

Mr Peter Rundle; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Terry Healy; Mr David Scaife; Mr Hugh Jones; Ms Kim Giddens; Mrs Lisa O'Malley; Dr Katrina Stratton

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**SCHOOLS — STAFF — GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

*Motion*

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [4.00 pm]: I certainly relish the opportunity today to move the motion on the notice paper. I move —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its failure to alleviate teacher shortages and provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff.

Over the last few years, we have seen an increased prevalence in this area. It is a really important element when we look at a number of examples that I will be laying out today. The basis for some of my examples will be taken from the State School Teachers' Union of WA's report *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia*.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I point out that although the Minister for Education purports that I do not like unions, what I do not like is some of the legislation that the minister has brought in over time, such as making special arrangements for unions in certain places. What I do not like are the special arrangements for union meetings and special arrangements for unions in the electoral reform process and the like. Minister, I actually felt very comfortable at the release of the State School Teachers' Union report the other week. The president of the teachers' union, Matt Jarman, was there. I certainly have a lot of respect for him, and he is a very good teacher and principal in his own right. I was also surrounded by many union members from within this chamber. I felt very comfortable. Even the member for Bassendean came over and said hello to me on the day, so I want to put the record straight for the minister.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The Minister for Education is a very capable minister who will be able to say all of this in response rather than by interjection. I would like to hear what the member for Roe has to say.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Thank you, member for Cottesloe.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Okay, let's leave it. I will not refer to our usual —

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** We will let it go, minister, but I will be referring to some of the points that were brought up in the report and by former Labor Premier Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence, who was the chair of the panel. In this environment, I look forward to laying out some of the issues in the education system and finding out what the minister's long-term strategies and views are to alleviate the teacher shortage, which is a reality and needs to be dealt with by this government that has a \$6 billion surplus, or \$17 billion over the last three years. This is the minister's chance to lay down the groundwork to alleviate these teacher shortages. I am certainly looking forward to the minister's response outlining what he sees happening in the long-term future. I recall the minister saying in question time I think a couple of weeks ago, "Watch this space." I look forward to watching this space and seeing what he fills it with.

The *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report pointed out the disappointment that the teachers' union had to come up with a full review of the teaching profession in WA, in some respects allowing the Department of Education to sit back and wait for the results, knowing exactly what the report would say and provide it with another 12 months to put out fires within the education system.

I will lay out some issues pointed out by the State School Teachers' Union report. The report states that schools are starved of real-term funding, and that Western Australian schools require funding of up to 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard. It states that significant and growing pressure has meant teachers have reached breaking point, and that there are chronic and growing teacher shortages and an increased volume and complexity in the teaching tasks. It outlines the challenge of educating many more disadvantaged students and students with increasingly complex needs. The minister has spoken about that before. The report refers to the frequent policy changes and states that the independent public school initiative needs to be looked at, and that teachers have low morale and increased burnout and feel undervalued and disrespected. Class sizes need to be smaller and access is required to quality resources and professional support. Time for duties other than teaching and rural appointments also needs to change. That is from just the executive summary. The minister can see from that list that there is a real concern about many of those elements.

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I will start with the alarming statistics on violence in Western Australian public schools. An article in WAtoday by Holly Thompson and Rebecca Peppiatt headed “‘They are not safe places’: Perth’s most violent schools revealed” states —

... Freedom of Information ... show there were 114 instances where students took prohibited weapons to schools in 2022 ...

The article goes on to state that according to the report of the State School Teachers’ Union —

... school based violent events in WA were occurring once every 45 minutes, or 11 times per day.

Jarman said members were increasingly worried about their safety at work, and the union received hundreds of calls per month asking for help.

... 800 calls a month (from members) ... in the categories of violence. That number is growing ...

...

The union’s report also revealed 86 per cent of teachers had considered leaving the profession in the past four years, up from 80 per cent two years ago.

That is a real concern to me and, I am sure, the minister. As the minister knows, 25 per cent of graduates are also looking at leaving the profession within five years. The article continues —

... 31 per cent of teachers surveyed said they had been the victim of physical violence at least once this school year, while 55 per cent said they had experienced verbal violence.

The article quotes Mr Jarman —

“The number of staff who are leaving and attributing their departure to violence and physical safety has been increasing for the last three or four years.”

Almost half of all teachers surveyed said the violence had not come from students, but from their parents.

The minister has spoken about his concerns with parents and, quite frankly, I agree with him that quite a few of these issues are attributed to parents. The other issue is that teachers are confronted as they go about their shopping, they are being attacked in online forums and their leaders are having to deal with aggressive parents, all of which contributes to a dangerous workplace. I think that is a pretty good summary of some of the violent incidents.

The number of workers compensation claims within the Department of Education reinforces the dire situation that schools are facing. In the last financial year, there were 459 claims of assault by a person or persons, with a liability of \$9.5 million. This figure is up by 25 per cent from the 2022 number, when 384 claims were made at a cost of \$7.6 million. I will continue with the workers compensation figures. The breakdown is very interesting. There were 156 claims in 2023 for being accidentally hit by a person, with a payout of nearly \$3 million. The number of incidents involving exposure to a traumatic event is up from the previous year, which had 19 claims at a cost of \$1.4 million, with 44 claims at a cost of nearly \$3 million this year. The number of claims for exposure to workplace occupational violence is up from seven cases last year to 21 this year, with a cost of \$1.14 million. There are a variety of other claims. I think that gives an overlay of what we are facing out there in the world—violence and aggressiveness from both students and teachers. It is a concern. I know that the minister and previous minister outlined their strategies, if you like, to deal with violence. However, I think it is actually increasing. I am curious to know whether the minister has any other plans to deal with these issues. Of course, it flows on to our younger teachers as well. They are very worried about the workplace and how it is going to pan out. That is just a summary of that department.

If I can, I just want to move on to limited registration teachers. An answer given to a question on notice on 17 October stated that we have 380 limited registration teachers in the metropolitan area and 197—nearly 200—in regional areas. We have 577 out there. I guess they are needed in the current environment to backfill positions. That is just a reality. I was recently given more information about some of the regional incentives, some of which will potentially be paid. I know there is a category for graduate students, who are hopefully now being sent out to the bush. That is important and I support it. To be honest, when teachers get sent out to the bush, they sometimes actually enjoy themselves. They might end up finding a partner, maybe getting married and spending the rest of their life there with their family and so forth. We have seen many examples of that over the years. From my perspective, I support anything that will take our younger good-quality teachers out into the regions.

I have a couple of examples of incentives from other states. The Victorian government has announced payments of up to \$420 a day for student teachers who complete school placements in regional, remote and specialist government schools. It will provide \$140 a day in urban centres and metro specialist schools and \$420 a day in outer, regional and remote schools. It is called the pre-service teacher placement grants program. The Victorian government will

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put \$32.2 million into the program, funding up to 11 000 placements over the next two years. Other announcements from the Victorian government to support the teaching workforce include \$93.2 million for scholarships to make studying a secondary teaching degree completely free for around 4 000 teachers each year, \$95.7 million to support more graduate teachers in government schools, and \$27 million to provide \$50 000 to assist teachers from Victoria, interstate and overseas to relocate to hard-to-staff positions in government schools.

There is some serious expenditure by the Victorian government compared with the Western Australia government, which has allocated \$15.49 million to assist with the recruitment and retention of staff in regional and remote areas in 2024. That \$15 million will continue the funding of the regional attraction and retention incentive in 2024. As the minister knows, that is for 66 regional and remote schools, up from 48 last year. I welcome the addition of those other schools into that category. I used to say, and still maintain, that Daniel Andrews was the worst Premier that Australia has ever seen, but it seems like Victoria's Minister for Education or the new government—now with a new Premier—is injecting some serious amounts of money into the attraction and retention of young staff. I think that is important to note. We can look at the financial position of the state of Western Australia compared with Victoria. Victoria appears to be in substantial strife, but it has still prioritised the attraction and retention of staff over and above the scenario that we are seeing here.

I will quickly refer to some other articles that refer to teachers departing or resigning. An article by Caitlyn Rintoul entitled “Exhausted, burnt out and overworked” states —

WA teachers are picking up gardening and cleaning shifts in a desperate attempt to keep their schools open as the union warns the education system is stretched so badly the situation has now become “untenable”.

That is one article. There is another about the scenario with the curriculum, which I will probably get to a little bit further down the track. We have a real concern. I am curious about the minister's response to this article in *The Australian* entitled “Woke unis failing new teachers”. I found this article very interesting when it came out.

It states —

The Institute of Public Affairs has analysed 3713 teaching subjects in education degrees offered by 37 Australian universities. One-third of all subjects relate to what the IPA describes as “woke” theories of identity politics, decolonisation and social justice.

Just one in 10 subjects relate to teaching children how to read, write and learn mathematics.

That is the reality that has been identified. I think it is important. The basics are English, mathematics and the like. I am curious about whether the minister will address this scenario with our woke universities or some of the woke courses that are being dished up. They need to go back to the basics. As the minister knows, classroom management has to be the highest priority subject to be taught to our young teachers. That has to be the first priority, along with those basics subjects so that they can pass on that information.

My time is limited today. We had a briefing last week on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is prevalent, especially in some of our more remote schools. I certainly hope that our education department will make sure that our teachers are FASD-informed, because it obviously restricts learning capacity and can create speech and language disorders, communication challenges, sensory processing difficulties, issues with attention and focus, and many other issues. It is very important for the education department to take that on board also.

In respect of regional support, the minister knows that we like to talk about the regions. I have called on the minister to support regional leaders and teachers. I have also spoken to the director general on occasion about the need to bring back the regional centres that provided mentoring and support to our regional teachers and young regional principals who have just started out. They need that close-at-hand support, not people sitting in Royal Street. They actually need mentoring, the like of which we used to have at the Narrogin district office. We had that support, including Aboriginal support officers; lead psychologists; curriculum support staff; participation coordinators; road safety drug education regional coordinators; home school moderators; student health and wellbeing support staff; and positive behaviour support coordinators. These are all very important configurations that district offices can provide. They could provide them to support our regional schools and principals.

I do not know whether, amongst the \$5 billion or \$6 billion surpluses that seem to be rolling through, the issue of Government Regional Officers' Housing is being addressed. I know the minister who sits in front of the Minister for Education talks about the variety of housing projects, but I do not hear too much about GROH housing, so I look forward to any response on that. I know there are potential schemes for helping subsidise the rent of these new, younger teachers who are going out. Unfortunately, there are no GROH houses in a lot of those communities.

It has been revealed that in the five-year period from 2019 to 2023, there has been a significant increase in home education enrolments; obviously, COVID was a large part of that. Over that time, the ratio of students to home education moderators—who are tasked with legislative compliance requirements—has increased from one moderator

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to 167 students in 2019; the number of students had increased by 20 in 2023. We have a challenge. A lot more parents obviously took on home schooling due to COVID and continued on with it. We need those moderators in place to make sure they are doing the job well.

The School of Isolated and Distance Education is now basically the biggest school in the state. It provides a good service, but I worry that it now seems to be the fallback position for some of our district high schools and senior high schools that might have only a couple of students doing ATAR. I do not see it as a long-term solution for an ATAR student to be sitting in front of a screen in the library all week long. That is something I think the education system, over time, needs to have a bit of a look at. I know that it is a solution of sorts and it provides some sort of answer for students who are staying in their particular location. As I have said, we have seen SIDE grow into the largest school in the state in the number of enrolments. That is not the preferred option. Obviously, distances and so on are a challenge, but from my perspective we need to think about alternatives. When we get down to three or four students in year 10 at a district high school, we cannot just keep saying, “Oh, let’s just put them in the library and put them on SIDE”, and that is it, with no option for a teacher in front of them at the coalface.

I will quickly refer to the federal government report by Professor Mark Scott, *Strong beginnings: Report of the teacher education expert panel*. It states —

**Nationwide, teachers testify that at its best, teaching is a job that delivers rich, intrinsic rewards, but teachers are operating in an environment that is more difficult than at any other time.**

...

**The challenges for teachers can be immense.**

As we know, the pandemic caused serious challenges; however, initial teacher education is a focus of the Scott report. The recommendations were heavily weighted towards support for students and teachers during practical experiences; mentor teachers, as I spoke about; and mid-career pathway programs. Bevan Ripp, president of the Principals’ Federation of Western Australia, is very experienced and has put out a media release on the report titled *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia*. He said that alleviating the issues faced by public school teachers must not remove school leaders’ autonomy.

Regarding the centralised model, he said —

“By removing school leaders’ limited autonomy, existing problems will be worsened. We need our teachers and school leaders to be able to plan and apply strategies according to the needs of each setting.

...

“Re-introducing a centralised staffing model once again will not help in a teacher shortage where there are not enough bodies to go around. The focus needs to be on attraction, and then retention.”

He said that what is needed is for —

... current and future governments to direct funding to make salaries competitive and resourcing equitable; to raise the status of the profession in the eyes of community; —

That includes various other things, including reform around teacher training programs and the development of policy and promotion to encourage more robust sharing of the responsibility to address societal and community issues. That certainly is a good summary.

I spoke about some of my concerns about the curriculum, but I want to go back to the report commissioned by the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, *Facing the facts*. There needs to be an immediate and substantial injection of funding. The State School Teachers’ Union has provided the Minister for Education with a free blueprint for a comprehensive strategy that would alleviate some of the pressure points in the public education system. That the union had to fund this review in the first place is beyond me. It came as a response to the changes that have occurred since 2010 and the effects they have had on our teachers’ professional standing, workloads, roles and responsibilities. Returning to the regional support model would provide a significant improvement to the roles that regional leaders and teachers perform.

I guess my real question to the minister is: what is the long-term strategy for attracting and retaining teachers? With a \$5 billion-plus surplus, education is the one thing this government could target to ensure the future of the state. I have tried to lay out the groundwork and point out my concerns and the concerns of the State School Teachers’ Union and Hon Carmen Lawrence in commissioning that report, and some of the issues they see ahead. However, unlike Victoria, this state has the resources and the minister has an opportunity to put his blueprint on what he sees as a long-term strategy for attraction and retention. I know there are challenges and that COVID has created a challenge, but we are hopefully out of that scenario now. I think a lot of points were identified in the review.

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I certainly look forward to the response of the minister. Unfortunately, he will not be here tomorrow morning to listen to my grievance about Esperance Senior High School, which he knows is one of the main infrastructure projects in my electorate that I think would aid that part of the world. Anyway, I look forward to the parliamentary secretary responding to that grievance. That is a separate issue from the attraction and retention of teachers, which is an important issue that this state will face over forthcoming years. I look forward to hearing the minister's response to that.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education)** [4.30 pm]: The member for Roe has brought an incredibly important issue to Parliament that I want to tackle in a serious manner, but I have to say that the member's contribution was everywhere. The motion states —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its failure to alleviate teacher shortages and provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff.

The member for Roe went on to talk about the Institute of Public Affairs and wokeism. What did that have to do with the motion in front of us? He talked about peripheral issues. Before I get on and respond in detail, I will briefly refer to the *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report. I welcome the report and am giving it serious consideration. We already have some of its recommendations in place. However, I am confused. The member for Roe said that that report provides a blueprint. He then read out Bevan Ripp's view that we must retain the independent public school system. *Facing the facts* states that we have to get rid of IPS. Where does the member stand? Does he support the report or Bevan Ripp on IPS? He said that *Facing the facts* provides a blueprint going forward. A considerable part of that report talks about removing IPS, an initiative of the previous conservative government. Where does the member for Roe stand? I am confused. He said that the report is a blueprint but then said that Bevan Ripp is right, so where does he stand?

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** The report says that there are some issues with IPS that are worth looking at.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It says more than that. The member for Roe referred to the executive summary. Did he actually read the report or just the executive summary?

**Ms L. Mettam:** He read the report.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I am asking the member, not the Leader of the Liberal Party.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** I read the report, I can assure you, minister.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** If the member for Roe read the report, he would know that it does not talk about tweaking IPS. Let us be honest: it does not do that, does it?

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** No; absolutely.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The member for Roe would therefore not agree with that part of the report. It does not necessarily provide a blueprint, does it?

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** Issues were brought up in the report. It is not question time.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The member needs to be careful. He said that the report is a blueprint for going forward, but a considerable part of the report criticises IPS and basically recommends its abolition. That is what it does. The member for Roe needs to be careful with what he wishes for or what he says.

The member for Roe referred to Victoria. I want to talk about WA, but he referred to Victoria. Does the member know the current debt of Victoria? It is about \$100 billion and is projected to be \$171 billion in 2026. We are a prudent government with good financial management. That is why we were able to respond in a way that resulted in us being able to keep our schools open during the COVID pandemic. As the member knows, being a great football supporter, when Gillon McLachlan was here for the AFL grand final in 2021, he stated that his kids had missed seven out of eight terms of school. Did any of our students do that? I think there was a one or two-week lockdown.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** What I am talking about is their investment, given their debt.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I would not use Victoria or any other jurisdiction as an example.

The member for Roe also referred to the Professor Mark Scott report on teaching. As the member very well knows, that report talks about national issues. Teacher shortages is a national and international issue. This is a very serious issue and I will address what we are trying to do. The member for Roe stood up and reeled off a whole list of things without any linkage, logic or connection between them, and he did not link them to the motion that he brought to the house. What he did not say was what can be done. I could invest millions and millions of dollars in this issue tomorrow but that would not increase the number of teachers tomorrow. As a principal said to me in front of other principals, if the teachers are not there, they are not there. We cannot just change things, but we are addressing the issues. I will go through that. I might also say that a school community is made up not just of teachers; it is also made

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up of principals, who have a very important part to play, and education assistants, but we know what the previous government thought about education assistants—it wiped them away. A school community also includes front office staff, cleaners, gardeners, P&C members and board volunteers; they are all part of a school community. The motion is particularly about teachers, and they are a very important part. As the Minister for Education in the Cook Labor government, I will not listen to a conservative politician cry and lecture me on public education. I will not tolerate that. We are the champions of public education; we have been and always will be. We are doing many things to address the challenges that we face, and particularly the teacher shortage issue.

The member mentioned the Scott report, which considered the teacher shortage issue. One of the main reasons that we have a shortage of teachers is that there are not enough graduates. But people are not going to be attracted to teaching when people like the member for Roe talk about violence in schools and say that schools are a terrible place to work. I have a very good working relationship with Matt Jarman, but he is not helping the situation when he paints a picture of schools being a place of violence and not being safe. That is not true. Schools are one of the safest places to work because of the great work that teachers and principals are doing. How are we going to attract people to teaching when the member for Roe stands up and reels off issues about workers compensation and says that schools are such violent places? He knows that they are not. He knows that most teachers have a good, rewarding experience and that schools are safe. Yes, there are issues. That is why my predecessor, Hon Sue Ellery, and I have tackled the issue of violence. As the member knows, I enhanced the anti-violence package earlier this year. I have not had one principal come up to me and say that what I did was wrong. They come up and thank me, because they know that the government and I support them against abuse, and particularly parental abuse. I have told them that if they need to use a prohibition order, they should go and use it. They have thanked me for that. However, it will not help the situation when people like the member for Roe paint our schools as bleak, unattractive and unsafe places. What will happen is that fewer people will go into teaching. The shadow Minister for Education should show some responsibility and tell me how we can improve things, rather than expressing his bleak, alarmist attitude to public education in Western Australia. I can tell members that that is not the case. It would be better if people like Matt Jarman also did not paint that picture. Yes, there are issues, and we have been seeking to address them. More things need to be done. One of the major challenges is parental abuse, whether it is online or physical. That is totally unacceptable. As the member knows, I have instigated measures to ensure that principals know that we have their back when it comes to violence.

Yes, it is hard to staff schools, particularly in some of the regions. That is why we have the regional attraction and retention incentive, and that is why we have increased it. On 20 September this year, we announced more than \$15 million in funding to continue that incentive to 2024. That builds on the \$12.4 million provided in 2023. That incentive scheme now covers 66 schools, up from 48. Teachers can receive between \$5 000 and \$17 000 for going to hard-to-staff remote public schools. That is a major measure and I think the opposition is supportive of that. That is one of the things that we have done to try to attract people into the regions. The opposition talks about being the champion of the regions, but between 2013 and 2015, under the previous Liberal–National government, there were three Nationals cabinet members—they were basically part-time because they walked out when they did not agree with something. I have to tell the member for Vasse that some of her former Liberal colleagues were seething because they were not cabinet ministers and Nationals WA ministers were allowed to be cabinet ministers. They could decide to walk out if something was a little bit too hard or they did not agree with it. If someone is going to be a cabinet minister, they need to take the responsibility, both good and bad. They cannot take only what is beneficial to them and walk away when things are difficult.

Anyway, with regard to public education, between 2013 and 2015 the previous Liberal–National government cut over \$200 million from school budgets—over \$200 million. A further \$45 million was cut from secondary school budgets in 2015. Over 800 teaching positions were cut in 2014–15. More than a thousand education assistant positions were cut in 2014–15. More than a thousand education assistant positions were cut in one year! The opposition talks about regional offices, but what did it do? It cut 150 central and regional office positions. There were 200 redundancies across the sector in 2015 alone. There were 110 Aboriginal and Islander education officer positions cut in 2014 and an average reduction in spending per student of \$714 a year. Can the opposition stand up with a straight face and say what we should be doing with public education when it has that record? Surely the member for Roe cannot do that. He cannot be serious about standing up and referring to a union report, a central plank of which is the independent public school system that his government introduced, and then refer to someone who supports IPS, and say, “Provide the blueprint”, and proceed to tell us what we are doing wrong, when I have reeled out what the opposition did when it was in government.

The last state budget had a “six” in front of “billion dollars” for public education for the first time—\$6.4 billion. Is the opposition saying we are not spending on education? I cannot understand the logic behind that. We recently introduced further funding for 51 district high schools. That is a \$5 million funding boost, per annum, for 51 district high schools. I announced that in September. That builds on the \$9.3 million funding for regional schools in

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2022–23. That is incredibly important for district high schools because it allows for improved curriculum delivery and expanding access to specialist student support services and helps schools to provide the best education for students in the regions. I am passionate about students in the regions receiving a high-quality education, but it is a challenge because we have such vast geographical distances. It is difficult, but we are putting spending programs and policy decisions in place that will assist with that.

Yes, the staffing issue is a problem, but we are not alone. It is a worldwide problem, apart from probably Ireland and Finland. In terms of English-speaking countries, there is probably no other jurisdiction beside Ireland that does not have a teacher shortage. What are we doing? We are employing teachers for Teach for Australia. We are utilising pre-service teachers. We are engaging in an international recruitment program in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Canada and South Africa, and we have been very successful in attracting over 75 teachers from overseas to go to schools in our regions. We provide a stipend to encourage pre-service teachers to do their practicums in regions and in learning areas of high demand such as STEM. We are doing the things that the opposition says we should be doing. The Leap program pre-qualifies teachers into learning areas of high demand. The Aboriginal employee professional learning program is a pathway for Aboriginal staff to become teachers. There are teacher career pathway opportunities for senior teachers and level 3 classroom teachers, recognising exemplary practice in classrooms. Those are some of the measures we have taken and are taking to try to improve the quality and supply of teachers in Western Australia. We engage in the Teach in WA program, the remote teaching service induction program and the remote connection program. They are the things that we are doing. I do not think the member for Roe should refer only to one report, which he says is a blueprint but he disagreed with half of it. He should do his research and look at what the government has done. We have done a lot and we have to do a lot more because we are facing a demanding challenge, which was recognised by the Scott report that the member referred to.

The member's reference to the Institute of Public Affairs was out of left field. I fail to understand how wokeism in the curriculum has anything to do with the motion. The member talked about universities. One of the problems—some people will not agree with me—is that when we moved from the one-year diploma of education to the two-year master's degree, it created a disincentive for some people to do teaching. It is a particular disincentive for people to make a mid-career change from one profession to another. They may be able to cope with one year out of the labour market, but two years becomes more difficult. Not everyone will agree with that. There were good reasons for going to two years. People thought it would improve the quality and status of teaching, but I do not think it has. I have not seen empirical evidence that that is the case. There may be evidence, but I do not think there is. I have told the deans of our education schools in our universities that I want a rethink of that. They came back and told me that they cannot fit all of the content in. I said their focus should be on what is needed for teaching. Students could do their Dip. Ed., and if they have an academic bent, like the member for Cottesloe or my good self, they might want to do a master's. They could do that part time for the second year or do a thesis.

I think we need to rethink that issue. There is opposition in the tertiary —

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** Are you making any progress with that?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I cannot do everything at once! If the member knows how universities work, he will understand that there is a process of engaging in dialogue and then we will see how we go. It will be difficult.

Let me talk about red tape. I have stated a number of times that once I became minister, I instigated a review of red tape. I think the member may have mentioned that teachers and principals should be doing what they should be doing, which is teaching and leading schools. We should be reducing red tape when we can. I am determined that we will do that. All I can say to the member is, “Stay tuned. Watch this space.” I think, even the member—who likes to paint a negative picture of anything we do—is going to be hard-pressed to paint a negative picture when I announce some changes. Watch this space. The thing about this side of Parliament is that we are passionate about public education. We have numerous people here who have experience as teachers. Even if they have not had experience as teachers, they are still passionate about education. There are a number of people who want to make a contribution. I would love to go on for an hour, but I will not.

We need to be careful about the “violence stuff” because that is important. If we are going to paint schools as a cesspit of violence, nobody is going to teach. The member has a responsibility as a member of Parliament to not paint that picture. At the last census, we had 322 294 students across 830 public schools in WA. The Department of Education is the largest public sector employer in the state with over 43 000 full-time equivalent staff with around 96 per cent of those in schools. If we take that into consideration, some of the figures that the member read out may be diminished in significance. Maybe it is not as bad as the picture the member is trying to paint. But we need to continue to ensure that our staff can go to work every day, because one thing about the Labor movement is we believe in a safe workplace. We know the other side of politics likes to cut corners when it comes to workplace safety and has not always been a great champion of occupational health and safety legislation. Members opposite

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talk about schools being such violent and unsafe places, but do they know the industry that has the most workplace deaths? They do know.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** I do.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is agriculture. I do not go out and say that farms are terrible, violent, unsafe places, because they are not, but that is where most of the workplace deaths are. Members opposite should be a bit more responsible in what they say. It is totally unacceptable for any teacher, principal or student to be subjected to violence in a school situation. That is why, on 17 July this year, I announced an update to our anti-violence package, *Standing together against violence*. I ask the member for Roe to stand with me and this government in our battle and our efforts against violence, rather than coming into this house and painting a picture of alarm, because that is not going to help anyone. We have the connect and respect initiative, and I am really determined that we will keep on with that and do what is necessary to ensure that we have a safe environment in which everyone can come to work and return home safe, and students can learn in an environment in which they can achieve their best outcomes.

As I said, there are many more things I would love to talk about, such as the alternative learning centres that we have and the increase in money we have provided for students with special needs. One thing we will not do is cut hundreds and hundreds of education assistants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers. That is one thing we will not do.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** One of the best recruiters we've had in that area, don't worry.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Yes. We will not do that. I recognise the *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report. We have already instigated some of those recommendations, and I will make other comments on that in due course. But in regard to red tape, watch this space very soon.

**MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary)** [4.51 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to this debate. For those playing along at home, I will be opposing the motion. I would like to address the second component of the motion. I will talk about some of my experience as a father, a teacher and a local member of Parliament. I think it is disappointing for the shadow education minister to put up a motion that we have failed to provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff.

At the outset, I say thank you to all the teachers, education assistants, student services and admin staff, students, parents, families, principals and leadership of all our schools. If someone is having trouble sleeping tonight and is listening to the debate of this at home, please do not take what the opposition says about schools in Western Australia as fact. Take it with a grain of salt.

I have 16 schools within my electorate. One of them is the school I taught at most recently. I count about 30 to 35 schools as being within my electorate, because a lot of my families go to Perth Modern School, Rossmoyne Senior High School and private schools around Perth. My families attend a number of primary and high schools and I want to thank each and every one of them. I cannot talk about a motion like this without acknowledging the role that each of those school leaders, staff members and families played during the COVID period, as well. The minister alluded to it. The eastern states and the rest of the world missed entire chunks of curriculum. We will see the positive ripple effects of having had people in a learning environment at school for a generation to come. The TAFE and training sector was able to continue. The students I used to teach actually got to complete their certificate in hospitality courses while still at school. Most hotels, worksites and other places continued; building industries continued. The shadow Minister for Education spoke about the School of Isolated and Distance Education having too much screen time. That was the experience for a lot of the world. Because of the hard work of our teachers, staff and families, that was not the experience of Western Australian families.

I have to tell members that I was a teacher at what would be called a hard-to-staff school in my electorate. It is deemed to be a rougher school than others. I do not think there are any rough schools; there are no bad or good schools. Sorry, I should say there are no bad schools; they are all good schools. But it was tough teaching at a school under the Liberal–National government. I will talk about some of the things that were done that we are still addressing now.

My experience is that I was an English and careers teacher in Gosnells. I was a year coordinator and I had experience in student services. That means that I dealt with a lot of what I would call the darkness and the diversity that families bring in and have to deal with, and young people do not have a choice in the cards that they are dealt. I was a workplace learning coordinator. I was also the teachers' union representative, so I was a member of the State School Teachers' Union of WA, for those in the opposition who are worried about union influence. I was a very proud member of the teachers' union. We had assaults. There were times when young people made poor decisions and there were times when parents and families made poor decisions, and staff were hurt as a consequence of that. That was never okay, but one thing I commend Ministers Ellery and Buti for is actually rocking up to that debate and saying

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that violence is not acceptable. That did not happen under the previous government. When we had Liz Constable as the education minister, and Peter Collier, as a former teacher himself, as the education minister —

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Point of order.

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife:** Oh, no, you didn't use "the honourable"!

**Mr T.J. HEALY:** Hon Peter Collier.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Carry on, member.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr T.J. HEALY:** When Hon Peter Collier was the honourable education minister, he did not take a stand, like the current government has. I refer to the *Let's take a stand together* document. I come from a family of teachers, and a number of my friends and colleagues are still in the teaching profession. I think I have forgotten some of the tough periods as a teacher; I think I have glorified some of it now. I have forgotten that at this time in the term, teachers are absolutely waiting for the end of term. I acknowledge that; I am not saying it was incredibly easy. But a number of teachers appreciated that the education minister and the director general said: "You have rights. Violence is not okay." Again, I commend the former Minister for Education's *Let's take a stand together* report and the next generation, Minister Buti, and the *Standing together against violence* statement, which actually states what is and is not okay.

In the schools that I taught at under the previous government, it was never a clear line when someone, be it a young person or a parent, crossed the line. This makes it clear—I am not sure whether we can call it a codification—and that is important, because there were many times when I was told about a young person who might need to get suspended or not suspended, or we were doing different arrangements. It is important for a line to be drawn so that when there is assault or violence, whether it is verbal or physical, a school, teacher, staff member or principal knows what to do. There is a great package of options. It is never a great option to have to explore exclusion and some of those more extreme options, but it is also important to say to a young person and their family that these are the consequences.

I am going to talk about consequences. The shadow Minister for Education, Peter Rundle, spoke of the challenges that now exist in schools. There absolutely are challenges, but I tell members that we are dealing with the ripple effects of what the previous government did. I say this because the shadow minister is seeking within a matter of months to form government and become the actual Minister for Education, and I fear—I think the majority of our communities fear—a return to that. It almost seems like a bit of a cliché now. The former government literally cut millions of dollars from schools. When governments cut actual dollars that schools could otherwise allocate in their one-line budget for excursions, relief teachers and all the different aspects, it has an effect on the culture of the school. I will use the example of my school. Annually, \$500 000 was cut from our budget at Southern River College. I can tell members that we were not drinking la-di-da coffee and walking on carpets of gold; that money went to core services. When the previous Liberal–National government cut education assistants from all our classrooms, including mine, it had an effect. That government made a promise at the 2013 election, which it won—that my school and a number of other pre-1980 schools would be rebuilt. Esperance, which I heard the member for Roe talk about before, was in that little cohort. That was part of the promise that the former government broke, by the way. My community voted for the Liberal government in 2013 and after the election you said—not you personally—all Liberal members of the then Liberal government said, "We broke that. We shouldn't have made that promise." Older schools needed that. They relied on that, but it was cut. Again, there were teacher cuts. We spoke about the loss of AIOs and education assistants. The former government raised TAFE fees by over 500 per cent. In my role in the careers workspace, I dealt with students transitioning into their careers. My young people could not afford to go to TAFE. My young people who wanted to do a bricklaying course or a hospitality course or a nursing degree or any of those things could not do it. Looking at what I used to call year 13, those students would have to sit on the couch in year 13—those who wanted to explore leaving school early to go into a form of apprenticeship or other things. We are still dealing with those consequences today in terms of our workforce development. If the former government had actually provided the funding to that generation who really missed out that the Labor government of today provides now, we would have a different skill set for young people now. The independent public school rollout was damaging. My school was one of the last to move into the independent public school system and have the ability to pick more of its staff. If Hon Nick Goiran, honourable Voldemort, gets back in, this will come back.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I ask that the member withdraw that statement. It was an offensive slur against a member of the other place.

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**Mr T.J. HEALY:** I withdraw.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr T.J. HEALY:** It was federal governments too. Interestingly enough, we had a school tour when Chris Pyne was federal Liberal education minister. He actually came to Southern River College. That was a time when we were talking about Gonski. Labor governments were talking about Gonski funding—actual equitable funding. I may or may not have the part of the union. I think Matt Jarman and a number of senior State School Teachers' Union of WA people were there having a little protest outside the school and Chris Pyne actually came over. I was quite impressed. Ken Wyatt was there as the federal Liberal member having a school visit. I remember Chris Pyne saying blatantly to all of us, "No, don't worry. We'll fund Gonski exactly the same as Labor will. You can trust us." We know that did not take place. We know that at the federal and state levels, Liberal governments failed us. On our end, I will say that we built new primary schools in my community. We froze TAFE fees. The minister spoke about the wonderful builds for STEM labs at district high schools. The support for regional schools and teachers and recruitment is commendable.

Members, I just want to say again how much I look forward to a strong debate in the community about whether it really believes that a Liberal government, which could easily form in a couple of months—a Liberal–National alliance or coalition or whatever they call it—would cut school funding. Who knows? I might be teaching again in 18 months! A Liberal government would raise TAFE fees. It would disadvantage our young people. My community needs to have a think about that because it is very, very clear that Labor governments fund and support teachers and schools and their families. Again, I commend Minister Buti, Minister Ellery, director general Lisa Rodgers and all the schools in my community and across Western Australia and their teachers and their staff and families. Thank you very much.

**MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn)** [5.04 pm]: I rise today as a passionate advocate for our public education system. Members will know, if they have heard me say it before, that I am a proud graduate of Australind Senior High School. I did all my schooling there. I do not have quite the background of some of the members to follow, but the member for Collie–Preston has just pointed out that the catchment area for Australind Senior High School is shared by her and the member for Murray–Wellington. I know there has been \$15 million worth of builds completed under their watch at Australind Senior High School. Thank you for doing that for my ex-school, member for Collie–Preston, member for Murray–Wellington and the minister. It is a great investment. I am a proud graduate of the public school system. I served on the board of Australind Senior High School when it became an independent public school. After I graduated, I acted for the State School Teachers' Union of WA and its members when I was an industrial relations lawyer. I would say that my number one priority since being elected as a member, as the minister knows, has been advocating for public schools, some of which are significantly disadvantaged in my electorate.

I really want to say that when the member for Roe gets up on these issues, when he goes down to meetings of the State School Teachers' Union, when he goes to the launch of the *Facing the facts* report, they know that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. They know that. They know that he is not genuine. They know that he does not have the runs on the board and that he is not credible when it comes to his commitment to teachers and the union movement. They know. They see through it. They see through the act. They see that he has just hitched his bandwagon to what he sees is an issue that he can attack the government on, but he does not have the track record of working with teachers, school leaders and the union movement to make the investments that are needed.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** I have known Matt Jarman for a good 25 or 30 years.

**Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE:** That is like saying, "My friend is", or, "I know someone." That seems to be his defence: I know someone who is a teacher or a unionist and therefore I must be a supporter. That is exactly the kind of flimsiness that I am talking about, member for Roe. His evidence that he supports teachers and unions is that he knows a teacher. I am pretty sure that if that were the test —

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** I am married to one.

**Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE:** I know that the member is married to one. I was waiting for him to get that one out. That has to be his best one yet. His defence for how much of a supporter of the education system he is is that he knows a teacher and is married to a teacher. If that is the test, literally everybody in Western Australia knows a teacher. That would mean that everybody in Western Australia is on the side of the public education system like the member for Roe.

I will digress for a minute. I think the member for Roe should be a little offended because the member for Southern River did not use the member's proper title before. He referred to the member for Roe by his name and the member for Cottesloe did not jump up and take objection to that.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** If I wasn't writing, I would have.

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**Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE:** That is not true, member for Cottesloe, because the member was writing when he raised a point of order about Hon Nick Goiran, but he did not back the member for Roe. Maybe the member for Cottesloe sees through the member for Roe's act as well.

I want to make this point, which the minister and I have made before, which shows the member's lack of genuineness when it comes to supporting the teachers' union. I refer to the ridiculous contribution he made when we were debating the independent monitor to be appointed to Crown Perth. In that contribution—I have *Hansard* here—the member was referring to his concerns about the qualifications of the person who would be appointed as the independent monitor. The member said —

What concerns me is whether that person has any links to government or unions, and what their history is, or the like.

Just to make sure that it was not a slip of the tongue, the member repeated himself and said —

It will have to be someone of the highest integrity, with no background union affiliation.

The member very clearly put on the record that he considers that if someone has a union affiliation, they cannot be a person of the highest integrity. I will tell you what: Dr Carmen Lawrence has some union affiliation, member for Roe.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** So do I.

**Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE:** I heard some rumours that the member for Bassendean has some links to the union movement. In fact, I have heard some rumours that many members in the Labor Party have links to the Labor movement. Go figure. I really want to make the point that the member for Roe cannot stand in this place and rely on the *Facing the facts* report when he has run down people with a union background. He has said that they cannot be people of the highest integrity, and, like I said, the member for Roe repeated it.

I want to back in a point that the minister made. I will not claim to have read the whole report, but I was flicking through it and found a section on independent public schools. It will be interesting to know whether the member for Roe wants to endorse the whole of the *Facing the facts* report, because the really telling part about independent public schools in the report says —

In the event, there were substantial cuts (\$250–300 million) to the public education budget in 2013–14 following the introduction of IPS, resulting in significant job losses in the WA Department of Education's head office and in regional offices, as well as reductions in the number of education assistants and family liaison personnel across the state.

That is the legacy of the former Liberal–National government that is exposed in the *Facing the facts* report. If the member for Roe wants to get up and quote from that report, he should also get up and own up to the fact that the political party that he belongs to was part of a coalition that is savaged in this report for its \$250 million to \$300 million cuts to public education. Members of the Liberal Party and Nationals WA will say and do whatever it takes to get elected, and we are going to see that more and more over the next 16 months—an opposition that is desperate to win back at the next election the furniture that it lost and is desperate to hoodwink the people of Western Australia again and get back into government. Opposition members will make a series of false promises about things like public education, when their record shows that they do not care for public education and they do not care for teachers in our public education system and all they are prepared to do is treat them as a ticket to a job in Dumas House.

**MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range)** [5.12 pm]: It is a pleasure to follow the member for Cockburn. I must admit that I was a bit disappointed when he jumped me, because he is a hard act to follow.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** As long as you're not going to attack me like the member for Cockburn.

**Mr H.T. JONES:** I am inspired to attack the member for Roe now!

The other day, I was reading *The Guardian* online, which is the best publication in Australia for news, and the teacher shortage popped up as a story. I thought, "Oh no, the Libs have planted another story", but no, it was about New South Wales. I looked into it and I found, as the minister mentioned, that there are shortages everywhere. I googled it today and found that there is a worldwide teacher shortage. Does anyone want to have a guess at how many teachers we need to educate every child in the world? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimates that we are short 44 million teachers to educate every child in the world. It is good news, though, because the figure is lower than it was a little while ago, when it was 69 million. Southern Asia has increased its teacher cohort. It is now only 7.8 million teachers short. The teacher shortage is everywhere around the globe. It is a competitive industry. The global reasons that people mention for the shortage is that teachers deal with high stress levels and have low salaries in some parts of the world. The director general of UNESCO said that we must better value, better train and better support teachers.

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The lemon suckers opposite, as the member for Mandurah refers to them, try to undermine every institution they talk about in this place. I was struck when the member for Roe mentioned the \$5 billion surplus. It is never mentioned in terms of great economic management. There is always something to spend. He mentioned that the one thing that the WA government could do is spend more on teachers, but he forgets about the other areas he undermines all the time. I used to be in the Navy and I compare my life with being on a ship—that is how long I was in the Navy for. Morale is a powerful tool on a ship and in life. Since I have been in this place, I have been a bit disillusioned. Perhaps I was naive, but opposition members spend all their time undermining every occupation they can think of to score the political points that the member for Cockburn mentioned, in a desperate attempt to regain their seats and possibly government. I do not do that.

The member for Cockburn undermined one of my arguments. I am married to a teacher, but I was also taught by teachers. As a good local member, I get to every school in the electorate, and even those outside the electorate, as often as I can. It may seem a little woke to the member for Roe, but disability education is a focus of mine. As such, I am on the board of Kenwick School, which is miles away from my area. I was asked to be a board member of the school. My son went to that school, so I am passionate about the services it provides to children with disabilities. I went to the graduation recently and there were teachers and education assistants who do an immense job sometimes under trying circumstances, because some of the disabilities are quite profound. Sorry, Deputy Speaker, Kenwick School is obviously in your electorate, but I was glad to represent you at the graduation. Education assistants are vital. As the minister said, the opposition, not wanting to be woke, cut 1 000 education assistants in 2014. Of course, cutting education assistants puts more pressure on teachers, because education assistants perform roles in the classroom. They manage behaviour and prepare lesson equipment. They are in classrooms, making life easier for teachers. If the member wants to talk about supporting teachers, he should not cut education assistants.

Another school that I am a board member of is the Armadale Education Support Centre, which, again, is outside my area in the member for Armadale's seat. I correct that; I have been invited to be a board member of the Armadale Education Support Centre. I went to the graduation last week and it was probably the best graduation I have ever been to. It was very uplifting. The year 12 teacher, Jordan Walker, gave a fantastic graduation speech. It was really uplifting for the students and everyone in the audience. The education assistants at that institution do an immense job in performing their roles to make life much better and to take the workload off teachers in the woke area of social justice and providing education to people with disabilities.

As a local member, I talk my electorate up and I talk people up. Members should not talk people down because then morale suffers and people start to think that they are in an occupation that is undervalued. Teachers are in a noble profession. It has a high workload and high pressure, but there is great satisfaction when the kids graduate at the end of their schooling. I must admit that I was jealous of my wife, who is a teacher, because everyone came up to talk to her at the Kelmscott Agricultural Show. All these kids who had been her pupils and had graduated were saying, "Oh Mrs Tran, Mrs Tran", not knowing who I was. I will have to work more on my projection in the electorate. These are young people who may not use Facebook. That sort of thing is very gratifying. The member for Fremantle talked about doing some bricklaying. Seeing houses built gives a sense of satisfaction, and I think that seeing young people built is also a great source of satisfaction for teachers.

In the electorate, there is a network of principals at the state schools within Serpentine Jarrahdale. If we look at the different schools in the area, we see that some are very small and some are large. Jarrahdale Primary School has 64 students and six teaching staff. The biggest primary school in the area, West Byford Primary School, has 794 students and 46 staff, while Byford Secondary College has 1 416 students and 86 staff. Within the network, they support each other. We cannot expect Jarrahdale Primary School to have expertise in all the areas that the other schools have. The principals meet every month. They share ideas and resources and lend resources to each other. Teachers go between schools. The IT specialists sort out IT problems for people. The schools lend their venues to the other schools—they collaborate. A couple of weeks ago, the Minister for Education visited the network. Network members were able to have a great and frank conversation with the minister and highlight the issues that they are dealing with. The education of kids with disabilities was up there on their list. There is no denying that being a teacher is a difficult role and it takes a lot of resources. They expressed their ideas. It was not all about, "Give me more resources." It was about training the trainer. There is a lighthouse project at some of the schools in Geraldton and, within that, they teach teachers how to manage children with special needs and to share resources. That is the sort of thing that the wonderful principals in my electorate do, and I am sure principals all over the state do a similar thing. They are experienced and professional and they use the resources they have to get the best possible result. I will not talk them down. They are a wonderful cohort and they should be talked up.

All this negativity and white anting will not achieve anything. As the minister said, instead of pointing out things for video clips or to feed to journalists as news, what the minister wants from the opposition is some ideas: "How about you try this? This is something that I've read about and it's a good idea". Opposition members have to think about the impact that their words have on teachers. Teaching is a noble profession. Teachers should be applauded. Education

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assistants are just as important as teachers. Everyone involved in the education system should be built up and supported. I did not want to continue to use the word “supported”; I should have gone to school for a bit longer! I like to talk up my electorate, the teaching profession, police and nurses. That is the way to improve things.

**MS K.E. GIDDENS (Bateman)** [5.22 pm]: I am also pleased to make a short contribution to this motion and build on the positivity in the contribution of the member for Darling Range. I will not speak about the first part of the motion; I am confused as to why it has been this structured in the way it has. Clearly, there is no evidence that the Western Australian government has failed in the context of what we have already talked about—namely, a national and international shortage. I will leave that and focus on the second part of this motion, which refers to the failure of the state government to provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff, which, of course, is a motion that I fully disagree with. When I read this motion, my first reaction was a cynical eye roll: “Here we go, yet again. Our school staff, communities, students, parents and families are being used to score poorly conceived political points in this chamber.” The role of the opposition is really important. The opposition absolutely has a role to play in raising issues with the government and to ask it questions and hold it to account, but this is not the motion to do that.

After I got past my cynicism, I had the realisation that, in fact, only one person in the entire Liberal–National opposition has teaching experience. Giving members opposite the benefit of doubt, I will assume that perhaps this motion comes from a misunderstanding of the challenges and experiences of schools. I put on record that we on this side of the chamber have a proud record of supporting schools and teachers in public education in particular and that we have the experience of no fewer than 10 members of this government who are former teachers and principals. In fact, two former educators sit in cabinet, the very highest level of decision-making in the Cook government.

All teaching and non-teaching staff deserve a safe workplace—that goes without saying. Schools are unlike many work environments. As well as having the obligation to keep school staff, visitors and students safe, they have obligations under anti-discrimination legislation to provide an education to all young people. There is complexity in this job—disability, trauma, medical conditions, poverty, family violence, housing instability and neurodiversity, to name just a few. I would like to give some examples of what my teaching experience was like for the benefit of members of the opposition, although I note that only two opposition members are in the chamber. I doubt that their interest in this area is genuine. I hope my experience can inform the two members of the opposition who are in the chamber about what schools are like and the experience of educators, students and communities. What I am about to provide are the stories of real students in real schools, but I will obviously use false names to protect their identities.

Johnno, who was a student at a regional school at which I was doing a prac, was given a ride home by his teacher. That is the kind of thing that teachers in regional areas do that teachers in the metro environment may not do. When the teacher arrived outside Johnno’s house, Johnno became so scared that he was non-verbal. It was clear that Johnno had experienced severe family and domestic violence in the home and was scared to get out of the car.

Felicity started self-harming in year 3. She was concerned about her weight and image. She was active on social media and had a history of being bullied by her peers and sharing inappropriate images on Facebook and other social media networks. Sarah, who was a primary school student, smeared her own fecal matter on the toilet walls. Likewise, she was a victim-survivor of severe child abuse and family violence and she presented at school with very significant and complex behaviours. Peter was a student with ADHD who went on medication. He was an active and engaged student, but often his medication was stolen and sold by his big brother, and it was clear when Peter was off his medication. Max was a year 7 student who came to me and the school I was working at at the time. His trauma background was so severe that he was in the care of community services. He could not be fostered in a home and he could not live in a group home. He was looked after by 24/7, round-the-clock, paid carers in a house that was provided by the government. He was at school for three hours a day, if we could get him there. We worked with him on a one-on-two basis, with me as the teacher and an education assistant. We worked with him to provide him the opportunity of reintegration into a classroom learning environment. Samuel had an alcoholic father. He would be awake all night, often on his PlayStation or other devices, listening for the sounds of his father. When a student accidentally bumped into him in the canteen line, he would act aggressively. He was hypervigilant to risk. Jane had no nutritional food in her house and when she missed breakfast club because the car would not start, she could not concentrate and became disruptive in class.

I do not share these examples to demonstrate that schools are unsafe. I share these examples to demonstrate the incredible role of our schools and teachers in providing for the complexity and diversity of students from our community. They do that in a safe environment. It is an incredible achievement. The work they do is absolutely vital in our community and they are the unsung heroes. It is deeply rewarding work. We have heard that it is undervalued work. Motions like this do nothing to raise the value of our teachers, schools and educators.

Mr Peter Rundle; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Terry Healy; Mr David Scaife; Mr Hugh Jones; Ms Kim Giddens; Mrs Lisa O'Malley; Dr Katrina Stratton

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As the member for Bateman, I now support our schools in a different context. I work with some incredible educators and schools that achieve great things, largely in an environment in which students are very well resourced and have great support from families and their community. I would like to share some of the amazing work that schools in Bateman are doing, such as Applecross Senior High School, which is a finalist in the 2023 WA Education Awards for excellence in teaching and learning. This nomination is extremely well deserved. I believe that the awards will be announced next Monday. The school's Facebook page boasts a vast array of activities, opportunities and achievements for its students. Currently, the tennis team is in Brisbane competing in the national high school championships. We can see on that page examples of visual and creative art and drama; musicals; fundraising to give back to other communities in need; vocational education and training programs and courses; and a range of pathways to meet the needs of all the students in that community.

Last week, I visited the school to see the result of Labor's 2021 election commitment of \$1.5 million for a new science classroom. It was great. The kids were in the classroom, racing cars that they had designed from scratch and made using a laser cutter. They were doing a whole bunch of maths and STEM around that activity. I have to say that the member for Roe's call to bring back the basics is such a simplified call that absolutely does not reflect the work that happens in our schools. I guarantee that those things are not simple, and they should not be. Our kids are engaged with a range of tools across curriculum areas that are complex, exciting and engaging. As part of the \$1.5 million election commitment that was delivered, kids are using laser-cutter machines and 3D printers. I do not want our schools to go back to basics. That does not represent the workplace and the skills we need for the future, or the opportunities and skills that our kids need.

At Applecross Senior High School, I met Avery and Milla, two year 9 students who were selected for next year's Premier's Anzac student tour. The competition is for year 9 to 12 students, and two students from Applecross Senior High School were selected.

Also last Friday, the same day—a busy day—the year 7 transition students from across Bateman were at Applecross Senior High School, including my own son. I know with absolute confidence that those students who will be going into Applecross Senior High School will have the very best quality education with the very best teachers and support staff.

I will make one more very brief important comment. When we talk about failure, there is an obvious claim that things have not been done that should have been done. I put on the record that Minister Buti has been to my electorate and met with not only Applecross Senior High School but also all my primary schools so that the principals and key staff of those schools could have a direct conversation with the Minister for Education in this state. That was not just it. I have had feedback from a number of schools that the issues they raised at that meeting had been addressed by the minister—that the department had been in contact with them and the issues had been actioned. There is no failure by this minister or members on this side to support schools, and particularly public education.

**MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton)** [5.34 pm]: My son has completed his formative schooling years and my daughter will soon complete year 10, both at local public high schools. They first went to Palmyra Primary School and then went on to Melville Senior High School. I quite literally have skin in the game on the matter before us today.

I am fiercely proud and protective of my kids and of our public education system here in Western Australia. I speak with firsthand knowledge when I say how grateful I am for the comprehensive whole-of-child approach to education that my children and their peers receive in their public schools. I join the minister in calling out the hypocrisy of a conservative member of this place lecturing us on investment in public education. I remember the cruel cuts of the Barnett Liberal–National government in 2013 and 2014. I remember working with my fellow parents and citizens presidents from across the southern suburbs to join together to form a group called Save Our Schools. We joined unions and the wider community to campaign to put our kids first. I remember marching up the Terrace with my daughter and many other families on that occasion. I remember when the education assistants left our classrooms because of those cuts. It was a major reason and, quite frankly, the catalyst for me being here today. We know that things like workload, administrative burden and the challenges that come with supporting complex learning and mental health can make this workplace difficult for our teachers.

While I have a moment, I congratulate the Minister for Education for his leadership and extraordinary commitment to supporting our teachers and support staff in an increasingly challenging environment.

**DR K. STRATTON (Nedlands)** [5.36 pm]: I thank my colleague the member for Bicton for allowing me the space to rise to oppose this motion and instead give an example of how the Cook Labor government has invested in our public schools to create spaces for students and teachers alike that are safe, inclusive and engaged in best practice, not only creating safe and supportive workplaces but also delivering amazing student outcomes. Like the minister, I start by acknowledging the best practice teaching work that we see every single day in our public schools. I see that as not only a local member, but also a parent and a proud product myself of WA's education system.

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I chose to live in Nedlands so that my children could go to Shenton College, an award-winning school with award-winning teachers and leaders. Decades earlier, my parents moved to Nedlands so we could go to Hollywood Senior High School. The tradition of great public schooling in my community continues. I will use one example from one school in my electorate. In fact, I have had to limit my highlights reel about this school to the last few months, as its great student outcomes are so abundant. Earlier this term, I had the honour of attending the opening of the second stage of Bob Hawke College, a state-of-the-art inner-metropolitan school that is beautifully integrated into its local environment and surrounds. It is the first high-density secondary college in WA, and that is only where the innovation at this school begins.

The minister and Premier were at the opening to see not just the physical spectacle of the school, but also the vibrant culture that has been created and the student-led practices so highly valued by the school. Some of the \$53.9 million investment in the second stage includes new state-of-the-art facilities to provide a hub for student talent and creativity, including a performing arts centre; a theatre with capacity for 350 people; dance and visual arts studios; music rooms; general classrooms; student service facilities; and multidisciplinary playing courts. There are also low-sensory classrooms for neurodivergent students.

In a very “woke” move led by students and their social justice club, the board, P&C and school leadership created safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ students. This is the kind of woke, safe and inclusive space that will mean better student engagement, retention and behaviour. Of course, buildings and facilities are only part of the story. I will tell members about some of the teachers and leaders at Bob Hawke College. Today, it advertised the Bob Hawke Aboriginal teacher scholarships, named, of course, in honour of Bob Hawke’s lifelong commitment to and support of Indigenous rights, and his vision of a fair and inclusive Australia. This scholarship will contribute to creating culturally responsible environments that build on the strength of the many Aboriginal students who attend Bob Hawke College, by engaging them in learning and enabling them to thrive academically, socially and culturally. These scholarships will provide for Aboriginal postgraduate and undergraduate students to complete secondary teaching qualifications, building fantastic workforce capacity in the short term and cultural capacity in the longer term.

Four days ago, it held the 2023 retreat for its 40 new staff and 300 new students, learning together about the vision, culture and practice of the college. The college is a finalist in the excellence in disability and inclusion category of the WA Education Awards for 2023. This award acknowledges schools that demonstrate excellence in meeting the diverse needs of students, parents, families and communities. It recognises schools that provide engaging and inclusive learning programs and environments for students with a disability or an imputed disability.

Under the leadership of principal John Burke, the school leadership structure includes, of course, a board and a parents and citizens association, but it also includes a student board, giving students a say in the decisions impacting them.

Let us see where these kinds of teacher-engagement and capacity-building strategies land the students. Recently, Bob Hawke College students were the first-place winners of the Minister’s Innovation Challenge 2023. They were up against 30 other schools from WA, and they looked at solutions to ease traffic congestion at Matthews Netball Centre in Wembley. Any netball parent knows that this is something of a wicked problem on a Saturday morning. They developed an app prototype that uses AI to predict car park availability and provides a carpooling option for its consumers. As part of the process, students engaged in a partnership with the Town of Cambridge and are now continuing that collaboration to develop the app further.

This month, a team of five Bob Hawke College students won the Planning Institute of Australia’s award that recognises outstanding planning work by secondary students in WA. Their nomination addressed social planning, environmental planning, transport planning, urban design and economic development planning in a project of designing a sustainable suburb.

Bob Hawke College student Lachlan Wheals has been selected to be on White Ribbon Australia’s youth advisory group, a national group of 12 young adults aged 13 to 17. Lachlan is one of three students from WA. The group will meet quarterly to discuss and shape key messages and actions to prevent violence against women and children. He will participate in the annual national meeting as well. It is a really important role to acknowledge during the 16 Days in WA of activism against violence against women and girls. He is a young man whom perhaps some other community leaders could learn from as tonight we face the closure of the Safe Night Space for Women in the City of Perth. People can use their position, leadership and passion to make a difference to the lives of others.

In another arena, Bob Hawke College won the School Sport Western Australia interschool gold carnival last month. Finally, team Bob Hawke College won the mock trial competition. Their team Legally Brunette won the 2023 Law Society of Western Australia mock trial competition. The competition began earlier this year with 116 teams but came down to two—Bob Hawke College and Rossmoyne Senior High School—at a trial in the old Supreme

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Court adjudicated by the Chief Justice of WA. The victory is even more impressive for Bob Hawke College because its year 10 students were competing against year 11 and year 12 students throughout the yearlong competition.

This is just a number of examples from one school that this Cook Labor government built, created and invested in. It has invested in teachers and in building their capacity to lead amazing student outcomes.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman**.