculous that is! I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition understands the value of education assistants. They are incredibly important.

I do not normally do this, but I will relay a personal story about the importance of education assistants. I will relay a personal story here, Leader of the Opposition, because it is an offence to state that the Minister for Education and Training agreed to 300 additional education assistants purely to appease a union. I do not care what union they are members of, but I will tell the Leader of the Opposition the value of education assistants. My eldest child has special needs; she has left school and is now 23. When she was in primary school, we decided she should be mainstream educated. High school was a different situation, but she went to Armadale Primary School. I am not sure whether any members of the opposition have been to Armadale Primary School.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I have.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The member for Nedlands has been everywhere, and he would have gone to the old school.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** No; I handed out an engineering award at the new school.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** As he knows, it is built into the hills. It is a beautiful school but its access is very steep. Obviously, steep access can be quite dangerous to people who are not mobile or steady on their feet. We decided that we would educate our daughter locally, at Armadale Primary School. She had been there for two years, but in the third year it was decided that the number of education assistants at that school would be reduced. Had that been implemented—we fought that and it was reversed—our daughter would not have been able to go to the local primary school because there would not have been a sufficient number of education assistants. To argue that the Minister for Education and Training is putting education assistants into primary school to appease a union is so far from the truth that it shows that the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the value of education assistants. Education assistants are there to not only support people with special needs, but also assist the teacher to occasionally give a little more focus to children with special needs and to assist with students who do not have special needs. They play an incredibly important role. I congratulate the Minister for Education and Training for employing 300 additional education assistants in our schools. I hope a lot more are employed. I do not care what union they are part of; that is irrelevant. What is relevant is their value to our education system and to the education of our children, whatever needs they have. If we are to ensure that we do not discriminate against children with special needs and that they have the same opportunity to go to a mainstream public school, we have to ensure there are sufficient education assistants.

To try to link these additional 300 education assistants to their belonging to a certain union is appalling. They provide incredible value to our education system. It is offensive to education assistants for the Leader of the Opposition to say this government values them only as union members. That is what the Leader of the Opposition is basically saying. He is saying that the only value to our public education system of education assistants is their membership of a certain union. How appalling is that! Does the Leader of the Opposition know whether all those 300 education assistants are actually members of a union, given the “no ticket, no start” principle? Can the Leader of the Opposition please tell me how many of the 300 education assistants are members of the union?

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** United Voice is —

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Does he know?

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** Let me finish; you asked me a question. United Voice has been hired by the education department to hold an induction session for all those 300 education assistants and maybe any additional education assistants. Part of that campaign is to try to convince them to become a member of United Voice.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Who said that?

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** I have the brochure.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The Leader of the Opposition cannot tell me how many of them are members of the union. Does he not think those education assistants are professionals and value the role they play? He is downgrading their role purely —

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** We employed 2 500 additional education assistants.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Therefore, the Leader of the Opposition understands that they have a value. His government increased the number of education assistants, but if this government does it, it is purely for the sake of the union!

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** It was a function of need rather than for the union movement.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, you are on three.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The government and the Minister for Education and Training have articulated quite clearly why we need these education assistants. The Labor Party stated quite clearly during the election campaign why we need these education assistants. Their role is to help teachers by providing assistance to students. Parents who want their child to go to a public school should not be barred from doing so purely because of the lack of an education assistant for their child. I congratulate the education minister and this government for seeing fit to increase the number of education assistants. That has not been done for the stupid reason that has been outlined by the Leader of the Opposition—that is, to increase union membership. The Leader of the Opposition cannot even tell me how many education assistants are union members. Members opposite know that education assistants are doing a valuable job. Members opposite should support and congratulate the people who have decided to take on that very demanding role.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo)** [3.35 pm]: I would like to make a contribution to this debate this afternoon. During the debate yesterday and again today on the School Curriculum and Standards Authority Amendment Bill, members opposite gave us a substantial history lesson about their government’s performance and achievements in education during its eight years in office. I was a teacher at the coalface for those eight years, and I can tell members that that history lesson does not match my real-life experiences as a practitioner during that time. I am a rather logical person, and I am confused by one thing: if the former government had such an outstanding performance in the education portfolio, why on earth is it now in opposition? That is the bit I cannot match up. If

the record of members opposite in education was so strong, why on earth are they now sitting on the opposition benches? That does not quite follow through.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Scarborough!

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Obviously, their recounting of history does not match the reality of what is being faced in schools and classrooms.

**Dr M.D. Nahan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Opposition members are totally out of touch. If they do not get a grip on reality and look at the history of their performance in education, they will be sitting on the opposition benches and floundering for a long time to come.

It is interesting that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, in her historical rant, wanted to go all the way back to outcomes-based education. How many years ago was that? I think we can keep it a bit more current. We have a very telling report from a parliamentary committee—which was released under the member for Scarborough's government—that is absolutely scathing in its summary of the independent public school program.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** That's what we're worried about.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, please! I do not want to have to throw you out, but if you keep interjecting, I will.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I am glad the Leader of the Opposition is worried about that, because so are we, and so is the Minister for Education and Training. We are absolutely committed to the IPS system—full stop. We need to make it better, and we are committed to making it better, on the basis of the findings of a parliamentary committee of this place. How can members opposite possibly criticise us for acting on the findings of a parliamentary committee that the Liberal Party chaired? That is quite extraordinary.

This history lesson that we are getting from opposition members does not match the reality of what teachers have experienced, what parents have gone through and what students have had to endure during the eight years of the former government. Our government is putting things right. The now Minister for Education and Training was very busy when in opposition, and she is extraordinarily busy now as the Minister for Education and Training. In the short time that she has been the minister, she has visited schools in Burns Beach, Kalamunda, Forrestfield, Wanneroo, Jandakot, Mirrabooka, —

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Nothing in Dawesville.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville, we know that you are the member for Dawesville. We know you are not getting anything, but just let the member carry on.

**Ms S. WINTON:** — Southern River and Balcatta. I believe she is going to the electorates of Kingsley and Joondalup next week. The Minister for Education and Training knows what she is doing. She is hard-working, switched on and responsive.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Roe, you should know better.

**Ms S. WINTON:** She is extremely busy. She was responsive to the feedback she received from various sectors during her time in opposition. The feedback was scathing. I remind members opposite of some feedback that the previous government did not pay attention to, and it is quite outrageous. We have heard in this place how wonderful IPS is, and how, somehow, it was the miracle that brought everybody back into government schools. I will tell the house a bit more about that, and what a joke it is to draw that conclusion, in a moment. I will read from the report of the Education and Health Standing Committee in the thirty-ninth Parliament. I am delighted to reread it, because it is important. Maybe the message will get through. I will read it slowly for the member for Dawesville, because I know he has a particular interest in education. The executive summary of the report states, in part —

The introduction of the IPS initiative has had no significant effect on the academic or non-academic performance of students, including those with additional needs.

That is a fact.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, through the Chair, please.

**Ms S. WINTON:** The report continues —



Further, while the DoE acknowledges that teacher quality is paramount in improving student outcomes, it is not clear to the Committee how the IPS initiative directly promotes improved teacher quality.

We can talk about teachers and numbers—we put this much money in; these people put this much money in—and then there were all these comments about being sneaky. I would like to take just a minute to tell the house about a really sneaky way that the former government stole 100 full-time equivalent teachers out of the system and thought it could hoodwink everybody. I am talking about the level 3 teachers. Under the previous government's watch, there were in excess of 1 000 level 3 classroom teachers, and the government cut 0.1 FTE, just like that. That was an equivalent cut of 100 FTE out of the system, like that, Mr Sneaky.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange:** No, it wasn't.

**Ms S. WINTON:** Yes, it was. In the election campaign, we committed to reintroducing important support time for level 3 teachers, and our minister has delivered on that.

I have to touch on this because I find it extraordinary that yesterday the former Premier and today the member for Scarborough somehow bragged or suggested that increased enrolments in government schools in the last couple of years has been due to this magical IPS system that parents are so proud of. I have met with all the principals in the schools in my electorate, both public and private, and I can say that the number one factor for declining enrolments in private schools is the economic hardship faced by people in this state, created by the previous government. I have stories of parents having to pull their children out of the schools—rip them away from their cohorts and friends—and send them to another school, not because they want to go to an IPS school, but because they could not afford the fees when the previous government took their jobs away.

Several members interjected.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Take some responsibility.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Dawesville, I have been very patient.

**Ms S. WINTON:** On the one hand, I want the opposition to take responsibility for the damage it created as the previous government, but on the other hand I hope it does not, because the longer members opposite do not take any responsibility, the longer they will wallow on that side of the chamber.

The share of kids in public schools is related to the economic health of the state. Let me tell you this, Mr Speaker: we are getting this state back on track. We are delivering confidence back to this state, and with it will come confidence in the public sector.

Finally, I want to briefly talk about this redeployee smokescreen that has been put up by the opposition.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I have spoken to principals of schools in my electorate, member for Dawesville, and they are quite comfortable with this new system that has been brought in by the Minister for Education and Training. All that the principals are being asked to do is to consider redeployees. They are not being forced to accept them; they are being asked to consider them as part of their mix. Many principals are absolutely delighted to consider redeployees because many redeployees are stuck in a school because the previous government changed the system that allowed teachers to transfer around the state. It is absolutely outrageous and mischievous of the opposition to suggest that schools have to accept redeployees. That is an absolute untruth.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on education, Mr Speaker. I will be opposing this motion.

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism)** [3.46 pm]: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** That introduction has cut your speech time down a bit.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, it has. Thanks for the assistance with filling in the time, Mr Speaker. I appreciate it.

Having the responsibility of representing the Minister for Education and Training in this place and with education not being my portfolio, I was bracing myself for the onslaught from the opposition this afternoon, and I was a little unsure. I have to say that, in the end, the entire process was presented as an incredibly underwhelming experience. I was pumped and ready to resist the onslaught and defend against the arrows being slung across the chamber, but there were none. We pretty much heard a reflection of what was contained in the motion, which states —

That this house expresses concern at the state government's handling of the education portfolio and undermining the quality of education for Western Australian children.

It expresses absolute outrage. I cannot really determine what the opposition is getting at. It is vague and ambiguous and a lot like the contributions from the opposition this afternoon, which have been vague, ambiguous and

indeterminate with respect to what the attack is supposed to be. I am not sure what the criticism is. I am searching for some link between whether it is bad or good to have the education assistants brought back into classrooms. Apparently, there was a time when it was good to bring EAs back into classrooms. That occurred over the entire eight and a half years under the Barnett government, when the number of EAs at the end was magically bigger than the number at the start, despite the fact that the government sacked 350 education assistants and Aboriginal and Islander education officers during its last term. The number was bigger at the end than when it started in government; that is true, but of course that government reduced the number of EA full-time equivalents, and that had a direct impact on some of the most vulnerable students in the state. The Leader of the Opposition can shake his head however many times he wants to.

**Dr M.D. Nahan** interjected

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Leader of the Opposition should be careful because he is on three calls, and the Speaker is very twitchy this afternoon.

That loss hurt people in places such as Kununurra District High School. At the time I visited that school—it was a long time ago now—12 to 17 jobs had been taken away from it because the number of people who worked on the ground was much bigger than the number of FTEs. The FTEs were cut and more than a dozen EAs at Kununurra high school were removed from their jobs. Young Aboriginal children who are in a very challenging environment in the state's north desperately needed people to encourage them into school and to make that school a welcoming environment. That environment is foreign to them and frequently English is not their first language; it is often a third or fourth language. When they get to school, if they have an education assistant or an Aboriginal and Islander education officer who has the capacity to speak their language and who is a familiar face, they are far more likely to get into that school. I know those assistants were removed under the Liberal–National government as a policy that the Leader of the Opposition initiated. As Treasurer, he was fully aware of it; he was in cabinet. It is not something the Leader of the Opposition was not aware of. Prior to the election, we made a commitment to return 300 EAs and 50 AEIOs to classrooms. The reason for those numbers is that they are the numbers the previous government cut. It was not a number we plucked out of the sky; it was a response to a bad decision by the previous government. It was an election commitment.

**Dr M.D. Nahan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Be careful; it is a hair-trigger. The Speaker is right on to the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon.

As the member for Wanneroo indicated, it hurts, and when the government did that, it was noticed. I understand, as members opposite have indicated, that part of this motion is about their own schools. They have big high schools in their electorates that have had to reduce their budgets to share to enable equity amongst smaller schools. I know that policy, and I applaud it. I have two big high schools in my electorate and both of them are receiving cuts, but I have talked to the principals about it and they are capable of dealing with it. Sure, I would rather they did not have to do that. I would rather we did not have to move money around in the Department of Education to achieve equity. I would rather we had some revenue from the gold royalty that the opposition knocked back. I would rather we had that opportunity than have to work within the department as we have to, because the Leader of the Opposition is failing in his responsibility. It is very sad to watch what has happened to the Leader of the Opposition. About a month ago, the Leader of the Opposition was standing fast and applauding some of the initiatives we had introduced in the budget. But he has gone from that stage to being initially unsure about whether the opposition would support revenue measures to fix the budget mess it left us with to now being completely beholden to the wreckers and economic vandals in the National Party and in the crossbench of the upper house. That is a sad state of affairs. It is a very sad fall that the Leader of the Opposition has suffered. I know that the Leader of the Opposition is not going to be around—he is not concerned about it, but he is striving to get as close as he can to the next election; however, he is not going to be there—but to the rest of the opposition: take heart, because this is not as bad as it is going to get. I can guarantee members opposite that the second term is far worse. Waking up the morning after the second election is far worse.

**Mr W.R. Marmion** interjected.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Do not worry about that. These will be the good old days. Members opposite will look back with fondness —

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, get back to the point, please.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am about to finish, Mr Speaker.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 22 November 2017]

p5936c-5946a

Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Dr Tony Buti; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Paul Papalia

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**The SPEAKER:** You will finish quicker than you think.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Of course, I reject this accusation. I am not sure whether it is an attack or a criticism; it is a bit vague and ambiguous. But I think it is bad and I do not agree with it. I think the Minister for Education and Training is doing a wonderful job under trying circumstances—in the terrible circumstances and the mess she inherited from the former government. She is dealing with those circumstances. She is focused on equity and on assisting teachers, EAs and AEIOs in the classroom, and that is a good thing.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (16)

Mr C.J. Barnett  
Ms M.J. Davies  
Mrs L.M. Harvey  
Mr P. Katsambanis

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup  
Mr A. Krsticevic  
Mr S.K. L'Estrange  
Mr R.S. Love

Mr W.R. Marmion  
Mr J.E. McGrath  
Dr M.D. Nahan  
Mr D.C. Nalder

Mr K. O'Donnell  
Mr D.T. Redman  
Mr P.J. Rundle  
Ms L. Mettam (*Teller*)

Noes (36)

Dr A.D. Buti  
Mr J.N. Carey  
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke  
Mr R.H. Cook  
Ms J. Farrer  
Mr M.J. Folkard  
Ms J.M. Freeman  
Ms E. Hamilton  
Mr T.J. Healy

Mr M. Hughes  
Mr W.J. Johnston  
Mr D.J. Kelly  
Mr F.M. Logan  
Mr M. McGowan  
Ms S.F. McGurk  
Mr K.J.J. Michel  
Mr S.A. Millman  
Mr Y. Mubarakai

Mr M.P. Murray  
Mrs L.M. O'Malley  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr S.J. Price  
Mr D.T. Punch  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Mrs M.H. Roberts  
Ms C.M. Rowe

Ms R. Saffioti  
Ms J.J. Shaw  
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski  
Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Mr D.A. Templeman  
Mr P.C. Tinley  
Ms S.E. Winton  
Mr B.S. Wyatt  
Mr D.R. Michael (*Teller*)

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Pairs

Mr I.C. Blayney  
Mr V.A. Catania

Ms A. Sanderson  
Mr B. Urban

Question thus negated.