

# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**2022–23 BUDGET ESTIMATES**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2022**

**SESSION TWO**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **Members**

**Hon Peter Collier (Chair)**

**Hon Samantha Rowe (Deputy Chair)**

**Hon Jackie Jarvis**

**Hon Nick Goiran**

**Hon Dr Brad Pettitt**

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**Hearing commenced at 2.00 pm**

**HON SUE ELLERY**

**Minister for Education and Training, examined:**

**Ms LISA RODGERS**

**Director General, examined:**

**Mr JAY PECKITT**

**Deputy Director General, Education Business Services, examined:**

**Mr ROB THOMSON**

**Executive Director, Infrastructure, examined:**

**Mr ALLAN BLAGAICH**

**Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards, examined:**

**Mrs PHILIPPA BEAMISH BURTON**

**Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services, examined:**

**Ms MELESHA SANDS**

**Deputy Director General, Schools, examined:**

**Ms RAEHELLE LEE**

**Executive Director, Strategy and Policy, examined:**

**Mr JIM BELL**

**Deputy Director General, Student Achievement, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to today's estimates hearing. The committee acknowledges and honours the traditional owners of the ancestral lands upon which we meet today, the Whadjuk Noongar people, and pays its respects to their elders both past and present.

Can you just indicate to me that you have read, understood and signed a document titled "Information for Witnesses"? Just a collective nodding of the heads will be fine.

[Witnesses nodded.]

**The CHAIR:** Duly noted.

Your testimony before the committee must be complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The committee will place the uncorrected transcript of your evidence on the internet a few days after the hearing. When the transcript is finalised, the uncorrected version will be replaced by the finalised version. This is a public hearing, but the committee can also elect to hear evidence in private. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question.

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Members, before asking a question, I ask that you provide the relevant page and paragraph number where possible.

Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, I am good to go, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** We will move to the committee first of all. Hon Samantha Rowe.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, chair. My question is around budget paper No 2 and it is page 363 under “Spending Changes”. When you go down near the bottom of the page, it has got “Premier’s Reading Challenge”. Obviously, we all know how important reading is for children’s development. Are you able to give us a little bit more information in relation to the Premier’s challenge and maybe specifically how many students you are seeing taking this up and how that program is going?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you for the question. This is an important initiative. It had been in place previously but had been axed. Encouraging children to read is a really important thing to do and this is one way to encourage it. I was pleased to write to MPs across parties about it and encourage them to promote it. As at 16 June—so six weeks since it was launched—some 23 726 readers have signed up and they have logged between them over 100 000 books. That is a great sign so far.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** Minister, my question relates to page 364 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. These are the budget line items under “Ongoing Initiatives”. There is one there which is the expansion of educational adjustment to support students with additional learning needs. It starts off at \$4.3 million in 2022–23 and goes up quite significantly in the out years. I note that under dot point 5 on the same page, it says that this total is an additional \$31.9 million to expand the education adjustment allocation. Can you provide some more information about what that program is and what that additional funding is for?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can. So it exists already as part of the student-centred funding model, which was put in place by the previous government and which this government has continued. It is, if you like, a bucket of money that schools can use at their discretion to assist those children who need a bit of extra assistance. What we have done is increase the size of the bucket of that money that is available for children. The way that we have done it is to try and get as scientific as we possibly can. It is related to performance in NAPLAN results, which is where we see an indication of literacy issues. We have increased the percentage of students who are eligible for that money. We think that it will probably assist about an additional 15 000 students. It is commonly the case that—you would have heard this from your own constituents or maybe people that you know—there are children in school who do not have a diagnosis for a range of reasons but who struggle, particularly with literacy, and this bucket of money allows the school to determine how it will provide assistance to those kids. It might mean they use that for an additional literacy program, perhaps one-on-one with the child. It might mean additional use of education assistants. Essentially, it is expanding the bucket of money, increasing the bucket of money, to assist those kids who need a bit of extra assistance.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** I start by referring to line item “Miscellaneous — Schools Clean Energy Program” and the “Solar Schools Program”, which is on page 373 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, under the works in progress line item.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Just find it for me—point me to where it is.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Page 373, halfway down the box.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can see it.

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**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Do these programs constitute the \$39.8 million solar and clean energy initiative referenced in point 37 under the “Asset Investment Program” on page 371; and, if not, could the department provide a breakdown of that funding initiative?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Are you asking about the reference to the schools clean energy program on page 373 or are you asking about —

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Are they the same? On page 371, there is reference to the solar and clean energy initiative. I am just trying to work out—what is the schools clean energy program? Is that the same program or are they different?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There is the schools clean energy technology fund, which is made up of \$35.2 million, to assist eligible schools which have persistently high levels of energy consumption costs with new energy technologies or measures. This bucket of funding was an election commitment. The first round has gone out. The second round of applications, I think, is open now. A sum of \$4.8 million will go directly to Synergy to provide an additional seven schools—three in Kalgoorlie, four in Geraldton—with virtual power plant battery systems and \$4.6 million to Horizon to install solar panels in a further 28 schools as part of the solar schools program across the Kimberley, so 18 schools in the Kimberley and 10 in the Pilbara. That \$35.2 million of that clean energy technology fund is about a whole range of different options that the schools can choose, whether it is LED lighting, a whole range of other kind of smart technologies that they can use to assist them with their energy costs.

[2.10 pm]

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Which is the delivery of the solar and clean energy initiative. It is on page 371. I am just trying to make sure I am understanding they are the same thing.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Thank you. Just so I am clear, the money that is listed on page 373 under miscellaneous—Schools Clean Energy Program—that is part of that. They are the same pot of money.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. It is.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Thank you. You listed 28 schools with Horizon and another seven between Kalgoorlie and Geraldton. Is that the total number of schools—35?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. Synergy takes it right to the edge of the grid and then Horizon for the rest. The 35, though, could go to schools anywhere, and it is a whole combination of different technologies.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Are there any schools in the metropolitan area that are participating in this program?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There probably is. I am not sure if we have got a list of the first round of grants, but it also needs to be said that of course a number of schools had already, through their Parents and Citizens Associations or whatever, raised funds to put solar in place as well.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** I am interested, if you think it is appropriate, Mr Chair. Could we get a list of the schools that have accessed that? I do not know if it is public or appropriate?

**The CHAIR:** The overall program, are you talking about?

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Yes. That have accessed that program and got successful in getting funding through that program.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That would be the successful applicants to the first round.

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[*Supplementary Information No B1.*]

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** As a follow-up to that, I am assuming some of those—especially on the Horizon one—batteries are part of that program. I just wanted to get clarity.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Are there any ones on the SWIS—on the Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and other ones—including batteries or are they all just solar?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** They do. Thank you. I appreciate this is maybe a bit technical, and I am happy to take it on notice, but do we know what the average payback period is for these kind of programs?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** What the average —

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Payback, in terms of investment versus payback.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am not sure that we would have that information. I suspect the energy agencies themselves might have that because we have been doing this in partnership with them. I am happy to take it on notice but, I guess I put the caveat, we might not hold that information. I might be, in the answer, directing you to ask the Minister for Energy.

**The CHAIR:** I am inclined to agree. I think you will probably not be able to get it. Anyway, we will put it down.

[*Supplementary Information No B2.*]

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** I just do not want to get the point where we are asking the Minister for Energy and he says this is an education issue.

I think that is all from me for now. Thank you.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Minister, I want to ask about an employee by the name of Mr Burston. You might recall that I have been asking some questions.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** You might want to take me to the budget paper.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Yes. I would be happy to direct you to page 363. In this budget here, it looks like it is some \$4.4 million that is being expended. Mr Burston, as I understand, is employed by the department. I have been asking some questions in regard to the failed prosecution of Mr Burston in the Kununurra Magistrates Court. I am not expecting you to be able to answer any questions that have already been answered by the WA Police Force, but is Mr Burston still employed by the department?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Honourable member, I am not going to provide you with an answer to any questions that are not related to the budget. I have answered questions about him in this place before and I have indicated that there is an ongoing investigation. I am not going to add anything to the answers I have given to Parliament in question time before.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Right. I take it that the department only investigates people who are employed, not people who are not employed by the department.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** You can draw whatever conclusion you like honourable member but I am not answering any further questions about that. I have told the house in answers that I have given in question time that he is under investigation. You draw whatever conclusions you like; I cannot add anything to that.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Is there a policy or procedure dealing with investigations of departmental employees?

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There are all sorts of policies. There is a whole part of the agency—that is the Standards and Integrity Directorate—that conducts inquiries into all sorts of matters. You would appreciate, member, everybody has been to school; lots and lots of people have children who attend school. From time to time there are allegations made against school staff about all sorts of matters and there is a specific Standards and Integrity Directorate that investigates those matters.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** All right. That standards unit—it has to comply with certain policies and procedures, you say. Does that include whether an investigation continues after a criminal prosecution or not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There is not a specific policy, that I am aware, on whether or not an investigation continues after a criminal investigation, but it is not unusual for an investigation to continue after criminal investigation. What frequently happens, honourable member—and you will appreciate this; it applies to the Teachers Registration Board as well—is that an allegation will be made. If it is of a criminal nature and, quite often, whether it is the Teachers Registration Board or the SID in the department, they will put their inquiries on hold until the criminal investigation is completed. Then, irrespective of what the outcome of the criminal investigation found, there may still be issues related to their registration or related to their employment that require investigation. That happens regularly.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Then that regular practice is documented in some kind of policy or procedure.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am not sure; that is what I said at the beginning of my answer. I am not sure there is a specific policy that says—in the event that there is a criminal investigation—if it says yes, you do this, if it says no, you do that. Each allegation is treated—as it should be—on its merits and judgements are made accordingly. Staff are required to conduct themselves according to a code of conduct, for example. The code of conduct is a document that is available but in terms of how investigations are conducted, in respect to whether or not there is a criminal investigation, it is done on the merits of the particular matter.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Is there anybody here from the standards unit today?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Since you are not really sure whether there is such a policy or procedure, can I ask you to take on notice to ascertain whether there is one or not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not mind doing that. I am happy to take it on notice; I just make the point each allegation is dealt with on its merits.

*[Supplementary Information No B3.]*

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Now, while an investigation is ongoing, is there a policy or procedure dealing with whether an employee continues to be paid while they are on leave?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Employees have industrial rights and those arrangements may well be set out in industrial instruments or they may be set out—I do not think we can answer you as to whether there is a precise policy. My experience in the job in five years is that I do not recall being made aware of anyone who has had their pay withdrawn while an investigation is ongoing. It tends to be they continue to be paid, perhaps excluded from the school, depending on what the circumstances are, or suspended. Normally suspended on pay has been my experience. The director general cannot advise me whether there is a precise policy.

I am happy to take that on notice but I think, honourable member, it might be a combination of the industrial instrument as well as any policy.

*[Supplementary Information No B4.]*

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**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** How many employees are currently under investigation?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised this information is regularly published in the annual report. That is the advice that I have. As at 30 March, the total—that does not give me a total. I have to read sideways! The total number of investigations—I think I have to get back to you. This says 116 but that does not add up.

[2.20 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can tell you that as at 30 March the total number of investigations is 116.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Is that 116 live, ongoing investigations, or 116 had been undertaken?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** What it says is that the total number of disciplinary investigations as at 30 March 2022. I am advised that does not include any that might be related to COVID. You would recall there was action taken against some staff who did not comply with the vaccination mandate, for example. This is non-COVID related investigations.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** It does not answer the question. Are they active or are they completed.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I cannot tell from that. I will take that on notice.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I thought that the director general would know if there were routinely 100 active investigations on foot at the moment, as 116 is a lot. That means that there is a lot of activity is going on right now, potentially in June, or 116 is pretty much for three-quarters of the year.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can tell you, as someone who has been in this position for five years, that is pretty normal

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Pretty normal of what?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** With a workforce of 60 000 people at any one time, the information that I have had available to me, that is not an unusual figure.

**The CHAIR:** Before we go any further, we want to ascertain whether they are live.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will check whether they are completed at 30 March or live at 30 March.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Since the minister is checking that are we are able to have the current figure?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not have that. I can take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B5.]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I will pick up on one part to that. With regard to those investigations that are currently underway, and I appreciate that each has to be looked at on their merit, but do we have an understanding of the general length of time it takes? That is something that is sometimes raised with us, with regard to that length of time. I appreciate it depends on the circumstances, but do we have a general idea?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. You would appreciate, honourable member, some investigations take much longer than others, but I can probably give you an indication. This was as at 12 May, the average days to resolve 117 disciplinary investigations is 190 days—that is six and bit months, so they will be different. If it is helpful to the honourable member, one of the things we put in place was the parent complaint unit. You would appreciate, as a user of the system itself—go Inglewood Primary School!—that quite often the system is not particularly user-friendly for people who do not speak education-speak, and sometimes parents will have concerns that they have tried to raise with the classroom teacher—they may even try to raise with the principal—and sometimes the response, with the greatest respect for people who work in schools, is education-speak. The parent complaint unit is there to help the parent, for example, work their way through and understand the complaints

process so that it might not necessarily end up in a formal allegation against a staff member; it may well be a case of not understanding the process.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I will go to the end of the budget papers, page 379, and then I am going to go back to the beginning. On page 379, under “Details of controlled grants and subsidies”, specifically the national school chaplaincy program, note (b) underneath states that the current agreement expires in 2022 and that the commonwealth is committed to the continuation of the funding in the forward estimates. However, the state allocation has not yet been determined. I have a couple of questions about this, but I did note, I think on Friday, that the federal education minister, Jason Clare, indicated he will be opening up the program to give schools the option to choose either a professionally qualified student welfare officer or a chaplain; therefore, he would be having discussions with state and territory education ministers over the next few months to ensure it was ready for the start of the new school year. Was the McGowan government consulted with respect to this decision before the minister made the announcement?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, we were not, but I am relaxed about that. The state government’s position is that we do not require a chaplain to be of faith. This has been a matter of public debate for many years now, so it does not strike me with surprise that he would say that. I do not have any more detail than what you read in the media yourself, but I envisage he will be talking to us about that in the near future.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** You do not see there will be a massive impact to this state and how it is run?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not think so, because we do not require schools to have someone of faith now, but there will be schools who will decide that for them a youth worker is a better choice than someone who wears the label “chaplain”. I am perfectly relaxed about that as well.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** With respect to the WA allocation, because there is reference to the commonwealth, can you tell me where you are at with regard to the WA allocation and when that is anticipated to be finalised?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** This does not answer the member’s question, but I need to point out that that national school chaplaincy program, at \$2.469 million, is the amount that goes to non-government schools. Your question, I think, is what is happening with the state.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** More generally, yes.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The member asked about note (b). Is your question about the state allocation to the chaplaincy program for non-government schools in Western Australia?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** No, I want it more generally.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think you are asking about the actual expenditure on the state school chaplaincy program. In 2023, it will be \$11.5 million; in 2024, it will be \$14.6 million; in 2025, it will be \$15.1 million.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** You might need to take this on notice, but are you able to tell me how many government schools currently access a chaplain and, on top of that, I know that in the 2021 state election both your government and the opposition provided a commitment with regard to additional funds for schools. Are you able to tell me, since 2021, how many additional schools, which previously did not receive funding, have received funding now?

[2.30 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** In 2021, 674 accessed the chaplaincy service. It was 107.

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**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I move to page 363, under “Spending Changes”, and specifically the school camps assistance package. Previously, minister, I did ask you a question, I think in question time, with regard to the number of grants that had been approved. I am just now seeking some more up-to-date information. To date—again, you might need to take this on notice—how many providers have applied for a grant in any category as part of this scheme? Of those, I am obviously keen to know how many were approved funding or not approved.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There have been two rounds. The first round closed on 8 April this year and round 2 closed on 6 May. For round 1, 52 applications were received relating to 318 school camps. The total funds—48 successful applications, with a total approved funding of \$2.3 million and a further \$427 000 in school deposits that were refunded. That is total funding of \$2.7 million. There were two unsuccessful applications. One application was withdrawn at the request of the applicant.

With respect to the second round, 10 applications were received. As at 10 June, the department has allocated \$3.278 million. As at 10 June, nine applications of the second round had been assessed and applicants were notified, \$466 000 had been approved, with a further \$30 000 in school deposits. One application is still under assessment. Details are being clarified with the schools and the applicant.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I would like to ask some general questions about camp schools.

**The CHAIR:** First, just to follow on the chaplaincy one, just be mindful that the feds have got form on this. I am not talking about the current government; our mob did the same, to be honest, and they bailed and 178 schools missed out. We did the shortfall. I assume with this new edict from the current government—I have no problems with it—YouthCARE is the primary provider of chaplains in Western Australian schools. Will this render them ineligible to provide a chaplain?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not know. We have a contract with them, so that does not change. I am not sure. All I know is the general announcement that was made on Friday. My sense of it was he was suggesting that they were going to open the eligibility. He did not say anything about increasing the pool of funds, so I do not know. I do not speak for YouthCARE but I think it would have a contract arrangement already with the federal government, but I am not sure about the detail of that.

**The CHAIR:** As you would well know, minister, the chaplaincy program is voluntary, so schools do not have to have it. I cannot ever remember in my entire time as education minister a school saying, “We don’t want it.” We had heaps that wanted them, so we filled the gap when our mob bailed. It would be a real shame if a school misses out on a chaplain because they happen to be aligned to YouthCARE, if the school is very happy with that chaplain. Ultimately, it is up to the current state government to fill that gap. I am sure you are aware of that.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** While we are on camp schools, I would like to know whether or not the department, with respect to the six camp schools that previously were run by the department and are no longer, as well as I think the Broome camp school that I think remains under the control of the department, does the department hold records with regard to the number of students who have attended those camp schools? I am incorporating those six that are no longer run. If so, can I have an understanding of how many attended both in 2020 and 2021?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think it is part of the contractual reporting, but I will just check.

I might take it on notice. It appears from the information here that it is not collected centrally. I am pretty sure that I have answered questions about it but I will take that bit on notice.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** If we could, and then on top of that—again, I am happy for it to be taken on notice—for those same years, what were the rates charged by each camp school? I want to see

whether or not there have been any increases since 2019. If that can be incorporated in the answer, that would be fantastic.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If I can provide that, I will.

*[Supplementary Information No B6.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** With regards to the contractual arrangements that are in place, in terms of ensuring that the quality of services at these camp schools remain, are evaluations and/or performance audits undertaken by the department at these camp schools and, if so, how many have been undertaken since 2019?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised that annual visits are undertaken.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Have any issues been raised with regard to the quality or services of the camp schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, there have. There have been complaints about Fairbridge and the cleaning, but I understand that has been resolved. For the Kalgoorlie and Geraldton sites, that may be live because the last visit was 8 June.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I am trying to think of a question on notice in a way that you can answer it.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I have given you the answer—Kalgoorlie and Geraldton.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Then you said that there might be one other.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, that is it.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Okay; right. Are you saying that one has been resolved and that perhaps one is still underway?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think it is safe to say, because I do not have details in front of me, that both are underway and a visit was conducted as recently as 8 June.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Again, on that same page, under the National Preschool Reform Agreement, minister, I recall asking you a question in Parliament with regard to this, specifically in relation to the implementation plan. I understand that that obviously is underway with respect to discussions between the state and the commonwealth. Can you give me an indication as to when you anticipate that implementation plan to be finalised?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The terms of the plan have been agreed. They will apply to our early childhood education sector from 2023. With the work that has been done with stakeholders now, you will recall that one of the elements of the agreement was that the money follows the child. It is working out with the sector exactly how those payments are made—literally, the logistics and the administration of the payments.

[2.40 pm]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** You mentioned stakeholders, are you able to provide me with a list of the stakeholders with whom the department and others are consulting?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We will get you a list of the stakeholders.

*[Supplementary Information No B7.]*

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 364 and the expansion of specialist learning programs to support students with autism spectrum disorder. I would like to ask about students and the “Let’s take a stand together” policy and exclusion panels. The minister has in the past advised me that the department is reviewing advice to schools on students with

disabilities in relation to these exclusion panels and will make access to experts for schools easier. I am just wondering what the outcome of that is and what the status of that is.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised the report has been done and I am about to receive recommendations out of that report, but I have not seen it yet.

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** It is obviously quite a challenging experience for schools to deal with children with autism. Obviously they react differently to other students. I guess one of the difficulties that I outlined, and spoke to the minister about previously, is when a child may exhibit behaviour that ultimately gets them excluded from the school and some of the challenges around that. Could you maybe outline what is underway at the moment, pre this new report, and how those things have been managed at schools to date?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Dealing with children with autism is not new and there are a range of ways that the school system assists children with autism to get the best education that they possibly can. Depending on where they sit on the spectrum, they may well be in a mainstream school with some extra assistance, they may be in a specialised autism centre—there are a number of those in mainstream schools—or they may be in a special education support setting. It really depends on the individual child and how they manage being in a classroom. It is a broad spectrum and there are a range of resources in place to assist schools.

Schools operate on the basis that—I guess that the fairest way to describe the principle would be—if a child is not in a position to adjust their behaviour when there has been a violent incident, because cognitively it is just not possible for them to understand the consequences, then that is not the kind of child that you would seek to exclude. Exclusion would in a really general sense—I have to say most educators do not want to exclude at all. Most educators have the laudable vocation that they are there to educate the child however that child presents, whatever issues that child has. For someone like me, as the minister, from time to time, I get a bit frustrated with that when I see that there are other children whose capacity to learn in a classroom is disrupted or staff have been the subject of violent incidents. That is why we put in place the alternative learning settings.

The tendency has been not to exclude. The principle, which I still support, is if a child is not able to regulate their own behaviour then exclusion is not necessarily going to be the best answer, but maybe the question should be asked about where that child is able to get the best education. So, even if a child is excluded, they are not excluded from education; they might be excluded from a particular setting.

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** Do we know how many children with autism present to schools each year? Are there any stats kept on those, and have those stats grown over the years? Is this becoming more of an issue?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** They certainly are because the diagnosis of autism is about 1 000 per cent better than it was 10 years ago and probably 10 000 per cent better than it was 20 years ago. I am being reminded that one of the things that we did was change the criteria by which a child can be eligible for funding under the individual disability allocation to make it easier for parents. One of the things that parents would complain about, or express frustration about, I suppose, was that the process by which they could achieve a diagnosis required, I think, two clinical psychologists. We have reduced that to one.

The numbers in terms of students who are accessing, in the public system, the individual disability allocation based on a diagnosis of having autism spectrum disorder in 2021 was 8 767 and in 2022 is 9 862. So that is an increase. I think that increase is as a result of the change in eligibility. There would be some component in there, I suppose, of extra children. It is also worth noting that is for

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children with autism on the autism spectrum who have a diagnosis. Ask any classroom teacher and they would say to you that they are fairly confident based on their educational experience they have children in their classroom who are on the spectrum who do not have a diagnosis.

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** Finally, on this one, if I may, it says in the budget papers —

Existing agency spending has been reprioritised to meet some or all of these costs.

Can the minister just provide some detail on that statement?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can you show me where you are in budget paper again?

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** It is budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 364.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That footnote refers to the primary school science package; it is not related to autism.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** If we can start at page 375 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and specifically the line item “Small Asset Capital Purchases”. That is \$527-odd million of expenditure in total. Is that over the budget period or including money that has already been spent?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is over the out years.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** So we are looking at \$46 million a year roughly. What are small asset capital purchases? What would that encompass?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Good question. It is when schools use their own budgets for small capital purchases. It can be small building works or it could be particular pieces of equipment. It is the bucket of money, if you like, that schools can use to make small —

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Presumably that is distributed evenly to all schools.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is the total.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Does that bucket sit with the department or with the schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is in school budgets, as I understand. It is not an allocation per school; it is an estimate of how much each year the total amount would be that schools will spend on that kind of asset.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Do schools have to request those sorts of funds or do they normally have that allocation in their budget?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It comes out of the student-centred funding model so that is the kind of one-line budget that they get.

[2.50 pm]

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** I now move over the page onto page 376 of budget paper No 2. Down towards the bottom of the table there you have got “New Works”, which includes \$36 million for Brabham Primary School. On page 375, we have \$18.5 million there allocated to Brabham Primary School as a new primary school. I am sure it is a very good school. There are no issues.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** A big school.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** A big school. But we have built the school and have to do an extra \$36 million worth of work, or was there some unexplained growth out there? What is the reason for that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think the additional accommodation does include an education support centre. Those are the centres that are for children with identifiable disabilities. I think that might be it, but I am just going to see if I can get you some more information. The first one that appears on page

375 is the original build and then you are correct: the next one that appears is the things that have been added to take into account enrolment growth in that area. In the north east and south east, lots of people are having babies at a rapid rate, and so we do need to keep providing primary schools, and in particular making sure that the spread of ed support centres keeps up, because, honourable member, education support centres can take students from anywhere, but if they live too far away, they have got to be bused, and that can be difficult for those particular children and hard for the families if they have to do the drop-off et cetera, so we are trying to spread the education support centres as far and wide as we can so that we are not asking people to make too onerous a journey each day just trying to get their child to school.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** A bit more efficient?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thank you. This is budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 365, and the line item around staffing and schools. Given the current circumstance where we have seen a peak in COVID numbers, and obviously that has had an impact on the workforce, particularly across education, has there been any secondment of staff from the metropolitan area, for example, to backfill into regional areas?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Has that occurred from all schools within the Perth metropolitan region?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We have not taken them out of schools. I would be killed if I took teachers out of schools, but we have asked—and at its peak I think there was around 500—those people working in central office or district offices—regional offices—with a valid teaching registration to make themselves available to assist schools across WA. At its peak, it was more than 500. Is that a point in time or is that the total? A total of 632 teachers were deployed on 1 253 occasions, covering 19 088 days. So that is 262 teachers through casual central pools, 348 from statewide services, 22 from central services and then there is non-teaching staff as well. If I can tell you, honourable member, at various points the numbers have been higher than others, so as at 17 June—we are kind of following the outbreak in the community—excluding casuals, nine teaching staff were deployed to six schools, including casuals—15 teaching staff. At various points that number has been much, much higher. This is taken out of, if you like, the central pool of people who are not based in schools. Schools have their own relief pools that they pull from, so they will go to this kind of centralised pool after they have tried all of their local, normal relief teachers. In addition to that, we have a flying squad, which we have always had, and the flying squad has been extended as well. Again, those teachers have gone everywhere, really.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Would those figures have included staff from the School of Isolated and Distance Education?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No. So they continued to provide teaching for their normal students who they teach. This is like “Silver City”—people working in “Silver City”—who are registered teachers. I can remember at one of my fortnightly DG meetings with the people sitting around me today saying, “Well, folks, you might be coming into a classroom.” It was literally asking people to volunteer, and I want to thank the hundreds of people who did.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thanks.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** I refer to budget paper No 2, page 363, the bottom line under “Spending Changes”. The last initiative refers to a funding allocation for a year 1 phonics initiative. Can the minister please provide more information about this phonics initiative?

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. The effective teaching of phonics, which is really breaking words down in its simplest terms, is a priority of this government. We took election commitments to the election in 2013, we did it again in 2017 and we have done it again as part of this budget. We really know that it works. All public primary schools from next year will be required to assess the phonics knowledge of every year 1 student, and they will be required to do that by the middle of the year. It is important to say that many, many public schools already do that because it is a useful measure of where that child is in terms of their literacy. So what this is doing is making sure that we put it in place for all public primary schools. Support will be available to those schools. That is what the money is for. There is a range of evidence-based and quality-assured assessments and programs. Like I said, many schools already do this, along with training and professional learning, where that is required as well.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** I refer to budget paper No 2, page 369, under the title “Asset Investment Program”, and the \$595 million investment in school infrastructure. Can the minister please provide an overview of which new school capital works projects are being funded?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Surely. Some of the items that have been funded in this budget—there is a lot in there—is \$40 million for stage 2 of Alkimos College. Like I said, the northern suburbs and southern suburbs are bounding ahead. There is \$36.2 million for new classrooms and the ed support centre at Brabham, which we have already talked about; \$22.9 million for a new double-storey classroom block at Harrisdale Primary School; \$19.1 million for an additional classroom block at Anne Hamersley Primary School and \$10.3 million for new classrooms at Caversham Valley Primary School. That is in addition to the primary school science program and the clean energy technology fund. We are trying to invest wherever the need is to make sure that our schools continue to be the best authentic learning environments that they can be.

[3.00 pm]

**Hon SHELLEY PAYNE:** Just following on from what Klara just asked about which new schools. I refer to significant issue 2 on page 364, which talks about the state’s population growth over the forward estimates, continuing to be slower, and that there will be a period of low sustained growth. I wonder if the minister can please advise about how the department does school planning.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** In 2017 the Minister for Planning and I committed to reviewing the planning methodology to make sure that the two agencies were working well together. That work will result in the operational planning policy. We have done some work on that; that will be released soon, to take account of how we do the planning for new schools. We have to continue to monitor those high-growth areas and infill areas to make sure that we are building new schools where they are needed. One of the difficulties we faced in the past is that sometimes in some of the peri-urban suburbs, in particular, metropolitan high-growth areas where there have been new residential developments that are required to put land aside for schools, it has been the least—what is a generous way to describe this?—optimal bit of that land that is put aside for schools, so it requires the most amount of work. It is rocky and has difficult topography, for example. We have tried to get a bit smarter about that and also appreciate that where we are talking about infill areas, we are going to have smaller footprints of the land available, so you are seeing many more double storey, and go to some three-storey, primary schools, where you might not have seen that 15 years ago. High schools have long been multiple storeys; we have tended not to do that with primary schools, but where we are working now in infill areas, that is what we are going to have to do, because the pockets of land are much smaller.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Can I say from the outset that I only have one area that I have an interest in at the moment. I note what you have been saying with regard to staff members with COVID; that has been difficult. But I have a particular area of interest, and that is with regard to page 365, under

“Staffing in Schools”, budget paper No 2. At point 7 it talks about recruitment campaigns, retraining programs and providing incentives, with a focus on trying to get the right skills at the right area at the right time, which obviously is smart. I just wonder whether you can expand on those campaigns, with particular reference to the career practitioners that I have heard a bit about.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It was an election commitment, and the view was that there are some secondary schools that do career counselling really, really well, and then there are others where it is a bit random, shall we say. We wanted to get a bit more consistency, and one of the things that staff who work in those areas were saying was that there needed to be, I guess, consistency in professional development. Career practitioners funding was allocated over four years. That allows for the appointment of 70 career practitioners, and it meets their training expenses. It will then embed career learning within the school curriculum, and they will effectively themselves become trainer trainers in one sense, if you like. Each of the career practitioners will undertake a graduate certificate in career development; that is also funded through this commitment. It is about really elevating that area of the profession and getting greater consistency across schools. It is a pilot project across 70 positions and it is underway.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Is that regional and metro?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, it is.

**The CHAIR:** Just a couple of questions, out of interest, and then I will go back. I have a question for either the Minister or Mr Blagaich. We have seen a pretty terminal decline in the uptake of science and maths over decades. I am just wondering how we have been going in the last few years, in particular. We built a couple of STEM schools, and I am sure you guys have been doing a bit as well, trying to, one, stem the tide, and has there been any improvement in the uptake of that at the ATAR level?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will let Allan say something in a minute, but I will make some overall comments. There are a couple of things. We really did put a focus on STEM classrooms in primary schools to try to encourage the uptake in primary schools; that was successful. In 2020–21 our election commitment was for every school, secondary and primary, to have STEM learning resources and/or learning areas. In addition to that, it is led by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, the STEM strategy, which includes an element of encouraging more students in years 11 and 12 to do STEM subjects. The STEM Enterprise Schools initiative has supported the delivery of STEM professional learning and mentoring for teachers in mid to low-socioeconomic schools. Twenty STEM mentor schools have supported primary and secondary schools. From 2019, 58 pioneer schools and 58 partner schools implemented STEM practices in their schools. Seventy-nine STEM Enterprise Schools demonstrated their contemporary STEM practices at STEM enterprise showcases. In partnership with the Asia Education Foundation, the department presented online STEM from Asia. The STEM learning project has delivered 41 kindergarten to year 12 STEM curriculum resource modules and various other modules.

The honourable member will have observed some public attention in the last day or so about a shortage of teachers. That is not a generic shortage of teachers; we have an excess of primary teachers across the nation. We have a shortfall across the nation of secondary teachers and, in particular, in STEM. Every jurisdiction is doing what they can to uplift it, but it still remains an issue for us. I will ask Allan to make some comments about the ATAR.

**The CHAIR:** What I am interested in is uptake of the sciences and the humanities, if possible. You may need to take this on notice if you do not have that information at the moment. I just want to see if there has been a pattern, particularly since the changes to the graduation requirements in 2016, from the sciences and then the humanities, in particular.

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**Mr BLAGAICH:** We can take the exact numbers on detail, but the generic comment can be made that we still figure as the jurisdiction that has the largest percentage of students taking a mathematics subject in year 11 and 12, so that still holds very well. There has been a shift with students moving between ATAR and general courses, which is a direct result of changes to enrolment requirements from universities. There has been a shift in those. The exact numbers for sciences we can get from the minister.

**The CHAIR:** I would also be interested to see the number of students in year 12 and the number who graduate. That was one of the stimulus points for the changes because we had so many kids who were going through that had nothing. Can we get that as well?

**Mr BLAGAICH:** Yes.

*[Supplementary Information No B8.]*

**The CHAIR:** How is P&L going, by the way? Are they keeping their end up? Since I left, it all just fell in a heap.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** Holding its own.

**The CHAIR:** Not ministerial, since I left the classroom.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** No, holding its own. The WACE achieved has remained stable, so we are still sitting at 91.3 per cent of kids in 2021 achieving their WACE, so we are stable across the board in that sense. That has been maintained.

[3.10 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If I can interrupt, in 2020, which was extraordinary, we actually got the highest WACE level that we had ever achieved.

**The CHAIR:** That is good—in that year. What about the cert II and above; do you have those figures, again, from 2016 on? I would just be interested to know.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Would you have that here or should we take that on notice?

**The CHAIR:** And from cert II and above in each year. Thank you. You can put that all into B8; that is fine.

Just one other one, a bit of an issue that I am sure we have all faced, is, again, the terminal decline of males, particularly in primary schools. We have tried a few things there. The males in the classroom program—I mentioned this before, I think, in one of the other sessions. We tried to bring newly graduated male teachers into the classrooms into year 10 across the state to try to get them to bestow the accolades upon what a great career teaching is. I would just be interested to know the current number of males in primary schools and high schools—again, I do not mind, for the last four years or whatever, and see if there has been any increase; it was around 14 per cent, I think.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We might have it here. Yes. It will require me to go to “W”, workforce, in my file, and that may well break my file!

**The CHAIR:** I can take it on notice.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will just see if we have it here. No, we will take it on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, I will take it on notice. That is B9. Can I get for that the number of males and females in primary school for four years, whatever you like, four years is fine, and the same in secondary, and, also, coupled with that, the number of male and female principals and deputies at the same time.

*[Supplementary Information No B9.]*

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We can take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Is that too difficult?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, no, we can take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** All right; that is me done. Hon Samantha Rowe.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, chair.

I am on budget paper No 2, page 370. If you go to the twelfth point, there is \$2 million in the budget for a new undercover area at Clifton Hills Primary School, which is great to see in the budget paper this year, because I know that the P&C has been advocating for this for some time. Minister, are you able to update us on where we are at with that project, and what it is going to include for that school?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you, member, for the question. Clifton Hills Primary School went through a really difficult period. They had a fire. Anyway, I can advise that an architect has been appointed, so design work is underway. It will deliver a covered assembly area and a storage and office space. We expect construction to commence towards the end of 2023, and the project will be completed in 2024. I am also advised that this year is the school's fiftieth anniversary, so I am delighted that we can make that commitment to them this year.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** I have a couple of questions to follow-up on some members' earlier questions. With regard to the funding for support for the students with autism, we had some questions about that, but I am particularly interested in the spending changes. Page 364, on that budget line item "Expansion of Specialist Learning Programs to Support Students with Autism", the minister mentioned that there was a change of the criteria for diagnosis, and there is an increased number of students being diagnosed. I am just wondering if you can outline what actual services are delivered with that increase in spending across the budget years?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is to support the individual needs of students K–12 who are at risk of disengagement or significant difficulties and who are on the spectrum. These are specialist learning programs, so there are currently 16 in eight mainstream primary and eight mainstream secondary schools in the metropolitan area and in Bunbury. The department intends to expand to eight more schools—so two in primary schools in each of 2023 and 2024 and two in secondary schools in each of 2024 and 2025.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** Just another follow-up question, if I may, with regard to STEM upgrades, budget paper page 371. We talked about STEM in schools. Dot point 36 notes that planning and construction has commenced to deliver new and repurposed STEM labs across 67 schools. I am particularly interested in how many of the 67 schools are in regional areas, and, obviously, my particular focus is obviously the south west region. I just want to check about where those new and repurposed STEM laboratories might be getting delivered regionally?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can advise you that in the south west region, 17 secondary schools will benefit from that. That includes Bunbury, as well as some district highs—so Nannup district high, for example. The STEM investment for secondary students in that region is just over \$17 million. It will deliver specialised classrooms that have got a specialised fit-out that is suitable for STEM subjects, and for some of those smaller schools enrolling smaller numbers of primary and secondary students, they will get money for STEM improvements, and that will ensure that they are equipped to deliver that modern STEM curriculum.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** Thank you.

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**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Minister, page 364 deals with significant issues impacting the agency, and, in particular, the first item there on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I imagine that there must be some teachers who were hesitant and, perhaps even further than that, just simply did not comply with the vaccine mandates. Do we have data on how many teachers were impacted by that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. It is less than 0.3 per cent. Somebody might be able to find me the specific numbers. Okay, I do not have a specific number for teachers. I can tell you that the per cent was actually—I think I said less than 0.3. It is less than 0.5. It was 0.35 per cent. I have a number of what that translates into for teachers and education assistants, which is 134. I do not have a number specific to teachers.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Okay—so the 134 includes teachers also includes teaching assistants?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** How did we categorise those individuals? Are they people who were dismissed or they tendered a resignation?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That 134 were placed on provisional standdown, and I will see if I can give you any more. I do not have them by teacher category. I can give you these numbers, if that is of assistance to you, honourable member. As at 7 June, 382 staff—remember, I just talked about teachers and education assistants; this is 382 staff—had commenced the standdown process with 261 continuing into the disciplinary process. That is across all the classifications of people who are employed.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Is that 7 June this year?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Can you explain to me the difference between the 382 staff and the 134 that you said were provisional standdown?

[3.20 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** So 134 is teachers and education assistants, but there is a range of other staff that are employed in schools in different categories.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** If we want to know employed Western Australians who are impacted by this, the answer is 382?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Who entered the standdown process; correct.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Then you said 261 are into the disciplinary process.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is 268.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** That would seem, shall I say, an escalation. Of the 382, 268 have been escalated to disciplinary proceedings?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** What has happened to the others? Have they resumed their duties, have they?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Some have returned to work because vaccination mandates were lifted. Was there something specific that you were looking for, honourable member?

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Of the 382 staff, how many have returned to work?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can tell you that noncompliant staff with an approved 16-week temporary exemption—as at 17 June, there were 208 staff who were eligible to return to work. Of those 208, those who were —

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** This is 17 June, not to be confused with the 7 June figures earlier.

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is correct. I am trying to get the figures right. Bearing in mind the size of the workforce and that many of the workforce are part time, I have two sets of numbers here which at first blush may seem not to add up, but in fact there is a reason for it. For example, the number of staff who were at work on 16 June, out of the 208 who were eligible to return to work, was 82. The number of staff who were at work on 17 June, of that 208 eligible to return to work, was 72. The reason there is a difference is that it may well be that there were 10 people who were part time and were not normally expected to be at work on whatever day of the week 16 June was.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** The 208 that you say are eligible to be at work—that is obviously a figure less than the 382 staff who had not complied with the vaccine mandates, so why would there be any person not eligible at present?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There are a range of reasons. I am sorry if this is a bit messy, but some people chose to resign; some people were terminated.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** You might remember that is where I started—how many resigned and how many were terminated. Have we got that data?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We might have it.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** At the moment I do not think we have taken anything on notice, and we have not really had any responses that take us anywhere.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Can you list—I have some information from 7 June and some from 16 June.

**The CHAIR:** We need to move on. Honourable member, can you tell us what you want.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Of the 382 staff, how many resigned and how many were dismissed? Of those who are eligible to return to work and have not returned to work, are they on leave, and is that leave paid or unpaid?

*[Supplementary Information No B10.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Could we turn to page 367, under both public primary education and public secondary education, in the context of employees. I am going to ask it here, and hopefully you are okay with this. It is in relation to collegiate principals. Are you happy for me to ask it there, minister?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** My question is: how many collegiate principals are currently employed by the department? I am trying to get an understanding of where they are based. Are they based at head office or in regional offices?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** They are usually based in regional offices. I am trying to give you some more information. They broker support for principals by connecting them to system and school experts. That might be coaching on a range of school improvement topics, or support following critical incidents. Since 10 February last year until 16 March this year, 443 principals have expressed an interest to engage with a collegiate principal. Of those, 239 are from regional WA and 204 are from metropolitan WA.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Minister, when you say they have expressed an interest to engage with one—have they, or have they not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I presume so. With no disrespect to whoever wrote the briefing note —

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** It is not clear.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Welcome to my world!

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**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Could I ask therefore that we put on notice how many collegiate principals there are and, of those, the data as to how many school principals have actually received support—not expressed an interest but actually received support.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised there are 16 collegiate principals, and I will confirm for you the number of them who have actually engaged with a collegiate principal.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** You have said 443 expressed an interest. Was that just metropolitan?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is the total.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** So we have 443 in terms of the expression, and then we will ask for how many have engaged.

*[Supplementary Information No B11.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** With regard to the collegiate principals, how are they employed? Are they on contracts? How are they actually employed as such?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** They are principals in their own right. They are seconded from their school to work as a collegiate principal.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Has the department either commenced or undertaken a review of the collegiate principal program? I understood that there was one to be undertaken. If it has been undertaken or is underway, who has been consulted and, if it has been finalised, what has been the outcome?

[3.30 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It did commence and was interrupted by the drama that was COVID in term 1. All of the stakeholders, so the professional organisations, the unions et cetera, were part, and are part, of the ongoing consultation. It is not finished yet. So, you might recall in term 1, we effectively put on hold a whole lot of things that were not core to getting teachers in front of classrooms.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** And this is one of them.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** So, do you have an expectation as to when it might be finalised?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** First half of next year.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Great. And also could I have a list of the stakeholders who have been consulted thus far?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure.

*[Supplementary Information No B12.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Thank you. Again, under the same topic, I am aware that there certainly was an intention by the department to review the existing principal class salary model and that a working group was to be established. Has that working group been established; and, if so, what is the current membership?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, the working group was established and has done a significant amount of work. The work is not finished. It is expected to be finished by the end of this year.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Similar to my previous question with regard to consultation and stakeholders, can you please provide perhaps on notice who has been consulted as part of this review?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, and it is fair to say the key stakeholders are on the working party.

*[Supplementary Information No B13.]*

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**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** While we are actually on public primary education and public secondary education, can you tell me whether or not there are any expected changes to either policies and procedures with respect to enrolments at schools? Is there something underway there? I can see a nodding of the head.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. The enrolment policy was reviewed, largely driven by requests from parents, as I understand it, and mainly around the issue of principals of education support centres being able to make a decision themselves as to whether to enrol a particular child. So, previously the enrolment policy in respect to who could enrol in an education support centre was based on an assessment done by a psych. This change is about giving the power, if you like, to the principal to make an assessment. Now, they may rely on advice from a psych, but it actually gives them the decision-making capacity. I am advised it is published. It is out for feedback from stakeholders now.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Thank you for that. So, the proposed changes to the enrolment procedure relate only to education support schools.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am told there might be other minor things, but what I can do is I can take that on notice and we can give you a list as to what that might be. <sup>1</sup>

*[Supplementary Information No B14.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Yes, and I suppose on that, can I confirm whether or not there are any further changes to enrolment procedures to community kindergartens as part of it?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Not that I am aware.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** If you could perhaps add that just to confirm. They have had a few changes from normal procedures.

Page 367, if I can keep going. Again, in terms of staffing allocations, and I am particularly interested with regard to early childhood education, can you just advise or confirm for me: is there a dedicated early childhood section or staffing allocation within the department with respect to early childhood; and, if so—and I am happy for this to be taken on notice—are you able to provide me with a breakdown of those positions including the total number of staff by FTE and headcount?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised that there is a group of staff in statewide services who are the early childhood experts if you like. I do not have numbers of those here. I could possibly get those for you.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** If you could take that on notice.

*[Supplementary Information No B15.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Again, on page 367, under public secondary education, where it refers above the items it says the provision of accommodation “for students from rural and remote areas who have to board away from home to attend a public school”. Can you advise—and again I am happy for it to be taken on notice if you do not have it on hand—in 2021 how many applications were received and how many were approved by the department for the boarding away from allowance?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not have that here. I do not have that here. I am happy to take it on notice.

*[Supplementary Information No B16.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I suppose if I could add to that, in 2021 what was the total amount of funding that was allocated in the budget to this scheme?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

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<sup>1</sup> A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

**The CHAIR:** That is all part of B16.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** The minister may or may not recall but during the most recent annual report hearings I asked you a question with respect to the BAHA and whether or not there was an intention by the government to review it. I recall that you said no. I have, however, been made aware that you did indicate via letter that after 2022, you would request to the Department of Education to examine the structure of the BAHA payments, rather than a restructure. That is, I suppose, where I got a little confused. So, can you tell me whether or not there is going to be a review of the structure of the BAHA payments?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not recall the particular correspondence that you are referring to, but you will recall that the budget savings measures went from 2018 to 2022, so it would make sense after 2022 to look at it. I cannot give you any firmer commitment than that, really. We are still in 2022.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** But at this stage you do not have any plans?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I have not made a decision, unless someone is telling me that I have made a decision and I have forgotten. I do not think I have made a decision to review it, but I am happy just to go and double-check what I might have committed to.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Okay. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** I will give you one more and then I am going to share the love a bit.

*[Supplementary Information No B17.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** If I can just go back to the teacher flying squad, which you also have provided some answers to. In response to a question on notice, minister, that I asked you just back in May of this year with regard to the number of teachers under both category 1 and category 2, I have seen quite a significant decrease in the number of category 2 staff. So, there were 319 in 2020; 137 in 2021 and down to 61 in 2022. That is obviously quite a significant reduction over three years. Can you explain the reasons for that? Is it in part due to COVID or what?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** What are the categories, honourable member?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Category 1 relates to teachers employed on two-year contracts, which can lead to permanency. The category 2 refers to teachers who have expressed an interest in short-term regional contracts and they have an ongoing contract and can decline offers. That is the statement. There is not a real change in the category 1, but there is quite a significant change in category 2.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised that the reason there is a change in the numbers because they get offered and accept permanent positions, but what I might do to make sure I am giving you the answer that you want, that if you spell out what you have just said again, we will take that on notice and I will just double-check we have got those numbers right.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** So, for the purposes of the question to be taken on notice, my question is: can the minister and the department explain the reductions in the number of category 2 staff from 2020 to 2022 from 319 down to 61 in 2022?

*[Supplementary Information No B18.]*

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** Chair, I would not mind just popping back to something that the minister has just said as we finished questioning on the last issue just to clarify. And that was on budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 364 and it was about children with autism support and the minister said that the footnote, "existing agency spending has been reprioritised to meet some or all of these costs", and mentioned that it related to the "Primary Schools Science Package", which definitely has an "(a)" next to it but also the "Expansion of Specialist Learning Programs to Support Students with

Autism Spectrum Disorder” also has an “(a)”, so I am just wondering if that was an error; or, if not, perhaps if she could just explain.

[3.40 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Good pick-up. I do not know.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** And it is under phonics as well.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised that it does apply to both, so some of the funding came out of reprioritising existing spending.

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** By savings—is that how I understand that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Not savings; just literally moving money around.

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** Thank you for that. I refer to page 365 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, the service summary, and public secondary education. This might not be the right line item, but I could not find one for this one, so perhaps the minister could give me a bit of grace. It is just in relation to Country Week. I note that Country Week was cancelled for the last two years in a row and there was some discussion about looking at the chances of being able to reschedule that. Presumably, that opportunity has now been missed. I am wondering if you could just run us through whether that was a live option and what was done in relation to Country Week planning.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It will proceed this year; it is just happening later in the year than it normally would. It is now week 7, term 3, which is 29 August to 2 September. Historically, it has been held in the last week of term 2, but to be safe, we pushed it back even further to hopefully get on the other side of Omicron.

**Hon JAMES HAYWARD:** Do we know what Country Week costs?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not have the numbers here. I am advised that we are not sure that we would be able to get you a budget, because parents pay for their children’s participation.

**The CHAIR:** A lot of fundraising goes on for Country Week.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Just referring to page 369 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the asset investment program, there is a lengthy list of projects there. I guess what I am interested in is the process by which schools are assessed as to their needs for upgrades, repairs, maintenance and that sort of thing, and when that is done and how often that is done.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There is not a precise science to this, because we are dealing with a very complex and big asset program. When we came to government five years ago now, just over 50 per cent of schools were over 50 years old. We have reduced that, so just over 47 per cent are over 50, not because we have made some schools younger, but we have built a lot more new schools, so it is in terms of the total pool of schools, if you like. There is a building condition assessment report that is going to be done again in 2022 and 2023. That is a program of work that will look at the building condition assessment. But I have to say that you could do that and you could come up with a list of particular circumstances in schools, but it really will depend on an assessment of, if you like, the total package of the school. There might be one area of the school that is very old, very out of date and needs a lot of work, but you look at that in the total of what that school has versus another school, where if you do not fix that area that is very old and very out of date, it will have a much bigger impact on what the whole school can offer. I would like to tell you that there is one scientific method, but there is not. It is a combination of trying to do the science—an assessment—but then also you have to make a judgement on what is the total package of capacity at that school.

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**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Presumably, there could be schools that are going to encounter issues because they are old and they will be outside of that BCA process. They could just come forward to seek funding —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** And they do.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** And they do. You mentioned that around 47 per cent of the schools are over 50 years of age. Presumably, that is statewide.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** What would the figure be in regional areas?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not know. We certainly would not have that number here. I can take it on notice and if we can provide you with a breakdown, we will.

**The CHAIR:** What was the time frame for the age?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Of schools over 50, how many are in regional WA.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** And, if possible, where they are.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If I can, I will, but I am not going to devote a huge amount of time to it. [*Supplementary Information No B19.*]

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Will that process commence or be completed in late 2022 or 2023?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Commence.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** So it will commence. How long will that process take?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It will go over 2023 to 2024. There are 800 public school sites.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Are they prioritised, in terms of the order they are done, in terms of age or if there have been requests for repairs?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It will not be on the basis of request. I think they will have to come up with a system where they do kind of rolling assessments.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Is it one proponent that does that assessment or do they have multiple teams?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, it will be a combination.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** I refer to page 383 of budget paper No 2. Under the heading “Expenses” is “Students at Risk”. I am interested to hear more about the alternative learning settings that have been established. Can the minister please provide information about these?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. These are settings that are outside of a school environment, and the purpose of them is to find the best way forward for individual students who either have been excluded or are at high risk of being excluded. The service, if you like, that they provide is individual to each child. They will work with the family to identify how best to continue the education of that child. It could be one of any number of ways. It could be that they do not return to that school, so you are trying to break up the peer group; you are trying to give the child a fresh start. It might be looking at them going to a different school. Obviously, depending on their age, it might be that they continue their education via TAFE. It might be that some additional therapeutic services are put in place to assist that child. So far, in 2020–21, we saw 97 students engaged across the four existing sites. There has been a further budget allocation as a result of an election commitment to fund a further eight, so we now have additional ALSs in Joondalup, Rockingham, Geraldton and Kununurra, and I am advised that Karratha and Port Hedland will be operational in term 3. Further work is underway to source and finalise locations in the goldfields and the wheatbelt. It is not set up like a school. A

student does not go there and continue their year 10 curriculum. They go there for the purpose of assessing how we tackle the issue that got them to this point.

**The CHAIR:** I think Hon Donna Faragher had a couple more questions, but do any other members of the committee have a question?

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I do.

**The CHAIR:** You can have one and then we will go to Hon Donna Faragher.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Okay. Thanks, chair. Minister, RAMPs—how many are underway at the moment?

[3.50 pm]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** As at today's date, I am advised there are 65 in place.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** You and the department had initiated a steering committee for a multi-agency protocol. Does that steering committee still exist?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, it does.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** From time to time, does it review the protocol?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, it does.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Might you be inclined, minister, to raise with them the circumstances in which a RAMP commences? Specifically, this is a follow-on from previous hearings that we have had and some supplementary information that was provided to the committee after one of the last hearings. It becomes clear that the RAMPs only commence once a notification has been received that a student has been charged. My concern is that if a school principal or an administrator is made aware of a situation, they ought not to wait until such time as police come and tell them that somebody has been charged. They have sufficient information; in fact, they are probably the ones alerting police. So, we wait for this process to occur before a RAMP starts rather than the RAMP occurring straightaway. Today is not the day to ask you for an opinion about these things. I am simply asking whether this can be raised at the next meeting of the steering committee.

**The CHAIR:** We can take it on notice.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am advised, honourable member, there is an obligation, once there is notification received from police, to put in place a RAMP, but that is not the only way that a RAMP can be put in place. If a school principal becomes aware of other circumstances where a RAMP is required for the safety of two people or the whole school or whatever, there is nothing prohibiting the principal from putting those RAMPs in place, and I am advised RAMPs have been put in place in those circumstances.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** You will obviously have to take this on notice, but were any of the 65 RAMPs that are currently underway commenced prior to notification that the student had been charged?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will just see if I have got that here. I will take that on notice because I do not have the split in front of me.

[*Supplementary Information No B20.*]

**The CHAIR:** I have a quick one before I hand over to Hon Donna Faragher. Do we have the current numbers of demountables—I know it is a contentious issue over a period of time—and what it has been for the last four years?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will take that on notice. We will have it somewhere.

[*Supplementary Information No B21.*]

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**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I refer to page 364, under “Ongoing Initiatives”, and “Expansion of Educational Adjustment to Support Students with Additional Learning Needs”. I did note some of the answers that you provided at the very beginning of the estimates hearing with regard to what those funds could be utilised for. Can you advise whether or not external speech pathology services to students could be an appropriate allocation of resources?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Honourable member, sorry; will you take me to the reference on page 364?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Sorry; it is page 364, under “Ongoing Initiatives”, “Expansion of Educational Adjustment to Support Students with Additional Learning Needs”. I think you did say that it could be for literacy programs and education assistants. Would external speech pathologists be incorporated within that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It could be. The focus will tend to be on literacy rather than therapeutic —

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Therapeutic interventions as such.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** — physical intervention. The focus of that money will tend to be around literacy support. It is not impossible. I would say it would be unlikely, because it is designed to assist with literacy support as the main emphasis.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** While we just mentioned speech pathology, minister, I did ask you a question at the last annual report hearings with regard to any mechanisms which people have written to you or the department about with regard to trialling speech pathology services and you indicated that Speech Pathology Australia had emailed you back in February 2022. Can I ask: have you given any consideration to it or have you referred it to the department for consideration?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think I have. I will just see if we have got any information here. I do not have information here, but I am happy to take that on notice.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** If you could, that would be good.

*[Supplementary Information No B22.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I turn to page 365 under “Service Summary” where it refers to “Regulation and Non-Government Sector Assistance”. I just note that there is a reduction over the forward estimates with regard to funding allocations attributed to this part, particularly between 2024–25 and 2025–26.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The slight changes in the forecast of the proportion over 2022–25 expected to be allocated to the non-government school sector are due to the agreement ceasing at the end of December 2025. That is what it takes account of. It is a timing —

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** It is a timing issue rather than anything else.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I refer to page 369, under the heading “Asset Investment Program”. I am keen to understand—I am happy for this to be taken on notice—in the 2020 and 2021 school years, what was the total amount of funding allocated by the department to government schools for maintenance upgrades to school playgrounds, including the installation of new playground equipment and/or shade structures? And, given the time, for those schools that received funding for school playgrounds, are you able to provide me with a list of those schools and the total amount allocated to each?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We certainly do not have that information here, but we can take that on notice.

*[Supplementary Information No B23.]*

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**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Again, I refer to page 365. Under the heading “State and Commonwealth Education Reforms”, it states —

The Department continues to work collaboratively with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions on key education reform initiatives

Obviously, there is the preschool reform initiative, but perhaps again, if it could be taken on notice, I would not mind having a list of the reform initiatives that are being referred to in that line item. I appreciate there might a few, but it would be good to take it on notice.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, that will be not just in relation to the preschool reform agreement but the —

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** It is the second part of that, yes.

[*Supplementary Information No B24.*]

**The CHAIR:** To the witnesses, thank you very much for your attendance today. Members, you may submit your remaining questions through the electronic lodgement system, which will close at 5.00 pm on 1 July 2022. Witnesses, the committee will forward the uncorrected transcript of evidence, with questions taken on notice highlighted, as soon as possible after this hearing. Responses to questions on notice are due by 5.00 pm on 20 July 2022. Should you be unable to meet the due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons why the due date cannot be met. Once again, thank you very much for attending.

**Hearing concluded at 3.59 pm**

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