

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2012–13 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
TUESDAY, 5 JUNE 2012**

**SESSION ONE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Members

**Hon Giz Watson (Chair)
Hon Philip Gardiner (Deputy Chair)
Hon Liz Behjat
Hon Ken Travers
Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich**

Hearing commenced at 1.02 pm

HON PETER COLLIER, MLC

Minister for Energy representing the Minister for Education, examined:

MS SHARYN O'NEILL

Director General, sworn and examined:

MR DAVID AXWORTHY

Deputy Director General, Schools, sworn and examined:

MR JOHN LEAF

Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration, sworn and examined:

MR JOHN FISCHER

Executive Director, Infrastructure, sworn and examined:

MR CLIFF GILLAM

Executive Director, Workforce, sworn and examined:

MR BRETT ROACH

Deputy Chief Finance Officer, sworn and examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to the hearing this afternoon. Before we begin, I must ask the public servants to take either an oath or an affirmation.

[Witnesses took the oath or affirmation.]

The CHAIR: You will have signed a document entitled "Information for Witnesses", have you read and understood this document?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private, either on its own motion or at a witness's request. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the committee values your assistance. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It will greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the budget statements, volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask your cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this deadline, please advise the committee clerk immediately. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask now that the minister introduce his advisers to the committee, and for each adviser to please state their full name, their contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

[The witnesses were introduced.]

The CHAIR: Given that none of the witnesses want to give an opening statement, I suggest we get stuck in. I will take the Chair's prerogative and ask a number of questions, and then I will ask members to indicate whether they have questions.

Minister, what are the government's key policy initiatives in this particular budget?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will ask Ms O'Neill to comment in a moment, but in terms of infrastructure, there is the continuation of the infrastructure development with the continuation of independent public schools, which is a very significant component of the way forward. In terms of teaching, we will continue to portray teaching as a valuable career pathway—that will always be an incentive and initiative of the government. I will ask the director general to comment on specific areas.

Ms O'Neill: There are two main areas represented in the budget this year. First, the 10 child and parent centres in low socioeconomic areas where services will be co-located and integrated to provide better services for young children and their families, including psychology services at the school, a health nurse, services parenting programs and associated programs for parents, parents with young children in particular. In this budget or over the forward estimates about \$28 million will be spent on child and parent centres. Some infrastructure will be built for those centres and each centre will be given funding to provide coordination and additional services. The child and parent centres are obviously a clear policy initiative in this budget. In addition to that, the relocation of year 7s to secondary schools in 2015. In this budget is the announcement of over \$200 million for infrastructure and around \$22 million for the retraining of primary teachers who may indeed want to take up a role in secondary schools. There is also some additional funding for some coordination and implementation. Both of those policy initiatives are directed in their own way at ensuring high standards for students across Western Australia on the back of the work that has already been done this year and, in particular, to make sure that young people in Western Australian public schools are positioned well for their future in terms of getting the right kind of support, not only academic support but more general support and also to take the best from the year 7 students being in secondary schools—the specialist facilities and resources and teaching that will be required and implied in the Australian curriculum.

The CHAIR: What are the key risks associated with implementing the government's policy initiatives?

Ms O'Neill: The risks in general terms for both of those will be ensuring that they are delivered on time. Both the child and parent centres and the year 7s have an infrastructure component. There is always a risk of making sure that the infrastructure components are delivered on time and on budget. We have contingency and risk-mitigation plans in place for both of those. It is a market where a lot of building is going on, and education, as a sector, takes a fair bit of that market. In fact, over the past 12 months we have probably had the biggest building program Education has had. I think we are well placed to manage those risks. Clearly, the delivery of infrastructure is a risk. There is also the risk of ensuring that we have the appropriately trained staff in both of those settings. Primary staff are being retrained, but other staff are moving into secondary for 2015. That comes at a time when there will be some shortages in and around secondary schooling. One of the risks for the year 7s is ensuring that we have the appropriate staff in place. We think we have good plans to be able to mitigate that risk. With the child and parent centres we are ensuring that we have appropriately trained staff who are able to provide more of the integrated services. Part of the child and parent centre initiative is to have procured not-for-profit groups to run the coordination. In part the thinking for that is to make sure that we have people with the expertise to work across all of the sectors—it is not just an Education initiative as Health and Community Services are involved—in not only the supply, but a well-developed skilled workforce. Those are two of the key risks. If we ensure that we have those in place, both of those initiatives will be successful.

[1.10pm]

The CHAIR: I will give the call to Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I will just go straight into the significant issues impacting on the agency. I refer to page 395, fifth dot point, “Behaviour and Attendance”. I want to focus on attendance. How many children are there whose whereabouts are unknown? As at 2011 there were 1 461 children whose whereabouts were unknown. Can I have the updated number?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can we get a second question? We will come back with the answer to that one.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Someone can find it—okay.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is here somewhere.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Well I thought it would be because it is pretty significant. I want to refer to the schools that have fallen below 80 per cent in terms of student attendance. There were 39 of them in 2011. Can the minister confirm whether there are still 39 or are there more now?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are yet to find the answer to that one. The answer to the first question in terms of unidentified schools was 1 135 as at 2 April 2012, which compares with 1 388 in April 2011.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: So there is a drop there.

Hon PETER COLLIER: For the second question, I will ask Mr Axworthy to respond.

Mr Axworthy: The department measures its attendance rate by virtue of an audit of students’ attendance over semester 1 and semester 2—over a long period. As the member would appreciate, on a weekly or a monthly basis certain schools go up and down with their attendance rates. So our official attendance rate figures are based on a whole semester’s worth—two terms worth—of attendance figures. The latest figures we have on attendance would come from semester 1 in 2011, and those were the figures that the member just mentioned.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: And you have no later figures?

Mr Axworthy: We have no later figures than that. We monitor our schools on a daily basis but we do not publish.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can the department explain to me what it is doing about these issues? At Balga Senior High School its semester 1 attendance rate was 72 per cent—a significant number of students not attending. At Burringurrah Remote Community School it is only 56 per cent. If we go down the list—I am going to pick the schools at random— at Kalumburu it is 68.8 per cent; at Roebourne District High School it is 49.6 per cent; and at Mullewa District High School it is 47.06 per cent. Minister, can you explain to me what is going on in Mullewa District High School or Roebourne District High School where more than half the students do not attend school on a daily basis? Where are these kids? The only thing I can conclude is that they are out on the street creating havoc in the community. How many of them are there?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mean the total number of schools?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Let us just take Mullewa and Roebourne District High Schools. One has an attendance rate of 47.06 per cent and the other one is 49.6 per cent. I want to know what those percentages figures convert to in terms of numbers, and where are these kids?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will get the director general to comment. Obviously in the two communities you mentioned, the Aboriginal community would be very high in that area and that brings —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is not an excuse.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No. I am not making excuses. As the Minister for Indigenous Affairs I can assure you I am very conscious of that. The simple fact of the matter is that there are issues with

regard to attendance rates for Aboriginal students. I can assure you that we are doing all that we possibly can to make sure that those students stay at school, and I will get the director general to comment on that in a moment. However, one of the best ways to do that is to offer as many pathways as we possibly can above and beyond the authoritarian nature of school, and that is what we are attempting to do. We have introduced a number of different initiatives from the training perspective, for example, to ensure that it provides other options for Aboriginal students. That is a very generic policy choice in terms of attendance rates right across the board, some more specific than others, on schools that you have mentioned. I will ask the director general to comment not just on those two schools but also in a more general sense in terms of how we try to identify problems specific to individual cohorts of schools.

Ms O'Neill: In relation to attendance in general, they are targeted very much in low SES areas and including schools with high Aboriginality. We have identified 40 schools with significant attendance issues and they have been provided with additional grants. We know over many years that attendance data has tended to be stable. There has not been, for a long time, big swings upwards—improvement—or big swings downwards, which is a good thing in terms of attendance. We also know that it is a broad community endeavour, so that schools right around WA in Mullewa, in Kalumburu, and in any of the places that have been suggested, that the staff in those schools work tirelessly to ensure that students are attending. We drive around, we pick up students, we feed them, we dress them, we continue to care for them way beyond the normal bounds of schooling. The question and the suggestion that improvement is needed is absolutely clear, which is why we have had a strong focus on improvement as not only an endeavour inside the school, but also a total community and mutually accepted responsibility. We have 40 schools where we have had a particular focus. We know that the rolling out of big initiatives that are the same in Perth, and the same everywhere else, do not do the job so we have had a much stronger focus on giving schools the funding to come up, in some part, with local solutions. There have been a number of schools that have done that and have had good results from that. In addition, we have given reward payments recognising schools that are able to lift the attendance of students. That has been part of a program that we have had recently. People would know that we have the Aboriginal school-based traineeships and other programs because it is also about changing the nature of schooling to engage young people further in the enterprise of schooling. So there has been wide and varied strategies attempted in schools to engage not only the students themselves —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Director general, can I just stop you there? As at 31 March 2012 you had 164 students across the State in Aboriginal school-based apprenticeships; only 164! That is not significant. You can go on for a long time in terms of what you are doing. However, the simple fact is that it is not working, and even when we move to the metropolitan area we find a concerning trend where students are simply not attending school. Can the minister explain to me where these students are? Approximately 25 per cent of students in regional areas do not attend school regularly, and anywhere between 10 and 15 in the metropolitan area do not attend school regularly. Where are these students who should be at school by law? Where do they spend their day and what are you doing about it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I point out that these figures are pretty standard. They have been standard for a number of years. It is no excuse; I can assure the member of that, but they have not shifted much at all in recent years.

[1.20 pm]

Ms O'Neill: As most people would understand, if the students are not in school, they are obviously in other places. We have a range of strategies to first of all go and find where the young people are. If they are secondary age, we have participation coordinators. We have an engagement with 2 915 young people who are working with participation coordinators and trying to get them involved in programs, including the Aboriginal school-based traineeship program, which while small in number

is pretty successful with the individuals that are involved, and we want to grow that. If I focus on years 11 and 12 students, for example, in fact a whole range of students are on notices of arrangement, so they are participating. The focus of the question is on the ones who are not in school, and of course that is our focus and we try to find them in the first instance. Young people can be elusive; they are highly mobile. Our participation coordinators know who they are. They engage them and they can get them to agree on one day to come into a program and the student does not turn up. We continue to work in an endeavour to have those people engaged in programs. They are not left, from our perspective, roaming. We have to be able to engage them—it is law—and we continue to do that. However, it is true, as it has been true for a very long time, that there are some continual refusers who choose not to come to school, whose parents indeed choose not to make them come to school, and they are a difficult bunch to work with. I do not think anyone is suggesting that they are easy and I do not think anyone is suggesting that we should not be more successful; of course we should. We are undertaking as many strategies as we can at the moment to have those people engaged; and we will continue to revise the ones we have and seek to improve those

The CHAIR: I might just go to the next speaker. We have three hours in total and I suggest we have a 10-minute break in an hour and a half.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to page 398 under the heading “Additional Stages at Secondary Schools”. The first dot point states that \$30 million is allocated to stage 2 of the building program at Dalyellup College. I would like an explanation on why the construction of a school gymnasium has been removed from the building program; how Dalyellup College will be able to offer a comprehensive physical education program without a school gym; whether the government will direct the department to ensure that it provides a gym as part of stage 2 of the building works, which was included in the original proposal for stage 2 of the building works; and, if not, what alternatives are available for the school to access funding for the building of a gymnasium?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will just get Mr Fischer to comment first in regard to Dalyellup.

Mr Fischer: The brief for high schools in early 2000 did not provide for covered gyms; it provided for covered assembly areas. So, the first stage of high schools that were built in 2000, such as Dalyellup and Atwell, had a covered assembly area. That assembly area at Dalyellup will be enclosed so that it will provide the same functionality as a gym. In fact in terms of the square area, there will be a larger area at Dalyellup than would normally be provided under the current brief for high schools. I think Dalyellup is getting about 1 000 square metres of a covered and enclosed area. The existing brief for a new high school is about 640 square metres. I understand that the brief has changed since early 2000 but it will get the same function, a covered area that is enclosed. A good example of that is what has been done at Atwell: it is a useful area, it is protected from the weather and it is a larger area than would be provided in a gym.

Hon ADELE FARINA: But surely the floor covering in a covered area is very different to what would be provided in a gymnasium, which could result in injuries to students if they do not have the appropriate floor covering that they normally would have in a gymnasium.

Mr Fischer: The floor coverings of a gym will still be appropriate for gym activities. Whether it is basketball or any other sport activity, it will be the same as is provided in a normal gym.

Hon ADELE FARINA: You are saying that the school undercover area will be available for use as a gymnasium, but surely that does not have the same standard of floor covering as you would expect in a gymnasium because it is an undercover assembly area, which is just plain concrete on the floor.

Mr Fischer: It is a surfaced floor. I believe there is a surfacing over the concrete, which makes it a suitable surface for sports events.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Are you stating that categorically: that the surface in the undercover area at Dalyellup College is suitable for use as a gymnasium? Are you stating that as a categorical statement?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will just get some clarification of that from the director general.

Ms O'Neill: I think we have to focus on the level of sporting surface that needs to be provided in schools. It is not necessarily the standard that you would expect in your top gymnasiums around Perth. It is true to say that we want it to be safe and it has to be of a relevant standard so that sporting activities can be undertaken, but I do not think that there is anywhere a guarantee that every school will have a top-level gymnasium floor in all of its sports surfaces. It is something that we would always like to have, but what has been provided at Dalyellup, in my understanding, is appropriate to the need and to the purpose at this point in time. That is not to say it could not be improved in the future and other facilities provided. But we certainly, in all schools, provide surfaces that meet the safety standard and are fit for the purpose that will be undertaken at that school. It is entirely dependent on the activities undertaken in that school.

Hon ADELE FARINA: But the school assembly covered area was not constructed for the purposes of a gymnasium, and now you are saying that it is suitable for use as a gymnasium, even though it was not purpose built as a gymnasium because there was always an intention to include a gymnasium as stage 2 of the building works program.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Mr Fischer has something to add.

Mr Fischer: The area is multifunctional. The area has been set out to use as a gym. It is currently set out that way with marked courts and with sports equipment around the area. The change that is occurring is part of the stage to enclose that area; that addresses the concerns about the ability to use that area in different weather climates.

Hon ADELE FARINA: How many questions do I get to ask?

The CHAIR: You can certainly go for another one. I indicate to members that I have a lot of people on the speaker list, so I will try to give a couple of topics to each and move along. Then we will come back, as I am sure that others have plenty of questions.

Hon ADELE FARINA: In my next question I refer to page 402 and funding for the child and parent centres, for which \$10.9 million has been allocated and I understand \$1 million has been allocated to build an early childhood centre at Carey Park Primary School. I would like to know what additional facilities will be provided at the school from this \$1 million funding allocation; what additional services will be provided at the school from that \$1 million funding allocation; how does that compare with the services currently provided at the school; and, finally, how will the additional services provided at the school as part of this program be funded beyond the 2012–13 financial year?

Hon PETER COLLIER: The director general will respond to that.

Ms O'Neill: Carey Park, as one of the 10 selected schools and also the schools around it, will receive what is referred to as a purpose-built early childhood facility, which is a state-of-the-art early childhood facility that is pre-fabricated and then sited on Carey Park site, and that will be completed for the beginning of 2014. The school and surrounding schools will receive funding for a coordinator and include up to \$200 000 for additional services to the school. The school psychologist will be located on the school site. The community health nurse will be relocated onto that site.

[1.30 pm]

Hon ADELE FARINA: Relocated from where?

Ms O'Neill: I am sorry, that is a question that the Department of Health would have to answer.

Community services and parenting services will be provided on the school site. So the \$200 000 is to buy in additional services that that area might need. They have not been designated, because there will need to be mapping at each individual school area to see what is needed, whether it is additional speech pathology or some other kind of service, so that is flexible funding. There will be a local advisory group that will advise the principal and the agencies working in the local area to work through what is actually needed in that school site. That funding will become available in the new financial year and we are starting the procurement process right now to get the coordinator for each school site on board. So as soon as we have those people in place, which we anticipate will be late August, or probably early September when that is finalised altogether, they will be able to start then bringing in, or look to consult locally about what the additional services might need to be for that school area.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So, is the \$200 000 allocated in this year's budget on top of the \$1 million for the facility or is it coming out of the \$1 million?

Ms O'Neill: The \$200 000 is in addition. I just need to confer with Mr Fischer about the cost. It is on top of the infrastructure.

Mr Fischer: The costs on page 402 of the *Budget Statements* identified only the infrastructure costs. There are moneys elsewhere in the budget that deal with the running costs.

Hon ADELE FARINA: And that additional money elsewhere in the budget is a maximum of \$200 000 for Carey Park Primary School, is that correct?

Ms O'Neill: Yes.

Hon ADELE FARINA: And that will buy what? Just a coordinator?

Ms O'Neill: Additional services.

Hon ADELE FARINA: It does not seem to me that that is going to buy a lot in additional services, so I am trying to get indication of what additional services we are actually going to get for \$200 000.

Ms O'Neill: I cannot speculate; it will depend on what is needed in the local areas. I was talking with various principals in the local area who are in these schools and they want to provide additional speech pathology for small children, for example, or they want to run more parenting programs for parents. So, we are not simply designating what they have to have. The quantum of what they can buy will be purchased out of that funding, but it would be remiss of me not to say that the school has other funding available to it that it already uses for this purpose, and that the surrounding schools, as a network of schools, use for this purpose. So this is supplementary to the funding that they already have, and indeed other agencies have, and the strength of the model is that we would want the other agencies to be coming together on a local advisory group to see what they can bring to that child and parent centre in terms of their existing resources. The \$200 000 is for additional services that will be identified at the local level to meet their local need.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Is that over and above the cost of the coordinator?

Ms O'Neill: Yes, I think it is.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So there will be \$200 000 that will be purely for additional services plus the education department will be funding the cost of a coordinator on-site full-time.

Ms O'Neill: That is right.

Hon ADELE FARINA: What is the funding allocation for the coordinator?

Ms O'Neill: It was originally scoped at around the equivalent cost—it will not be a public servant—of a level 7 public servant, which I think is just short of about \$100 000. But we are purchasing 10 coordinators through a procurement process, and as I said, that procurement process is underway. So that gives you a ballpark figure for what the cost of those coordinators might be.

We do not anticipate that they will be public servants—they will not be—we are going to the not-for-profit sector, but that was given as an indication of cost.

The CHAIR: I am going to give the call to Hon Linda Savage. I just want to indicate a list so that people know when they are coming up. I have Hon Linda Savage, Hon Liz Behjat, Hon Ken Travers, Hon Alison Xamon, Hon Philip Gardiner, Hon Col Holt and then I will go back to people who are coming back for seconds. Just so you know if you want to duck out and get a cup of coffee or something between.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: I refer to significant issues in early childhood education on page 394 and the child and parent centres. To preface my question I am just going to refer to the press release of 20 March 2012 about the new centres, which stated in part —

“We have learned from the successes of various models where parents and teachers work together including Challis ... Roseworth ... and Midvale Primary School, where a range of services are already integrated to help families, and will build on these.

In light of that, why is it then that Midvale Primary School has not got a child and parent centre? Midvale Primary School is referred to in the media release.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Director general.

Ms O’Neill: I do not have the press release in front of me, but as I recall, it referred to a number of schools that have been doing integrated services sort of work over some period and Midvale is certainly one of those. There was a process of identification of low-SES schools. There were a range of factors taken into consideration: the socioeconomic nature of the school—because they were meant for low-SES communities; the involvement already in the program; the capacity for infrastructure to be undertaken; the staff expertise; and also what is existing in the local area. The 10 that were identified as a result are the 10 that were in the press release and I think the press release also refers to the possibility in the future of there being more. So it was a range of factors taken into account for the selection. It does not imply, I think, that Midvale could not be a CPC in the future, but in accordance with the selection process and the contextual factors that were undertaken, it was not one of the original 10. That being said it may —

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: No; it did not get the \$10 000 either.

Ms O’Neill: I was not going to say that, I was just checking if it was in one of the service areas of another school. I do not think it is at this stage, but it is worthwhile mentioning that all of the schools have associated government schools that they will be working with. So while there are 10 schools, most of those schools are servicing at least three four other schools and very often a couple of Catholic or independent schools. You made reference to the grants that schools are able to attract. At the same time with that announcement, there are grants of up to \$10 000 that all schools that are under an SEI of 94 can apply for, and schools know that; they have been made aware of that. No-one has been awarded those grants to date, so we cannot say that anyone has or has not got them, because the grants have not been awarded at this point.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: A press release I have got actually went out last week with a list of schools that got the \$10 000, if I can find amongst my papers!

Back to Midvale though, it is interesting that it is named as one of the three models and then did not receive a child and parent centre. I noticed when I had a look at the figures that the SEIFA index for the suburb is actually lower than any of the 10 centres that have been chosen. That leads me to my next questions in regard to Midvale. What integrated services is the department working on in terms of the press release that it chose Midvale, along with Roseworth and Challis, to highlight? What integrated services do you understand are currently available at Midvale Primary School?

Ms O’Neill: I would only be talking in general terms, I am not specifically identifying the services that are provided there, but what I do know is that quite a number of our schools, including

Midvale, have strong relationships with not-for-profit providers. Local health departments in many schools could be involved at Midvale. I would not like to pretend that I know specifically every single service that occurs in 770 schools, so I am speculating, but at Midvale they have certainly prided themselves over many years for working with other agencies to specifically meet the needs of individual students in the area.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: Then, would it surprise you if I said—because I went to Midvale recently, about three weeks ago and have been before on a number of occasions—that they would not describe themselves as having integrated services, certainly not anywhere in the same range. In fact, it was said to me there that was quite absurd to put them in the same sentence with Challis and Roseworth in that media release. Perhaps that leads to another question. I wonder, amongst the people who are here today, when any of you last visited Midvale Primary School.

[1.40 pm]

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am not quite sure if that is relevant to the budget papers. I am not quite sure what the point of that question is.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: I suppose it is just because we have got the early childhood centres, which is a new era. It is specifically going to the press release that announced this. I am trying to pin down the consideration that was given to Midvale Primary School, given that it was referred to in the press release. I think it is relevant to these new centres, seeing that was how they were announced.

The CHAIR: Just before we proceed with that, it might be useful if the member has a copy of the media statement.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: I do.

The CHAIR: I am just checking that the media statement is in relation to budget matters. In which case, it is perfectly fine. Could we have a copy of that for the minister?

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: Perhaps I could put an additional question as to when Midvale Primary School most recently had a visit by someone from the department, including by the Premier and the Minister for Education, whose media release I am handing over, in which she referred to them in that announcement about the new child and parent centres.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I thought your question related to the people who are sitting here today as to whether it was —

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: Both.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I think you will probably find that the appropriate executive officer would have visited, I would imagine. I will ask the director general. I imagine that would be most appropriate as opposed to someone else.

Ms O'Neill: Perhaps if I just go back one step, in the identification that I referred to earlier there was a mapping of all schools under 94 SEI on a range of factors. So that work was done. In relation to Midvale itself and your question about how recently someone has visited, certainly we can find that out for you. We have a regional executive director who is part of our corporate executive, so at the same level as a number of people sitting here today. We could provide information on when they last visited, if that is helpful. Certainly the selection criteria to be a child and parent centre was not about a recent visit. It was undertaken on the basis of a number of criteria, one of which was SEI. I am surprised to hear Midvale not think that it has integrated services, because I have on a number of occasions been informed of the good work that Midvale does under difficult circumstances in this area. I am happy to stand corrected on that matter of how they describe themselves, but indeed the past principal has described themselves to me as having worked in the area of integrated services. Of course it depends entirely on the definition of integrated services. We have integrated services, extended services and people working together. Certainly Midvale, as I understand it and my colleagues would say, would pride themselves on working well with the

community and the people who are represented in the community, including other service providers, to do the very best for the students of Midvale. I would be very surprised to hear the staff of Midvale thinking that they were not in that category.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: Could I perhaps put it to you then that, given that they were named in this press release and, I think, the words that are used describe it as “successfully integrated” and then not to receive a centre, obviously has come to them as something of a surprise. Is it possible—Madam Chair, this will be the last question I ask in regard to this—to also ask: given that this media release was put out by the Premier and the Minister for Education, when did they last visit Midvale Primary School?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We will take that one on notice. It is a fair cop, I reckon. If the school has been mentioned there, we can certainly do that. As I say, I am speaking on behalf of the Minister for Education, but I could not tell you when she and the Premier last visited.

[*Supplementary Information No A1.*]

The CHAIR: I give the call now to Hon Liz Behjat.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Can we go to page 396, “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” of the *Budget Statements*. If we look there, it says “Secondary graduation rate (proportion of Year 8 cohort achieving Secondary graduation in Year 12)”. I just have a couple of questions regarding those figures there. I am just wondering, director general—Minister, through you—whether you have the comparisons between WA and other states with regard to the secondary graduation rate. How are we mapping alongside other states?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That cohort that reaches year 12, you are talking about—from 8 to 12?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The secondary graduation rate, yes.

Ms O’Neill: I think the answer is no, because the graduation requirements in different states differ, and so it is hard to make direct comparisons between the graduation rates of various states. What is required in one state for graduation—for example, our new WACE—is different than what is required in other states; for example, in Queensland, where there are no year 12 examinations.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: That might lead into my second question. I see here we are looking at 61.1 per cent in 2010–11; 2011–12, 62 per cent; an estimated 62.4 per cent for 2011–12; and then 2012–13 rising to 63 per cent, which I do not think is particularly high. What I want to know: where it says here it is the proportion of year 8 cohort achieving secondary graduation in year 12—Minister, I know you will know a lot about this—with the move at the moment now to do more integration in secondary school for different streams rather than just at the end of the day graduating from secondary school to go into VET courses and things like that, I just wonder whether this actually a fair way now of measuring our graduation rates or our success rates. Sixty-two per cent is quite low, but I would imagine if you add into that children who might leave at year 10 or year 11 and then go into a VET course and still not be doing that at school, it is different. Director general, you probably cannot comment on whether it is appropriate or not, but the minister might be able to—whether we need to start measuring this in a different way to actually keep up with the changes that are happening.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, I think we do. Probably that is happening in schools and through education across the board. Certainly in terms of Western Australia, gone are the days when for decades and decades, most of students left at year 10. A small minority went on and did year 11 and year 12 and graduated. There were those that left and got a job or an apprenticeship. Now we have the raising of the school leaving age. That in itself is good. I supported it—we supported it as a then opposition—because what it did of course was ensure that ideally students would be gainfully employed in either education or training. The big thing being, of course, that there is still a significant proportion of students who do not go to university. The vast majority of students do not go to university. Most students are still studying subject choices that have a career pathway through

to university. What we are doing and what is happening in education globally is that there is much more of an incentive, much more of a motivation on behalf of educators, communities and governments at large that we do provide more options. As training minister, I am very cognisant of this: the fact that we have to make sure that we provide not just adequate training and education facilities but appropriate education and training facilities so that students do not go through year 11 and 12 and do subject choices which quite frankly are completely meaningless to them. They get to the end of year 12 and their self-esteem is knackered. Their resiliency skills are up the creek because of the fact that they have been doing subject choices that they have failed in. We have to make sure that we provide those options. As I said, if there is a raising of the school leaving age, there are a number of kids who are going to school now who do not want to be there. They hate authoritarian schooling. They hate the notion that they have to jump when a bell goes or they have got to have their socks up or whatever. What we have to do—and this is what is happening more and more—is more and more students are choosing the non-academic pathways. That will put paid to this notion that everyone has to graduate, because there are a plethora of different opportunities.

Wherever I go around the state, you see more and more students choosing training now or career pathways in training through either their school or apprenticeships. There are a raft of other training facilities. There is the situation now where people are making the legitimate choice that says you do not have to choose the academic subjects.

[1.50 pm]

It is the way of the future. It is the way of education of the future. Finally, it is going to be a tough call, I can tell you, because there is still this mindset within our schools and the community at large that you should still do your academic subjects—not just the school counsellors and teachers et cetera, but parents and the community at large. It is going to take a while to get to a point where people are going to really perceive the non-academic subjects as a viable alternative to the academic options. It is a cultural thing that has got to change. It has got to shift. We as a government can do all we can. The best we can do it is to provide options, but that means, as you say, in terms of the graduation rate, that there are other options and it does not mean that those students are in any way diminished or subservient to those who choose the academic option. They are being provided with qualifications that will be recognised not just in Western Australia but nationally and internationally. The director general wants to comment.

Ms O'Neill: The graduation rate in that sense only describes the students to whom the minister was referring who remain at school. In terms of measure, a better picture of what all young people are doing is expressed through participation rate, some of which appears in the budget papers as participation rate. But the full participation rate includes those studying at schools, those in apprenticeships, those in employment. For 2011 the most recent data is actually 95.6, which is an increase over previous years. The minister was talking about VET. When we look at the increase in VET achievement, a 16.1 per cent increase in 2011, over 2010, for year 11s unit of competency completion rate—not just that they have started it, but they have actually completed it—and for year 12 a 14 per cent in one year over the previous year increase in the unit of competency completion rates. So, in 2011 we had 5 304 VET certificates achieved, which is 8.2 per cent over 2010—a real qualification that students take away in their hands. In terms of graduation rate, it does look low because it is an expression of one pathway and does not take into consideration the other pathways of employment. Thus far this year we have 6 785 students on notices of arrangement who are doing something other than the pathways in schools. There is always a strong push for those whose aspirations are towards finishing WACE courses to do that, but some really significant achievement in the other meaningful pathways as well.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The days when boys did woodwork and metalwork and the girls did cooking and sewing are long gone. At last now you have got real options that are available there

and, as I said, they are qualifications and they need to be captured in that whole gamut of we are preparing our students for post-schooling employment.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I think we need to speak to Treasury to get them to keep up to date with the way we report and what we are doing in the system. I mean, that is the disconnect for me. It does not reflect well and we have to then draw it out in sessions like this to say we are actually doing much better than that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right. It just adds to that weight that unless you go to uni or unless you do the academic subjects, it is meaningless, and that is crap.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: This would come under other programs that the education department is involved with, but last year we spoke about PCYC programs and you advised that you were working with the police on a number of initiatives such as the Keeping Our Workplace Safe strategy, the Crime Stoppers in schools pilot and an internet safety program, on which you have been working with the WAPOL major crimes divisions, particularly in Kinross and Southern River, and also working with WAPOL on the PCYC schools partnership. Can you just update me on what has happened since that last estimates meeting till now—where you are at with what has been happening?

Ms O'Neill: There has been good work done between the police and our officers in the education department. On a school-by-school basis, we still have in place the police officer who works in the central office and advises across a range of matters. That is still in place. Keeping Our Workplace Safe continues to be a program that is well regarded in schools. Those things continue to be funded and in place and support and training offered on a school-by-school basis.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Did you say you had a police officer at central office?

Ms O'Neill: Yes.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Full-time?

Ms O'Neill: Yes.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Just one?

Ms O'Neill: Yes—partnership with the police. That police officer is, obviously, very helpful in advising on a range of issues, but also going into schools and assisting us where we want to set up particular programs with police.

Recently there was, I think in the media as well, a story about the PCYC work being done in Broome where a local police officer and the local school were developing together a program that keeps students engaged in and outside of school—so working quite collaboratively there. We have a number of examples of those programs where we work with the PCYC but not only with the PCYC; there is plenty of places where there is not a PCYC where the police work with us quite collaboratively—very often in small country towns as well where we develop programs and work in, I guess, a community-style with those people at the local level. That is incredibly important in terms of positive image of policing in schools, but also community and relationship-building between some students who are known to the police as well and have difficulties in and outside of school. So, it continues to be productive work.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: My final question, Chair, at the moment—page 403, “Other School Facilities”. For the “Administration Upgrade Program” \$9.25 million is set aside in the out years there—\$2.65 million in the current years and then \$2.2 million in the three out years. I am just wondering how bad an administration block of a school has to get before it actually qualifies for administration upgrade. In particular, I am going to put on record West Balcatta Primary School. I have been fighting for a couple of years now to try to get an upgrade there and recently had to go there for a meeting with the principal, and the situation is so bad that a mother coming there with a twin pram cannot get the pram in the door of the administration building because it was built in the 19—I do

not know. I think it was the early 1970s or 1960s that that school was built. So we could not meet the person inside the administration. We had to actually go outside and stand in the corridor to conduct a meeting. That is not acceptable. I am wondering what a school has to do to qualify. That school has doubled its numbers in the last 10 years. It is not a large school as in numbers when you are looking at thousands of children, but to have gone from a school of 400 and something up to now 900 and something, it is bursting at the seams and the administration block is dreadful. What do I have to do to get them a new administration block, minister?

Hon PETER COLLIER: You have to do exactly what you have just done—identify it. I am very conscious of this school, I can assure you. I will ask the director general to comment because I understand that she has got a personal involvement.

Ms O'Neill: I am visiting the school shortly. While it has trouble with its admin area, it is a fantastic school doing fantastic things and I am going out to recognise that.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Great school.

Ms O'Neill: We have had a recent review of the school and we are going out to do that. By the sounds of it I will not suggest that I hang the certificate on the wall.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: There will not be a wall to hang it on.

Ms O'Neill: There will not be room. But it is a serious issue. Administration areas are incredibly important to the overall school—not only the look and the capacity for the community to be involved, but for the operations of the school to continue smoothly and appropriately. It is not a huge school, but nonetheless it has needs in that area. By way of process, minister, if I could ask Mr Fischer just to talk about the process of admin and how we go about deciding who gets admin upgrades?

Mr Fischer: We make a comparison of existing admin areas against a benchmark standard. That benchmark standard will vary depending on the size of the school, but generally it will identify how that school compares to what would be provided in current circumstances. Schools are then compared and then they are measured and those with the, I guess, greatest need in terms of their size compared to the benchmark standard are listed in priority order. That is the way we determine the priorities. Obviously, the funding will limit how many we do at a particular time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I ask a question on that point?

The CHAIR: You can ask a question on that point.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Were you just talking about administration or school buildings in general then? Is that how you develop the priorities for school buildings in general or just for administration blocks—the process you just outlined?

[2.00 pm]

Mr Fischer: The process I just described was for administration buildings.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How would the process differ for classrooms and teaching facilities of a school?

Mr Fischer: What we have described focuses mainly on the primary areas, the administration areas, and they have been pretty old. We look at a number of schools on a functional basis; in other words, what facilities they have compared with what would be provided under an existing design brief and we make some assessment of how they compare.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So the department has a formal process for determining the upgrade of administration blocks, but not for determining how it would upgrade the teaching and classroom facilities at a school? I would imagine that in most cases the age of the administration block and at least part of the school would be similar.

Mr Fischer: The size of classrooms has not changed, as I understand, for quite some time. That is generally not seen as a deficiency. New schools have some functionality that is not provided in some of the older schools, which we assess but we do not necessarily do that on a structured basis, but where we become aware of some deficiency in schools we will go into a school and do a functional audit.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The 2011 annual report indicates there are 398 385 students. I want to confirm—I need the director general's concurrence in this—the actual percentage of students in regional or rural areas who do not attend school on a daily basis.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is that figure of 398 000 for both public and private schools?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, it is for public schools.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That figure cannot be for private schools.

Ms O'Neill: The figure is 262 000.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: So 25 per cent of that number did not attend school in regional or rural WA on a regular basis.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What is the member's question?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am trying to ascertain what percentage of students in rural and regional areas—or outside the metropolitan area—do not attend school on a regular basis and, also, how many in the metropolitan area do not attend school on a regular basis.

Hon PETER COLLIER: So the member wants to distinguish between the two. I do not know if we can provide that now; we might need to take that on notice. We will take that on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is the minister telling me that the Director General of Education does not know the number of students who do not attend school on a regular basis in the regional areas and the metropolitan area of the state? If you do not have the breakdown between metropolitan or non-metropolitan, can you at least give me the percentage of the 262 000 who do not attend school on a regular basis?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does the member want the total number?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I would like the total number or the percentage.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We will look at the total number, but we need to take on notice the distinction between rural and metro.

Mr Axworthy: We place students' attendance in a number of broad categories. Our aim is for regular attendance of 90 per cent or greater; and 71.12 per cent of students attend at least 90 per cent of all occasions. The number of students who are regarded as at severe risk because of their attendance, where it falls below 50 per cent, is 4.27 per cent.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I add something?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can I get some whole numbers, please? I want to get a sense of how many of those 262 000 students who are part of education system are on the streets and not at school on a regular basis or a daily business—whichever way it is measured?

Hon PETER COLLIER: About the same as there were when the member was education minister

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Could the minister give me the figure? I have forgotten.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You have cut by half the number of participation officers.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Settle down! While Mr Axworthy is looking for that, I will make a point. One of the biggest issues going into the last election in education —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: With all due respect, minister, I am just after the figures.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am answering the question! The member is going to get the figures; we are looking for them at the moment. One of the biggest issues that has permeated our education system for a number of years now is behaviour management. That has been manifested for a whole raft of reasons, in particular, changes in social culture, attitudes et cetera; however, raising the school leaving age has added to the complexities of behaviour management.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: And the government cut senior school funding!

Hon PETER COLLIER: We went into the last election with a very decisive plan to make sure we could assist in that process. The independent public school process gives much more autonomy to schools to provide more input into behaviour management. We increased the number of school psychologists by 50 and the funding to the chaplaincy program by significant amounts to provide pastoral care to schools. We increased funding to the CARE schools—curriculum and reengagement in education—for those students who are really disengaged to provide some sort of positive avenue forward. The government has been very proactive in ensuring that behaviour management is right up there at the top of the ledger in overcoming a number of the social issues that exist in the public education system. Inevitably, there will always be a cohort of students that simply refuse to go to school. We are doing all that we possibly can to ensure that we can reengage those students in training and through other avenues. Having said all of that, there are some that we simply cannot assist in the process, but having given a very articulate and comprehensive overview of what we have done, I am not sure whether we can provide the exact numbers. I can keep going, if the member likes!

The CHAIR: No; that is fine. Before we get too far away from the question, the minister referred to supplementary information about the separation between country and metropolitan schools. I want to give that a number

[Supplementary Information No A2.]

The CHAIR: Minister, is there further information coming on this point?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We will provide the breakdown between rural versus metro areas on notice and we will get the information that the honourable member wants as a percentage figure; is that correct?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want the actual number, please.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have almost got it.

Ms O'Neill: We are trying to calculate that from the figure we have for 2011 of 4.27 per cent across an entire system the number of students whose attendance would be considered at risk. That is 11 000 students.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I would say that 11 000 is extremely conservative. Having said that, I now want to ask on how many occasions a school attendance advisory panel has been established? How many times has such a panel been convened on this number of 11 000, which is a very conservative?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Why do you say that is conservative? What do you base that on?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: If 25 per cent of Indigenous students are not attending school on a regular basis —

Hon PETER COLLIER: They constitute a small proportion of that figure.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: — and if 10 per cent of metropolitan students across the board are not attending school on a regular basis, I would say that that 4.2 per cent looks very conservative. You could do me a favour and have the agency calculate and provide me with the accurate figures for the whole of the system.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is what we have just given you.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You have given me the breakdown, but I am amazed that you come to an estimates committee and you do not have something that simple with you. You need to take that away.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Like what? What have we not provided?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am sorry, minister, but I am amazed that is the case.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What you want that we have not provided?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many school attendance advisory panels have been convened, given the department has at least 11 000 students who are at chronic risk of nonattendance?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have given you all the information you wanted—everything you asked for you have received, so I am not sure why you are spitting the chewie on this one.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It will be interesting to see.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There are three prosecutions pending and seven responsible parenting agreements relating to student attendance initiated by the department in 2011. I will ask the director general to comment.

[2.10 pm]

Ms O'Neill: Both of these processes, as you are aware, are processes of a last resort. We do get to this point with a small number of students and the history of the reason why the numbers are so small is the same history as it has been for some time; that is, we commence processes with the parents and attendance improves for a short while, and we recommence again when it drops off. It is not as straightforward as 11 000 students equals 11 000 prosecutions. We have to go through a process. The process is well documented. We are required to have programs and plans for the students. In terms of intervention, we also have to have panels at the local level before we even get close to having a panel of this sort.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many are in the process, director general?

Ms O'Neill: The minister just said there are three prosecutions pending, and this year so far there are four responsible parenting agreements in train. That is in comparison to 2010 when there were two sustained convictions. The rate of conviction in this area has always been historically low. It is one tool that is available to us. It is a tool that draws various commentary about how well it works or not, particularly in Indigenous communities. Our focus is always more constructive, trying to get students into appropriate programs, attending school for all the right reasons. Prosecution is there for us. It is lawful; if we need to use it we can, but it is a process of last resort.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In terms of appropriate programs, the last time we had budget hearings—or it might have been the one before—the department had to deal with the question of a three per cent deficiency dividend. At that time, the minister cut senior school funding to district high schools that were offering secondary courses. I ask the minister to comment on the impact of that on school attendance. Did it have an impact in terms of students not having relevant courses to enrol in?

Hon PETER COLLIER: The answer to that one is no. They are all engaged in appropriate programs. In terms of the attendance rates, that has flatlined at the moment, as I understand it. There has not been any shift.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The director general made the point earlier that what you are doing is a lot of Indigenous programs and she referred to the Aboriginal school-based traineeships. The total number of Aboriginal school-based traineeships and apprenticeship, as of only a matter of weeks ago, was less than 500 across the state. Five hundred Aboriginal apprenticeships and traineeships across this whole state hardly seem to be a huge commitment to providing Indigenous kids with real opportunities. There simply are not enough of them.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is only one pathway. You are only talking about one pathway. There are number of different valuable pathways for all students, particularly Aboriginal students. I go to dozens—and I mean dozens—of graduation ceremonies every year through SMILE, Clontarf or school programs where Aboriginal students are uniquely engaged in programs. It does not have to be an apprenticeship program. It does not have to be that way. More and more Aboriginal students are taking up academic pathways. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is talking about 500 out of about 5 000 Aboriginal students, which is around 10 per cent.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What do you put the 11 000 students who are not going to school on a regular basis down to?

Hon PETER COLLIER: What are you saying—that they are all Aboriginal? Why are you linking the two when they are completely different issues?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What is the reason why 11 000 students are on the streets and not in school?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Fine. I do not mind—you go for it. That is fine. We have just been talking about Aboriginal students and apprenticeships et cetera. I have just given what I thought was a very valid response and all of a sudden we are talking about 11 000 students not going to school. Are we on to a different topic now?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am just asking you, there are 11 000 students —

Hon PETER COLLIER: Just so long as you are not linking the two.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: — but only three have gone through the advisory panel process. I want to know why those students are not going to school.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Fair cop! I promise you that some very, very good valuable opportunities are now being provided for Aboriginal students. A number of them are taking them up. With regard to the 11 000, as I said, that has fairly much flatlined. That is much the same as when Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich was the education minister. You would appreciate the fact that, as I have said—I went on and on and on about this a little while ago—some students simply cannot embrace or engage with the education system. That is why, as I said earlier in response to a question from Hon Liz Behjat, we provide more meaningful pathways for those students. We are doing that. More and more students are now taking up DET options than ever before. That is great, because at last the students that would normally be those ones who nick off—they will nick off. No matter what we do, they will take off at lunch time. They will go and have a smoke at the oval—

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Minister —

Hon PETER COLLIER: Wait on; just let me finish. They will go and have a smoke down at the oval and you will not see them. They will be down the main street. It has never been any different.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The law says they have to go to school, minister.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Of course they do. As I have said to you, it is no different to when the member was education minister. It is almost like Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is trying to rewrite history. This is not new. This is not some new revelation that all of a sudden it is terrible because all these students are not going to school since we came to power. It has always been the case.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You got rid of the It Pays to Learn allowance.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If the member comes up for air, I will finish. What I am saying to you is that we are getting to the point where we are providing more meaningful pathways for students so that they will want to go to school. If a student has had a terrible upbringing and his literacy and numeracy skills are appalling and he has had terrible problems at home, why would he want to sit in an authoritarian environment and be forced to study subject matter that is completely irrelevant to him? That is why, as I said, it is right up there in terms of where we are going as a government to

provide those opportunities for students whereby they are engaged in something other than the academic pathway. The federal government ripped the heart of the funding for CARE schools a few years ago; I was shadow education minister at the time. I insisted on providing increased funding for CARE schools. They are wonderful institutions. The honourable member should go to the corridors, such as Midland, to see what I mean. We are talking about dozens upon dozens of students who are in juvenile justice or somehow not engaged in authoritarian schooling. A number are Aboriginal students. They are now in meaningful qualification pathways. That is what we are doing. In addition we have provided an additional 50 school psychologists to assist these sorts of students. We have provided a lot more funding across the board to provide meaningful support mechanisms and pastoral care —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Minister, 11 000 students break the law on a daily basis. They do not attend school and the government does not do anything.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The member is like an onion; she repeats herself over and over again.

The CHAIR: Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, I think we have probably explored that as far we can. I will give the call to Hon Alison Xamon. Before she starts, I have one question that arose when you were talking about this area of lack of engagement with kids who do not begin to engage in the education system. What proportion of those kids suffer from hearing damage, and what impact has that had? If you do not have the answer now, I would be interested if you would take it on notice.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We may take it on notice. It is a really good point because what happens, of course, is the notion that those who do suffer from hearing issues are recalcitrant or disobedient, but they are not. As a former chalkie, I know what it is like. You go in and some kids have not only issues with learning but also physical disabilities, and hearing is one of them. I will ask the director general to respond.

Ms O'Neill: We have tried to identify the number. It is hard to identify how many children specifically because it depends whether they have been diagnosed et cetera. We can provide that information as best we can in terms of their identification

[Supplementary Information A3]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Honourable Chair, I have just one quick question on this.

The CHAIR: As long as it is a little question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Madame Chair, I love you forever!

The CHAIR: I am trusting you, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, which is possibly dangerous!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many prosecutions have occurred as a result of nonattendance?

[2.20 pm]

Hon PETER COLLIER: Was that in 2011?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I think we just read it out.

Ms O'Neill: I think I have already said it was two prosecutions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay—two prosecutions and three panels.

Ms O'Neill: I will just clarify. We had two convictions in 2010, we have three prosecutions pending now, and we have undertaken seven responsible parenting agreements since 2011.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to significant issues impacting the agency outlined on page 394, “Early Childhood Education”, and the implementation of pre-primary as the first compulsory year. I understand that some education support centres at this stage do not take pre-primary students,

although policy provisions enable them to do so. Are you providing any extra funding for these centres to make sure that they can include the new compulsory pre-primary students, and are you providing greater clarity around the expectations of these centres regarding the inclusion of pre-primary students?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I ask the director general to answer.

Ms O'Neill: It has been a policy position that kindy and pre-primary students do not immediately go into education support centres. The issue has been raised with us and we are looking at it right now in terms of whether that policy position, separate even to an infrastructure position, will be the same or whether it will change with compulsory pre-primary. To date it has not been a direct entry into pre-primary for education support centres.

Hon ALISON XAMON: When you undertook the move to compulsory pre-primary—which I am supportive of, by the way—was there no automatic inclusion of the education support centres in that initiative?

Ms O'Neill: No. The policy position—the announcement by government—was to make pre-primary schooling compulsory; that did not confer on it a change to the policy of direct entry into education support. We are just looking at what that might mean—the advantages, the disadvantages, the implications. The policy decision to make pre-primary itself compulsory was about pre-primary schooling, not in the particular settings; that is a department position.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I understand that some parents who have children who would ordinarily enter these centres are ringing principals now wanting to get information, and there is a lack of clarity about this. When is it likely that these decisions are going to be made so that these parents can know what to expect for next year?

Ms O'Neill: We hope to have clarity into next term. Most of our enrolment policy work comes to completion on 3 August. Clearly, we would want to inform parents before that time. A small number of parents are impacted should that policy decision change, and we would want to inform them early and fairly directly so that no-one is disadvantaged.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Sure; I am small, but, I am sure you would agree, significant.

Ms O'Neill: Significant—absolutely.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is any data being collected at this point about inquiries so that you know who to contact to relay that information back to?

Ms O'Neill: We have not got a database of complaints or—sorry, not complaints, but queries on the matter. One question was asked and brought to my attention, and so our executive director in the early childhood area is trying to look into that now to find out the range or the scope. If people want to have direct information, they could ring the office of early childhood development and learning.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Good; that is something I can relay through to constituents.

I want to talk about the sixth dot point under significant issues, “Services to Students”. I note that concern has been raised about access to co-located services at the Padbury site, and I acknowledge that there has been the recent announcement to establish services for deaf children at Southwell Primary School in Hamilton Hill. Is there any intention to establish any new services anywhere in the east metropolitan region?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I do not think so. I will ask Mr Axworthy to respond.

Mr Axworthy: The plan is certainly to co-locate services at Padbury into the future, but the services that currently operate in terms of visiting teacher services for children with a range of disabilities, whether it be intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or sensory disabilities are in some cases provided by visiting teachers. We try to place those visiting teachers where there are hubs or where there is a population base. In some cases, because of the low density, fortunately, of

these disabilities, they operate out of the centre and have to fly all over the state. In some cases, we have local hubs where we have a number of students with particular disabilities. For example, WAIDE has local hubs that move from year to year when it has a density of population that makes it more sensible for a visiting teacher to be based in a certain location to visit local schools. We review that constantly, but there is no plan to build a new centre as such in the east metropolitan area.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I would like to make point that neither Padbury nor Hamilton Hill could be deemed central if you are living anywhere in the east metropolitan region.

I am also interested in the budget allocation for Schools Plus funding—again, under the same dot point of “Services to Students”. I understand that the diagnoses of the types of disabilities coming under this funding are increasing. Is there any extra allocation for funding this year, and also into the forward estimates, and whether any modelling has been done to predict extra demand for this funding going into the future?

Hon PETER COLLIER: What was the question again?

Hon ALISON XAMON: This is about Schools Plus funding.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are having a bit of difficulty hearing.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am so sorry. So again, it is about the sixth dot point, Services to Students, and I am asking about —

Hon PETER COLLIER: I got that; I just need the actual question.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I understand the diagnoses of students eligible for this type of funding are on the increase. Has there been any extra allocation for funding this year and also into forward estimates, and has any modelling been done to predict extra demand for this funding going into the future? I alluded to two examples for the areas we were looking at increasing now in terms of diagnosed hearing disorders.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I ask the director general to give you some figures here.

Ms O’Neill: The answer is yes—more was spent. The summary for 2011–12 is that we spent about \$241 million, nearly \$242 million, on Schools Plus, and the number of students that that provides for has increased every year for some years. I think we talked about that previously.

Hon ALISON XAMON: What sort of percentage increase are you talking about for students—not the dollar value, but the number of students diagnosed?

Ms O’Neill: It is different for the different categories of students. For example, for autism spectrum disorder, in real students numbers, we funded 1 611 in 2009 and 2 695 in 2012.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is there anything in particular that you —

Hon ALISON XAMON: I noticed that you mentioned you are reading from a table. Is it possible to have that tabled with the various disorders, and does that also include the modelling for increases in particular areas? Autism is a classic example. I was also interested in FASD, the hearing disorders, the areas that are anticipated to be —

Ms O’Neill: If I could clarify for you, we can provide a table that shows the eight disability groups that are funded by Schools Plus. FASD, as you recall, is not a specific funding group, although most of the students with FASD are covered in these areas. I will just run through the groups to remind the member. They are global developmental delay, intellectual disability, autism, vision, hearing, severe mental disorders, physical disability and severe health condition.

[2.30 pm]

Again, for those categories we could give you the numbers of students by disability group who are funded from 2009 to 2012. What we do not have in this table are forecasts. It is very difficult to

forecast the growth particularly. It is hard for us to ascertain how many younger students are coming in, unless they have been identified through a program where we are working with Health or the Disability Services Commission. So it is never absolute, but what we have seen are percentage increases in some areas over others. It is notable, for example, that global developmental delay has fewer students being funded. So, we are seeing some on the rise and some probably more stable, and that one in particular declining. I am able to table that table. What I do not have to table is any forecast on these figures.

The CHAIR: I want to confirm, Ms O'Neill, that there is no problem with that being a public document, I assume, if you are willing to table it.

Ms O'Neill: There is no problem with it being a public document. It is part of another document, so should we provide it?

The CHAIR: Is it possible to provide it and we will just photocopy that particular table?

Ms O'Neill: Yes. I am sorry, Chair, in answer to the last part of the question I should have said the funding is not capped. So in terms of forward estimates, the numbers of students that are identified in those groups are funded; it is not capped. So that is why the forecasts are not absolute.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I suppose for budgeting purposes, though, you would need to have some idea of the sorts of figures that might be coming through. One of the things I was particularly keen to pick up on is the fact that we are getting better at early diagnosis of a lot of these. You are right: I have raised the issue of FASD and Schools Plus funding multiple times, and I recognise that on its own it is not recognised as a disability for the purposes of this funding. That is why I was asking what sort of work had been done to at least approximate what sorts of numbers of students are more likely to get picked up with these types of disabilities.

Ms O'Neill: We have looked at the pattern growth in the periods I have described, and we can get some sense of the trend, for example the one I mentioned around autism, and therefore that gives us a ballpark for budgeting purposes. Sometimes that is pretty close to what happens and sometimes we are surprised. It depends: students move interstate; new diagnoses that any model needs to be sensitive to. So, yes, we can extrapolate in broad terms of the data that we have. It is not absolute. Whoever turns up—and that is of course the budgeting challenge for us—with those diagnoses needs support, and we need to provide it. So we do have to make sure our new cost-and-demand model, for example, is sensitive. It is the first time in fact as a department that we have had a cost-and-demand model where there are factors, and disability is one of them, that need to be fed into the model so that we can predict more robustly our needs for the future, such as the student growth part that is Indigenous, the student growth part that has a disability. So that is new work for our department, and we completed, I guess, the first round of that with Treasury last year. So your question is a good one and it does, I guess, enable us to say that we have begun that kind of forecasting in a way that we have not been able to do before. So we will have a better picture of that, and that is brand-new work.

The CHAIR: If I could add to that, would that be like an actuarial assessment of the demand or the trend?

Mr Leaf: No, it is not nearly as sophisticated as trying to do a demographic or actuarial analysis of numbers. In fact what my director general described is a process where the cost-and-demand model attempts to forecast as much as possible what we expect the mix of our students to contain. But the agreement we have with the Departments of Treasury and Finance is that components such as those students with special needs are looked at specifically, comparing an actual midyear review to an estimate made at this time with a budget set, and there are adjustments made to the budget to take account of funds that we may not have been provided with adequately, or indeed funds that may have been over-provided had our estimate of students with special needs been too high. But typically that is not the case; it is usually an adjustment the other way.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I have plenty more questions.

The CHAIR: One more question and then I will give the ball to Hon Philip Gardiner and then I suggest we might have a comfort stop. I note Hon Col Holt is away on urgent parliamentary business. I think everybody else on my list has already had some questions. I am trying to give everybody a bit of an opportunity. One more question from Hon Alison Xamon.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to the first paragraph on page 395 headed “Independent Public Schools”. Regarding the impact that the IPS initiative has had on the transfer of teachers between public schools, have you allocated any additional funding for incentives to encourage teachers to move to hard-to-staff schools, bearing in mind that the point system really is not working in the same way that it used to?

Hon PETER COLLIER: There have been a number of initiatives. One of the biggest issues we had a few years ago was attracting teachers and retaining them in the profession. We made some significant inroads in terms of salaries for teachers over the last three years. In fact I think I am correct in saying that they are the highest paid in the nation.

Ms O’Neill: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: They are now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: But I was not actually asking about that. What I was asking about —

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am doing a preliminary. This is called “the sell”! So, that is to ensure that we can retain teachers in the profession. Of course you are right, with regard to IPSs; they are a great initiative and I really love that policy. What we are doing is trying to, as I keep on saying, give more autonomy to schools but at the same time be mindful of the fact that there are those schools that are not IPSs and in fact some that may be in remote or hard-to-teach or hard-to-service areas of the community and, yes, we have to be cognisant of that. So there are several initiatives that we have got to ensure that we can entice people into those areas and I will ask the director general to comment on it.

Ms O’Neill: The minister is right: the initiatives that we have for recruitment generally apply to all schools, and so the significant recruitment factor is the one the minister mentioned—teachers’ salary. But we have the remote teaching service and the country teaching service, and in those schools teachers can earn, depending on where they are, up to \$20 000 in addition to the allowances that they would get to be recruited into those locations. IP schools are not having problems recruiting teachers into those schools, and indeed none of our schools are having problems in terms of recruitment at this point. They are fully staffed; they were at day one of this year, and last year I think we had two half-time positions that were not filled. So, in terms of the question about IPSs and the implication of staffing schools in general and the need for recruitment, we have no specific need for recruitment practices in relation to IP schools or indeed schools that are not IPSs at this point. All staffing positions are filled, recruitment is running as it ordinarily would, and redeployment is being taken up by IP schools, as expected it would be, and indeed all schools around the system.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I say that I was not suggesting that it is difficult to staff the IP schools? I was talking about the other schools and the fact that it has impacted on the transfer system. We are going into future years of teacher shortages so it may not be an issue now, but it will be an issue going into the future. So my question still remains and, sorry, it has not been answered. That is: what, if any extra incentives are going to be issued for teachers to be attracted to attend those difficult-to-staff schools that are not IPSs, considering now the whole transfer system has been completely altered?

Ms O’Neill: If I could just clarify, however, the shortage I understand you are referring to is not a shortage produced by IPS.

Hon ALISON XAMON: No, but it will be a problem with incentives.

Ms O'Neill: If you are asking about incentives for shortages, that is a different issue to IPS. So into the future, to ensure that we have sufficient teachers in place, we certainly will continue our relationships interstate with, for example, the University of Tasmania and other universities where we have special programs with them. Just some weeks ago I visited a young graduate from the University of Tasmania who is working in a location where someone else would not go.

[2.40 pm]

We use those people in places where we cannot get our local recruitment practices to get people in, so we will continue that—scholarships in particular areas. I mean, the shortage we are talking about in the future is not a generalised shortage; it is a specific specialisation problem we have and a distribution problem. We need particular teachers in the area of maths, science, and design and technology, and we need them to go to particular places. Overall there are enough teachers; we just cannot get them all to go to where we want them to go to, so we have specialised recruitment to target those areas. As I said, we have the allowance packages interstate. We do not at the moment have overseas recruitment because we have not needed it, but in the future if we need to consider it, we will give consideration to it. But first of all, the very first thing we need to do is to ensure that all of the teachers we have in our employment are suitably placed and we will have a number of those, and with the year 7 change we will need to give consideration to their placement and their retraining. So yes, we are very mindful of the numbers of teachers—the supply that we will need into the future to be able to account for those areas. And more recently in the difficult-to-staff schools we are looking at incentive programs for principals to go to places that historically have been very difficult to staff —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I ask what sort of incentives you are talking about?

Ms O'Neill: For example at the Ngaanyatjarra lands, the principal there, if they were successful, could earn an additional \$20 000 on top of their current salary, and allowances as well. So there are some financial benefits. That is new for a number of low-SES schools; I think we have two of those being advertised at the moment—Ngaanyatjarra lands and Moorditj Noongar Aboriginal college. That is happening in low-SES schools, remembering that some of our IPS schools are low-SES schools and they are doing very well in terms of their recruitment. So there are a number of strategies. There is Teach First and Teach Next, which are new innovations. We also have a very successful program, for those who are unaware, in Kingston school, where the ECU students actually are doing their fourth-year training at the school. They agree on the basis of that to go to hard-to-staff country locations where we have not been able to get people to go. For example, we had I think three or four teachers go from Kingston and they are currently teaching at Roebourne. So we are trying to do some quite innovative strategies, because difficult-to-staff has always been a challenge for this department and I think we have been managing very well in some difficult circumstances, and we will continue to have to be innovative, particularly as we look to 2015.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: My question refers to the early childhood education area on page 394. I just want some clarification. What are you calling early childhood education in terms of age?

Ms O'Neill: In general terms for the purposes of education—because our education system starts when a child turns four—it would be four and five, which is kindergarten and preprimary. Usually, in our general practice we would refer to early childhood as being years 1 and 2, and sometimes year 3. So it is usually between kindergarten and year 2, and in some instances year 3, for the purposes of formal education. Of course, there is a much a broader term in terms of early childhood learning and development, where teachers understand and work with increasingly trying to work with children much earlier, because we know that their dispositions—their learning, development—commences much earlier than formal schooling at kindergarten. It really depends on the purpose for which you are describing the term. When we talk about early childhood development and learning, we would be talking earlier than four-year-olds, and that can be anything from birth obviously.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: In terms of the portfolio or in terms of your ambit, if you like, the years of zero and a bit to four, or maybe even zero minus six months—but let us say zero and a bit to four—is that under your ambit or is that under someone else’s ambit?

Ms O’Neill: No; we are appropriated for schooling that commences in the year in which a child turns four.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: So we are really still missing a very, very important part of human development. I am just looking at the total cost of services; it is about \$4 billion, which is about a sixth of the total state budget. You are essentially an outcomes-based group, like all departments should be, and I guess our objective is to try to recognise that while we might all be born equal in theory, it is the equal access to opportunity that is probably the outcome we are all striving to achieve through the education process. My question was going to come back to—in a sense it is a policy issue, but I do not think it will be a problem—when you introduce these different programs, how rigorous are you in ensuring you have a baseline from where you start and then measuring what return the money and investment is giving you as the program progresses?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have to be careful when we use “outcomes” and “education” in the same sentence, but I will ask —

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I know it is a socioeconomic area; I know the difficulties, but nonetheless it is a big investment.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That was a massive issue, ask Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Do not worry; I have got some questions for you —

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am looking forward to it. That is why I came along today, because I knew you were going to be here.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Madam Chair, I do not know how this got crosswired. As nice as Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is, I do not know how this got crossed-tangled!

The CHAIR: I think we were about to hear from Ms O’Neill.

Ms O’Neill: If I can just clarify, the question is really more about how we understand whether we are getting a return on investment.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: It is, but more explicitly if I may, do you have a clear policy of measuring what the baseline is before you actually put in place a program that you think is going to change things for the better, so you can measure against something?

Ms O’Neill: The answer to that is, yes, it is our aspiration. I think we have some programs in place historically, because they have been there for a long time, that would not have had the baseline, but for any new programs, it is our intention and has been for some time, to ensure that we have an evidence base against which we can return and measure any improvement. A good example of that more recently is introduction of the on-entry assessment, which was taken in the first instance on a limited basis in 2010. The on-entry assessment is the first time we introduced into public schools the assessment of preprimary students, and over 20 000 students are now being assessed. That is the first time that we have had any data, apart from anecdotal data, about the progress or, in broad terms, the readiness or the progress already made of preprimary students, and now that is being done with all students in preprimary. That is an example of our move towards ensuring that when we involve ourselves or focus more heavily on an area that we have some good data upon which to base some judgements. I do not think historically we can say that that has always been the case, but certainly, over recent times that has been the move. We now have a good body of emerging longitudinal data around literacy and numeracy, for example. We have monitoring standards in education in some other areas; we have national testing programs. So, around student data, I think that is improving. And around our programs now we are introducing across all of our programs and projects now, more of a dedicated program management approach that requires the evidence, the

baseline and the starting information against which we can measure. So I would like to think we have improved in that regard. I think there is probably more work, there always is, in terms of establishing the baseline and it can be problematic in some areas of education, indeed, where the hard data exists. So certainly across the nation there is work being looked at to see, across all the disciplines, whether there is good, solid evidence and data available in some areas of social development, and that is difficult. It does not mean it is impossible, but work is being done in that area. For example, we started just recently with a new iPad initiative. We were able to base that on data that we had about children's literacy progress to date. In summary, I think we are getting better at it. In our programs for the future, every attempt is made to ensure that we have some good data upon which to base it and then to return to measure.

[2.50 pm]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I would like to think that maybe some of that might be in the annual report when it comes out, so we can see. That is interesting baseline stuff and how we are improving it. I know we are close to a stop, but can I just go back to the difficulty of getting attendance, especially in Aboriginal schools? Do you have any great success stories where you have got a high attendance in a school which is not dissimilar to Roebourne's socioeconomic demographics?

Ms O'Neill: I would point, for example, to recent success at a school like Challis or Roseworth in the city that have had good, solid improvements over time in attendance and their literacy and numeracy results. Both of those, for the moment, are metropolitan schools. There have similar SEI characteristics but also some similarity in approach—the approach being that the child is considered in the totalness of the child; that is, their social needs, their health needs, and other agencies are involved. It is very much seamless and integrated. I would point to two examples. We could certainly provide you with case studies of other schools. We have 40 AIM schools, some of whose results have improved quite substantially. I would be happy to provide you with some case studies of where that has gone well.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: In those examples—I might get this later on when you provide it—where there is an Aboriginal–Caucasian mix, have you tried to introduce Aboriginal language in the upper primary school years to try to encourage the Aboriginal part of the community to join in? Has it worked?

Ms O'Neill: The answer is yes. It was not specifically for the purposes of attendance, but we have some schools that are doing quite a bit in the area of Aboriginal language. It is highly dependent on having language speakers. It depends on the community members and not only their availability but their willingness and capacity to be able to share their expertise in that way, so there are some limitations on that. We find, regardless of whether it is Aboriginal languages or any other specific strategy, the sheer involvement of the community in the school pays dividends all of the time. That is what I was referring to before. It would not matter if that was an Aboriginal community or any community—the mutual obligation and the mutual support and collaboration that arises from that is incredibly valuable to the educative process. It shows the students that the parents and community value education. They are taking the time to be there. They are playing a role. So that is a fundamental of school effectiveness. We know all of our most effective schools have good parent engagement. It is certainly a key to positive student learning. That being said, there are some students who are able to progress really well despite being in difficult circumstances and having less positive engagement. Yes, we do have some schools that work well with Aboriginal languages. It is a challenge, because there are a number of Aboriginal people who are highly mobile. If they have expertise in this sort of work, they are often engaged in other sort of work for government and for other organisations. It is challenging, but some schools are doing it very well, I think.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I have one last question, if I may. If a non-independent public school had an Aboriginal community in their school community and they wanted to introduce an Aboriginal language into their curriculum in that upper primary level, can the principal initiate that and actually achieve it relatively easily?

Ms O'Neill: If any principal was able to supplement and complement their learning program with a valuable Aboriginal language and it was acceptable to the Aboriginal community—which is another thing—and the people had the Aboriginal cultural authority to be able to deliver that, we would welcome that.

The CHAIR: I am mindful that I promised a break, and I do not want to break that promise. I am also mindful Hon Col Holt has not asked his question yet. I think we will take a five-minute break. I will give the call to Hon Col Holt as soon as we come back.

Proceedings suspended from 2.55 to 3.02 pm

The CHAIR: Now that we are quorate again and people are ready to answer more questions, I will give the call to the Hon Col Holt.

Hon COL HOLT: I am referring to page 403, “Royalties for Regions” allocation, and there is a “Regional Schools — Future Expansion”, \$20 million. It just says the future expansion forward estimate into 2015–16. Any idea what that is about and if it is not allocated, how the process for priorities is going to occur?

Hon PETER COLLIER: This is the \$20 million, is it?

Hon COL HOLT: Yes, \$20 million.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will ask Mr Fischer to respond to this one.

Mr Fischer: The specific work has not been identified. There have been a number of projects talked about, including some improvements in Kalgoorlie. That is all I could add at this stage.

Hon COL HOLT: The process for identifying priority for that money then—what is it? How is it happening? If you have not done it now, when is it going to happen?

Mr Fischer: Sorry, I missed the question.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What is the process for establishing the priorities?

Mr Fischer: We have not determined the process at this stage. That is still to be worked out.

Hon PETER COLLIER: So you have got \$20 million there.

Ms O'Neill: If I could add to that, ordinarily, after our money to date we have made some proposals on the basis of our capital planning to the minister and previously our minister and the Minister for Regional Development take those proposals to EERC and cabinet. So, fundamentally, on the basis of our proposals of work that is already needed to be done in those locations.

Hon COL HOLT: At the moment the \$20 million is unallocated.

Ms O'Neill: We are going through a process of making some proposals around that over the next period.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I refer to “Works in Progress” on page 400. With respect to Governor Stirling Senior High School, which I had the pleasure of visiting last week, just to get an update, can I just clarify that it is absolutely clear from the department’s point of view that that school will be reopening for first term of next year?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I went out there a couple of times with Hon Donna Faragher, and the place was a dump.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes, you did, you came out with me, I think, minister.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It will be completed this year, will it not? Fantastic.

Ms O'Neill: Due to be open for the start of the new year.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: There were a couple of suggestions that perhaps there were some delays, so I am pleased that has been confirmed from your point of view.

Ms O'Neill: My understanding is that it is on track and everything will be done to ensure that it opens as it ought to on time for the start of the school year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I just want to go back to the “New Works” budget on page 402. In there you also have listed \$140-odd million for new primary schools. Where is it? I have lost it now.

The CHAIR: Three-quarters of the way down the page, I think.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: “New primary schools to be determined”—\$148 million. Is there a list of proposed primary schools that are being considered or is it that they have determined and they have not been announced? What is the process for determining those schools? In that \$148 million, what is your estimate of how many schools that will build?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will get perhaps Mr Fischer to respond to that. It is based on forward projections, I would imagine, and the population shifts, et cetera, and also the existing schools and the age of those existing schools; that all has to be taken into consideration. Then you would make a recommendation to government and the process would continue. Perhaps Mr Fischer can confirm that.

Mr Fischer: That is a process where we monitor schools which are coming under pressure. We also monitor housing developments. So we try to leave the decision about the schools we announce as late as possible. The way the program works is that funding is identified for approximately four primary schools a year and that is what is shown in the forward estimates. As I mentioned, the schools are monitored—those under pressure or where significant growth or development occurs. We provide advice to the minister, generally towards the end of the calendar year, and that allows for a decision to be made for a school to be announced. Those schools would then be built for a period of two years after that. It is approximately two years from the announcement of a school to its opening. If it is left to the budget announcement of dollars, then you would have to wait for two and a half years before a school could be delivered.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What you have just said is that there is effectively the potential for 12 new primary schools included in that money; is that right?

Mr Fischer: That is correct. Some of that money would be beyond the four-year period because they would be schools opening in 2017 or whatever it is—the four-year period.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But is there a list of existing primary schools that need to be redeveloped? What work are you currently doing to identify those subdivisions that require new schools in them?

Mr Fischer: It might just be worth outlining the process that the department uses for planning. During the planning process where a developer will submit a development scheme, for every roughly 1 500 lots a primary school is identified within that area. That is under the Planning Commission guidelines; they will identify a primary school site. The future planning of schools is identified or provided for through that planning process.

[3.10 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand that process, but the department does not always build a school on the sites provided. I am after how the department does its planning and not how the WA Planning Commission does its planning.

Mr Fischer: We work with the Planning Commission and the developers to identify those sites. That is the first thing. We have probably got 200 sites around the state that have been identified as future school sites. The member is right that we do not build on every site straightaway, but those sites are preserved to allow for future planning. Then we monitor a number of things around a site,

and we have already mentioned that those include the number of students in existing schools, which gives us a clue as to the pressure they are under; and we also monitor the development applications that go through, particularly for new houses. So we monitor the number of new houses that have been built in areas of significant growth. Those things give us a pretty good clue as to what schools will be coming under pressure in future years. That method allows us to look at a period of around about two to two and a half years, which is the period that has been allowed for by this budget allocation.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the department able to provide a list of the existing school sites that were mentioned earlier of about 200 potential school sites?

Mr Fischer: We can. We are in the process of providing that to the lower house budget estimates hearing that was held last week.

[Supplementary Information No A5.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would have thought the department would be able to give us some idea of the pressure areas for new schools today, in terms of growth areas. The department must have a reasonable idea of where those pressure points are in the system.

Mr Fischer: We do. We are monitoring a number of schools—probably up to 20 areas, not schools. We monitor areas where there is significant growth, which gives us a clue. From that there will probably be a list of schools on which we will seek advice.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can we get a list of those 20 areas that you monitor, please?

Mr Fischer: We could give the member the areas of high growth; there is nothing new in that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand that might include those areas, but you said you had 20 areas you monitored. Is that different from the areas of high growth?

Mr Fischer: Those 20 areas would be all the areas of high growth. They are in the outer metropolitan area—the Wanneroos, the Mandurahs.

Ms O'Neill: More to the north, than the south.

Mr Fischer: They are in the growth corridors. We can give the member an indication of where they are.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Finally, how do you identify those primary schools that are ageing and need replacing? What is the process for identifying the primary schools that need to be replaced and how they get on the list?

Mr Fischer: The focus on primary schools has changed a little since the BER program in which all primary schools were given a significant building program. There has been increased infrastructure with over 1 000 projects that have affected the primary schools. Notwithstanding that, governments over the last 10 years have rebuilt a number of primary schools—Wattle Grove, Deanmore, Gwelup, which has just been finished, and Yakamia in Albany—where there are significant deficiencies in a school. Having said that, the focus is not necessarily on primary schools at the moment; the focus is probably on the old high schools or secondary schools where there are probably greater deficiencies.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is there a process to identify those schools that need to be replaced, and what is that process?

Mr Fischer: The member asked a similar question before when he talked about admin centres. I will perhaps expand on that answer again. Administration centres are projects or needs identified by the schools, and they are submitted to us. That is the process whereby we assess the deficiencies of those. With primary schools, we do not have a systematic process. In the last 12 months we have

introduced a process to look at some of the older secondary schools, where we are assessing functionality. We will use this information when we get all that data collected to inform a program for replacement or refurbishment.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I have not moved on to high schools yet as that will be my next area, and I understand to some degree what is happening there. I am still trying to understand this. From what I am hearing, there is not a formal process; it is about lobbying by individual schools as to whether they get replaced or not. To get a rundown primary school replaced, it is a case-by-case basis of that individual school lobbying; is that what you are telling me?

Ms O'Neill: We have all the data at hand through the various processes that Mr Fischer has referred to. Schools are not built or replaced on the basis of lobbying. It is a matter of getting all the assessment data that we have, to us. It is based not only on that school but the surrounding schools and the capacity of those schools to take some of the pressure off; then, having given consideration to the total, decisions are made about each one. I think what Mr Fischer was referring to with the secondary process is that is what we would like to move towards as well; that is, a specific scoping of the older primary schools. In essence, the condition of each and every school is assessed through various means and then decisions and judgements taken and proposals given to government about what schools will be assessed. I do not think it would be fair to say that there is no process involved. There is not a specific process for old schools, but that is one we are contemplating when we see how it runs for the secondary schools. There has not been a process for schools lobbying, but they do anyway, so we get good representation from schools and school community—rightly so—about the condition of their schools. All of that information is put together in order for judgements to be made.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is there a set of criteria against which they are then assessed?

Mr Fischer: We use a functional brief, which is really the brief we would use for a new school if we built that school today. We use that as the basis of measuring the performance or adequacy of an existing school.

Ms O'Neill: That is used with a building condition assessment report, which gives an assessment of the various aspects of a school that require work, and that is considered against the specifications that have just been described.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Could I have those reports for, say, the 20 worst schools in the state—the ones that have come up with the worst —

Ms O'Neill: I do not think we have a list of the worst schools, so perhaps if the member could give us 20 schools, we could give him the building condition assessments for 20 schools.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You must have an idea of which of the schools are the oldest schools that are in need of repair.

Ms O'Neill: The 20 oldest schools?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No; the ones that are in need of repair because some of the older schools like Jolimont, which is over 100 years old, were built to a quality, which contrasts with Hillarys Primary School, which was built in the seventies in that demountable style. I would have thought that somewhere in the agency there would be an idea about the 20 primary schools that are under the most pressure for replacement of their assets because they are in a state of deterioration.

Ms O'Neill: I will clarify that we could give 20 reports that would be of schools that are in great need; they are not in rank order.

Mr Fischer: The building condition assessment has previously been tabled for all schools.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How long ago?

Mr Fischer: We do the building condition assessment every two to three years, so I think it was tabled over 18 months ago.

Ms O'Neill: It was an extensive piece.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When is this assessment next due to be completed?

Mr Fischer: We are about to start a new assessment—at the end of this year. That is a five or six-month process to complete.

Ms O'Neill: We would be tabling what we have tabled previously because they have not yet been updated.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So nothing has been updated since that date?

Ms O'Neill: Not through the formal BCA process.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Was it previously tabled in this house or the other place?

Mr Fischer: It was before my time, but we could find out and let you know.

The CHAIR: It is probably easier just to ask for it to be provided.

[Supplementary Information No A7.]

Mr Fischer: Yes, if the question is where it was tabled we could answer that; however, the volume of data would probably fill several bookcases.

[3.20 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If it was tabled in this place, there is probably no need to re-table it. If it was tabled in the other place, it might be worth tabling it again.

If it is possible, I move to high schools. As I understand it, the department is going through the process of drawing up master plans for schools for their replacement. Is that correct?

Ms O'Neill: The master plan process is a new process, which is to engage architects—Mr Fischer can talk in more detail about that—to give us an indication of what would be needed in a school in order to be funded. It does not mean that it is being funded, but what we are trying to get a sense of is the scale of work and the kind of work that needs to be done over the whole school for it to be brought up to standard or, in fact, to be brought up to a higher standard.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is there any money in the budget for that process?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No? Are any schools getting a master plan done at the moment?

Ms O'Neill: A number of schools are getting master planning done at the moment. We have been able to do that using our existing resources.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What are the schools for which master planning has commenced?

Mr Fischer: We are working through those secondary schools in the metropolitan area that were built prior to 1980. They are the highest priority. We are also looking at some schools built in the metropolitan area between 1980 and 1990. The total of the schools that we are working through is 38. We are also looking at schools in the country area, both country high schools and district high schools. We are working through that process with them too.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is the assessment process, is it not? Are you actually doing master plans for each of those 38 schools?

Ms O'Neill: Yes.

Mr Fischer: Eventually, yes. The process is, firstly, to do an assessment of the functional performance, which is really comparing it to a current-day brief. As the director general mentioned,

there is other information like the population of the school and the building condition assessment that we have to add in as well. That also informs the priority of the works. In terms of looking at the master plan, that is identifying what needs to be upgraded and where it would fit on site, we are doing that for all those sites. That will take a period of time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Are you actually doing it for all those 38 sites at the moment or do you plan to do it for those 38 sites?

Mr Fischer: We are in the process of doing that at the moment.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Which of the 38 sites have you actually commenced a master planning process on?

Mr Fischer: We have finished the audit and identified the deficiencies in 38 of those. I do not have the number in front of me, but we have started the master plan for a number of those others.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, and that is what I am asking. Which ones have you started it for?

Mr Fischer: As I said, I do not have that number with me today.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You just said you have completed the audit. Can I get a copy of the audit for the 38 and can you identify which schools you have actually commenced a master plan on?

[*Supplementary Information No A8.*]

Hon PETER COLLIER: The audit will go to the minister for recommendations and she will take it to the ERC for cabinet consideration. That is where we are at.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am not asking for the recommendations to cabinet. I am asking for the audit, which is a statement of the condition of buildings, I assume. These are public assets—their state should be made public.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I think we are at cross purposes. I understand what the member wants. We will try to be as transparent as we can, but if it is something that requires cabinet approval —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It does not.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If it is spending on capital investment it does require cabinet approval. I am a little confused about what Hon Ken Travers wants.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I was just advised that the department has completed its audit of 38 schools. Is that correct? Is that what I heard?

Mr Fischer: We have inspected the 38 schools.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You now have a record of the deficiencies of those schools?

Mr Fischer: We have some assessment of those deficiencies.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am interested in the department's assessment of the deficiencies at those 38 schools.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I understand what the member wants. We are fine with that. We are of the opinion that that information is already readily available. Having said that, we will provide that information.

The CHAIR: I confirm that that is supplementary information A8.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Then there are the schools that you have commenced a master planning process on. Is there a list of those? Am I able to get that now or take it on notice?

Ms O'Neill: We have a list—we do not have it here today—but we know which schools we have commenced a master plan on. We can provide a list of the schools that we have commenced a master plan on.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you also give an idea of where you are up to in the master planning process in each of the ones where a master plan has commenced?

[*Supplementary Information No A9.*]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: As I understand it, Willetton High School has had its master plan completed, and that is how the decision was made. How was Willetton chosen to be the first school to have its master plan completed?

Ms O'Neill: There were a number of factors. It is one of the biggest schools and it is under enormous pressure. I think it has about 25 additional transportables. It has had the most transportables for the longest period. There were a range of factors. Not only was it one of the schools that needed some additional work, but that was a major factor in terms of its needs for the future, so the enrolment pressure that Willetton is under.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Was there formal assessment criteria or was it that it was the longest with the biggest number demountables?

Ms O'Neill: That was a major factor in the decision. A couple of schools are undergoing master planning, but Willetton given its size and enrolment explosion and the number of transportables and the delivery of programs becoming increasingly problematic, a decision was taken to have Willetton commence work.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Sorry, a decision was taken? Was it a recommendation of the department that that be the first school to have a master plan or did the minister direct the department to do that?

Ms O'Neill: The processes of the department are that we provide information to government and government makes those decisions.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Was it a recommendation from the department that Willetton be the first school to have a master plan done?

Ms O'Neill: Willetton was one of a number of schools that we recommended needed some work.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But was it the department's recommendation that that should be the first school?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I think the director general has answered. A number of schools —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am asking was the recommendation that Willetton be the first school? It is a very simple question, minister.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am about to answer it! No priority order was provided.

Ms O'Neill: But contextual information was provided around the particular pressures of Willetton, which I have already referred to.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You said there were a number of schools. What were the other schools identified at the time?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Anything pre-1980.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: All schools pre-1980?

Hon PETER COLLIER: They would have been in the gamut.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What? The director general just said that the department put forward a number of schools that required work on them. Was that every school built pre-1980? Was a list of schools put forward?

Mr Fischer: The question, I think, was: did we recommend that to be the first master plan? What we said was that a number of schools of that required deficiency. This is not a new process. The process for identifying schools that are inadequate has gone on for over 10 years. A number of high

schools have been rebuilt or refurbished in both the metropolitan and country areas. We started to see that we needed to understand what the full size of that task was, and we thought that there were probably some areas that we needed to focus on. Pre-1980 was the starting point and that is where the focus was.

[3.30 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand where the focus was and I do not have any problem with Willetton Senior High School being upgraded—I want to make that clear as well. It is about understanding the process. The problem is that a whole lot of other people will say, “We need our schools upgraded as well.” I am trying to understand how it is decided which school will come first. That will be a very contentious area from time to time, and it is fantastic for those that get the funding, but those that miss out will be sitting there in what their parents will say is a substandard education facility. My old high school at Mt Lawley has been upgraded and it is fantastic these days. When you put forward the recommendation about Willetton, what were the other schools that you identified at that point that required work?

Ms O’Neill: I am not sure any other schools were as advanced in the master planning as Willetton was.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Who made the decision to advance the master planning at Willetton?

Ms O’Neill: As a department, we are the ones doing the work. We make recommendations on the basis of our work to the government where the various stages of the master plan are up to. We were interested in advancing the work and the master planning around Willetton because of the enormous pressure that that school is under, which I think I have already referred to.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But you, director general, would accept that it is not the only school that is under pressure.

Ms O’Neill: No, I did not suggest it was the only school that is under pressure. It is the school that has been under pressure the most for the longest. I am not quite sure how else to answer the question, except to say that we look at a range of schools. A number are under pressure and a number need work. We decided to advance the work of the master planning of Willetton ahead, and that master planning was finished, I think, in December last year. On that basis, advice was given to the minister and decisions were made about Willetton.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I have two final questions in this area and then I will finish. Can you provide us with a list of the number of demountables at each high school and how long they have been there for?

[*Supplementary Information No A10.*]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Finally, the \$32.5 million being spent on Willetton, will that enable all of the demountables to be removed from Willetton Senior High School or will there still be some remaining at the conclusion of that process? Over what time frame with your master planning process would you expect the full \$80 million upgrade for that school to be completed?

Ms O’Neill: I think the minister mentioned the other day in estimates that it would be quite a long time, and I will have to ask Mr Fischer if all the transportables will be removed in the first stage. However, the minister certainly talked about work that may need to be taken over some 10 years as the time span that was referred to the other day. There is a lot of work to be done over a time, and it needs to be staged appropriately and carefully. There are students onsite and we have year 7s coming in, so the planning is going to be quite complex for Willetton.

Mr Fischer: One of the difficulties in rebuilding an existing school that is operating is where you place the students when the work is going on, and generally transportables are the way to accommodate that. At Willetton there will be some demolition, so we have re-engaged with the school and commenced a process of working out the building program so that we can minimise the

impact on students. That work is not yet finished, but I would suspect that a number of transportables will be retained onsite to allow that disruption to the student program to be minimised. When the program is finished, the demountables will be removed.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Under the 10-year master planning process, how many students is the school being built to hold?

Mr Fischer: From memory, it is around 1 800 or 1 900 students; the figure may be plus or minus.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to the list of various programs under “Other School Facilities” on page 403 of the *Budget Statements*. Which schools in the South West, if any, will receive funding under these programs, and, for each school, can you please provide details of the works to be undertaken, the total funding allocated and when the works are due to be completed?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I imagine that we might need to take that on notice but I will just check with Mr Fischer.

Mr Fischer: For most of those programs listed we invite schools to apply for those programs, and that is done once the budget has been announced. There is no list of schools for each of those programs at the moment.

Hon ADELE FARINA: When will that list become available?

Mr Fischer: Generally, we advertise and invite submissions from schools about April or May, and that work will be determined in the beginning of the financial year.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to page 400 and the “Air Cooling Program Stage 1” under “Miscellaneous”. Can you advise which schools in the South West Region have received upgrades or air-cooling systems provided as part of stage 1 of that program to date; and which schools will be provided air-cooling facilities or upgrades in the 2012–13 financial year?

Mr Fischer: The focus of the air-cooling program has been in the metropolitan, inland and northern areas. There were some schools in Geraldton that were addressed in the first phase of that program. The next phase, which is the work that will be completed by the end of this calendar year and is funded from 2012–13, will again be focused on the metropolitan area. I do not have a list on me of those in the South West and the timing, but that will probably be in the second phase of this air-cooling program.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Which commences when?

Mr Fischer: That is in the following two financial years. Generally, the work that is funded by the 2013–14 financial year would be completed by the end of the 2013 calendar year.

Hon ADELE FARINA: The last dot point on page 399 of the *Budget Statements* is headed “Year 7 Students Relocation to Secondary Schools”. Of the \$265 million allocated over the next three years for works to relocate year 7s to secondary schools, which South West schools will receive funding under this allocation; and, for each of the schools, can you please provide details of the work to be undertaken, the total funding allocated, and when the works will be due to be completed?

Ms O’Neill: Twenty nine schools were made public a couple of weeks ago. We could run through them all —

Hon ADELE FARINA: I just want the South West ones.

Ms O’Neill: I am not sure of your borders -

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Could I have the Agricultural Region ones as well?

Hon ADELE FARINA: Excuse me; it is my question.

The CHAIR: I am mindful of the time.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We can table that component.

The CHAIR: How many schools are in it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Just 29 schools.

[3.40 pm]

Hon ADELE FARINA: I am happy for that to be tabled, but it does not fully answer the question. The question goes on to ask for each of the South West schools, and to provide details of the works to be undertaken, the total funding allocated, and when the works are due to be completed? Because I want the detail, and then the next part which I have not yet asked is: will the minister guarantee that all south west secondary schools that require funding assistance to accommodate year 7 students have allocated sufficient funding and that in none of those secondary schools will we have children in demountable classrooms because you have not provided sufficient funding to build new classrooms to cater for those year 7 students?

Ms O'Neill: If I can pick off the various parts of the questions, the total allocation for the infrastructure has not yet been allocated to individual schools. That work, the enrolment audit work—so that we can be clear about the costs and the needs of each individual school—is happening as we speak. We have had some indicative costs, and we are just going through that work as we speak. We are confident that the allocation will ensure that all year 7s in those schools are in appropriate accommodation. I think only two schools will have transportable accommodation, and that is because there is some interim work being done with those schools.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Are either of those schools south west schools?

Mr Fischer: I do not have the electorate district with me but I do not think so.

Hon ADELE FARINA: When will that information be made available as to how much funding each schools is actually getting?

Mr Fischer: The funding is not being allocated to individual schools. The funding provides for the total program. So if we can build a facility at the school to accommodate the year 7s, that will be the funding that is allocated. We are not actually allocating total dollars to a school. We are working with the school and we intend to meet with all schools before the end of term 2 to talk about their program and the works that are proposed at each of those sites.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So are you saying that in the 29 schools you have identified in that list you are about to table, there will be no demountable classrooms at those schools at the end of this program?

Ms O'Neill: There have been two schools identified that I understand are separate—are they separate?

Mr Fischer: There are two schools which we believe will be affected by the population. Demountables we use when the population increase is only temporary, and two schools were identified where we believe that will be the case; in other words, where a future high school will take away some of the demand for that school. So in those cases—and that is the same process we use now at any school—we will put in temporary accommodation if the long-term forecast is not for permanent use.

The CHAIR: Mr Fischer, it might help just to name those two, then we can work out where they are and that will answer that question.

Ms O'Neill: One of them is in the midwest, and I do not recall the other one off the top of my head.

Mr Fischer: South metro.

Ms O'Neill: So, neither of them is in your south west area.

The CHAIR: Just for the process, I wonder whether you could table that document and provide copies to members. Hon Adele Farina, is that what you want?

Hon ADELE FARINA: I do not think it has actually answered my question, but it looks like we are never going to get an answer. It is quite remarkable that a department can actually determine the total funding that is needed to provide classrooms at 29 schools but cannot break that down into the amount of funding that is being provided for each school. I find that extraordinary and I would actually like that question to be taken on notice and for that information to be provided, because I do not think it is an unreasonable question. At some point they have to do a breakdown about how they are spending this money, and that should have been done in order to actually get the total cost.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I think we should get that breakdown.

The CHAIR: That is a request for that breakdown.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Absolutely; the breakdown, minister.

Hon PETER COLLIER: As I said, it is very, very difficult to ascertain the actual funding figures here, so I am not quite sure —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is not true.

The CHAIR: Can I clarify what I think is being asked? There are 29 schools. I am thinking, as a builder, you must know how much you are going to spend on each school at some point in the process. What is being asked is the dollar value that each of those 29 schools has against it.

Ms O'Neill: Chair, to arrive at the amount that has been in the budget papers, there are indicative costs done on the basis of the audit work at the time.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Can you provide that information?

Ms O'Neill: We are continuing our enrolment audits now to clarify that work. The discussion we have had around this is that we need to ensure that the accommodation needs of the year 7s are met, and we want to be careful not to name a cost for a school because in different parts of the state, as you know, they cost different amounts of money. So, within the total budget it will be managed flexibly so we have got to deliver in 29 schools across the total budget the accommodation needs. So the indicative costs are exactly indicative costs; they will be subject to change as we do the enrolment audits into the future.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So why can the indicative costs not be provided?

Hon PETER COLLIER: We can give the indicative costs, if you are happy with that. We can provide the indicative costs.

[Supplementary Information No A11.]

The CHAIR: A question from Hon Alison Xamon on this particular issue and yourself, Hon Liz Behjat, if it is on this issue. I am just following the thread of this line. Do you want to ask a question?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: On this issue, no, but I have only asked three questions in the whole thing!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have only asked one!

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: You have not!

The CHAIR: Order, members! You are very close to the top of the list, you will be pleased to know. A question from Hon Alison Xamon just on this matter.

Hon ALISON XAMON: In relation to these upgrades, are the principals or the individual schools going to be consulted as to what their individual needs are? I am just trying to get an idea of why the process is where it is at. If not, why are they not going to have input? Where is that at?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is why it is difficult to put a precise cost on it because that communication, that dialogue, is taking place and will take place.

Hon ALISON XAMON: It is taking place now?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So I suppose the question is: to what degree are their needs catered for? What we are trying to avoid is a BER situation where people are just having particular buildings imposed on them. We want to make sure that it is actually able to be tailored. I need to know whether associated infrastructure is also being factored into the increased costs. I am thinking about things like car parks, toilets, increased office space, or are you simply talking about classroom space?

Mr Fischer: The provisions for the additional accommodation include toilets, specialist areas, if required, and the offices for teachers if that is part of the build. It depends on the size of the accommodation required at each school. That varies, as you can imagine, and it does make some allowance for site works, like car parks for instance.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So when do you think that is likely to be finalised and people are going to know?

Mr Fischer: The process which we have described is that we are undertaking an audit of the school enrolments and projections. We then meet with the schools. I thought I had mentioned a few moments ago that we will be meeting the schools prior to the end of this term so that they will have an idea and we will have some agreements on what we believe the accommodation needs are at that school.

Hon ALISON XAMON: And it is at that point that that information will be fully available to members?

Mr Fischer: That would be the most appropriate time to share that information.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So do we have a date?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, that is what I am trying to get. The most I have got is towards the end of the term.

Ms O'Neill: Not exactly.

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is going to be very difficult to put a definitive date on that. I mean, there are 29 different schools. It is going to be varied in terms of the completion times, I would imagine.

The CHAIR: Three months away, six months away?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Term 3 of this year.

Hon ADELE FARINA: End of term 3, did you say?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

The CHAIR: I am mindful that people are keen to ask questions, and that is great. I am going to suggest that we run slightly over four o'clock, just to let people know. I have Hon Linda Savage, then Hon Liz Behjat on the list and then we will see how we go.

[3.50 pm]

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: I refer to improving student wellbeing under "Behaviour and Attendance" on page 395. I would like to talk about bullying, in particular homophobic bullying. Recently, the Equal Opportunity Commission, and Professor Donna Cross, who attended the event, said that there was a need for a specific policy on homophobic bullying. I wonder where the Department of Education stands on that and whether they are intending to develop a specific policy.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I might ask the director general to go through this.

Ms O'Neill: I think we have had an opportunity to talk about this before, but homophobic bullying is not acceptable, and certainly we want to support all our students who would be subject to any

bullying, including that sort of bullying. But, like all forms of bullying, it is protected against under our behaviour management in schools policy that refers specifically to this. At this stage, we do not have an intention to have a separate policy about this, but that being said, we are working with the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity on their gender and sexuality-based bullying and discrimination in schools steering committee and working party to be developing resources with them, working with them and in collaboration with them, but at this stage we do not have a plan to have a specific standalone policy on the matter. That being said, we are very keen and continue to work with various organisations in terms of accessing a variety of resources and strategies to assist principals and local schools. Some of them do have their own approaches, resources and strategies, but at this stage, it is not our intention to have a stand-alone policy.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: Can I put to you that given some recent research showed that 80 per cent of those who reported homophobic bullying reported that it occurred at school and that this group has six times the suicide rate of their heterosexual peers, have you sought any legal advice about your duty of care?

Ms O'Neill: We have not sought specific legal advice that I am aware of about our duty of care in relation to homophobic bullying. The duty-of-care provision is for care of all students for all circumstances, and we take that responsibility very seriously. In keeping with that, our standard, our approach and our commitment to duty of care is for all students, regardless of their background or their personal situation. Bullying of any nature is not to be tolerated and we take a firm view of that in schools. Unfortunately, as you mentioned, there is bullying of this sort and other sorts that occurs in school, and very often outside of school, that is brought in onto the school grounds. That does not make it right or proper, and we are certainly working with resources such as the Bullying. No Way! website and the growing and developing healthy sexual relationships program and the resources that go with that. It is not that we, in any way, stand back from the commitment and need to be supporting the students that suffer from homophobic bullying, but at this point, as I said, we do not have a specific intention to have a separate policy. Duty of care is prevailing. It is in legislation, it is for all students, and we take it very seriously.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: I put to you, though, that given the evidence we have now got about this specific group and their greater risk, and given that we know that they are mostly bullied at school, because actually at home they can escape the bullying, have you not considered that this is now the time, given that we have had this identified risk to these students, to reconsider that position?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just add something to that? I was a house head at a private school and I can tell you now that one of the issues that was always there was homophobic bullying and the issues that were associated with it. You have just got to be careful that you do not cross that line whereby it gets to the point whereby you draw attention to the victims themselves more than really is to their benefit. I agree with everything you are saying; it is true. I acknowledge that everything you have said is correct, and I think that the department's whole notion towards a generic policy on bullying is commendable, and certainly what has been going on in the last few years. Having said that, this probably is an area that we perhaps do need to give more attention to. Having a specific homophobic bullying policy, I have got to say as a former educator, I have a few reservations about that, for the reasons I have articulated. Perhaps if we can look towards an instance whereby there can be more understanding on behalf of counsellors and on behalf of staff et cetera, which then can be ingrained within the school culture, I think that is the way to go, as opposed to having a specific homophobic bullying policy.

Hon LINDA SAVAGE: Can I just put to you, minister, given that Professor Donna Cross, who is an expert in this area, has specifically said that we require a specific policy—I checked with her when I spoke to her this morning and she said again to me, “Yes, we need one”—has the department actually spoken to her about the need for a specific policy?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am not sure.

Ms O'Neill: We have engaged with Donna Cross on many discussions and many debates about a whole range of bullying scenarios. We could potentially have a bullying policy for 10 different kinds of bullying, none of which could be minimised against each other—racial bullying, people from the low SES backgrounds who are bullied because of what they wear, kids who just look different, bullies who are homophobic. I wrote to all schools in March of this year talking about a no-tolerance approach to dealing with bullying in schools. I do not say that in any way to minimise to these students the terrible grief that they must go through. What we need to do is ensure that all students understand that it is not only inappropriate, it is unlawful, as is the thought and what goes behind bullying, which is the basis of our entire approach to bullying and anti-bullying. In fact, just this year, we were leading with other states on the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence. So I think that our activity in this area is significant. I do not think there is any one group that at this point has stood out—they all stand out, but not one group has stood out that we would want to separate and have one policy for. As I said, we could have 10, 12 or 14 different policies in this area. But we do talk to Donna Cross; we have engaged her in various research. Donna also believes we should have a stand-alone policy, I think, on cyberbullying. All of those things are important in their own right; I do not say that in any way to minimise any of the groups of students who are being bullied. We work with our chaplains and we work with our school psychologists to provide assistance and support. To date, we have not decided to have a separate policy to deal with homophobic bullying. What we have decided to do, though, is to ensure that all students are well supported and that there are resources and support people to go to, and that they are well identified in schools to be able to do that.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Are we going past four o'clock?

The CHAIR: Yes, we are.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Good; okay I will ask a couple of questions. Firstly, back to independent public schools: I did not get an opportunity to ask one of my questions there, which refers to "Independent Public Schools" on page 395. Minister, you may have to answer this, because it may be a policy question. When are we going to include in the management of their own budgets that they can actually manage their own budgets with regard to everything in the school, including independent cleaning contractors and things like that? When will we see that happening?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I cannot actually answer that one; that will need to come for the Minister for Education. I have no problems talking about what I would like to see.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I know what I would like to see too!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will perhaps ask the director general to respond.

Ms O'Neill: As you are aware, I meet with all the independent public school principals from time to time and they are very satisfied to date with the flexibility and the authority they have over their one-line budget and particularly how that links in with staff. Only a couple of principals have approached me about the extent to which they would like to manage any further the corporate services—cleaning, gardening or lawnmowing contracts. They have not —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Do you want more to approach you?

Ms O'Neill: My preference is for principals to be focused on the things that will bring about the best educational outcomes for students, and to date my discussions with them have been around the importance of managing the costs to do with staff—their general costs.

[4.00 pm]

Not many of them to date have sought flexibilities around managing those. That being said, there are a couple of principals who are interested in at least exploring whether that is possible. As you say, that is a matter for government. In the evaluation we are doing of the whole independent public

school initiative, some of those views might be expressed in that and whether indeed that would be a useful pathway to go down. Any further expansion of that, as you say, is a matter for government.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Staying on page 395—I think it comes under “Growth, Student Demographics”—the commonwealth government last week announced the first of the enterprise migration agreements for the Roy Hill project and for 1700 workers to come in under 457 visas. Also, I understand that under the EMAs the 457s now go for five years rather than four years under a normal 457 visa, with a subsequent extension of another five years. I know that the minister for training knows that we need to get a lot more people in to fill these jobs that we are going to have, but when we are talking about enterprise migration agreements, it is going to be Western Australia and Queensland where these workers are going to be coming to. People on 457 visas will bring families with them; they will bring children. The children need educating. If you look at a visa lasting five years and a possible extension of another five years, that is 10 years. That is almost a child’s complete school life. What sort of pressure it that going to put on the Western Australian education system, and what will the commonwealth government be doing to ensure that we are able to cope with the quite large influx of students that will be coming into Western Australia?

Hon PETER COLLIER: A very good question.

Ms O’Neill: That aside, we already have had massive growth in the system. We have an additional 7 000 students into the public school system this year alone, so we are experiencing great growth, and the system has been able to make sure that they are fully accommodated. Any new decisions around interstate or overseas migration will put pressure on the system. Fortunately, we have had the injection, from the infrastructure perspective, of BER and of the biggest capital program in some years, even just in the state perspective. We believe that we are well placed. We will need to take some of that into consideration as we plan for year 7s into high schools, for example, and the spaces. But most of our schools from an infrastructure perspective have space in schools to accommodate those students. We know that from having done the year 7 work—there are only a limited number that will need additional support.

In primary schools, with the vacation of the year 7s, we anticipate that from an accommodation perspective we should be reasonably well placed. That being said, we have got to monitor the demographics continually, because the sorts of students who come in and their particular needs—this is the raw figure coming in but then there is the particular needs with the ESL students. In this state, for second language users and 457 visa students, the government has put in additional funding to accommodate that growth, because that has been an area of particular growth for us. At this stage, we are well placed. Again, our cost and demand model, which we have not had before and that we now have developed, will allow us to forecast in a more robust way the needs of those students, because they can be high-cost needs, depending on what setting they are coming into and their English needs and some of those students who have had high-level needs and others more moderate needs.

I think we are well placed in terms of infrastructure. Depending on the rate of migration and people coming into the state, there will be an impact on the numbers of teachers we need, but we already have that in our model into the future and also in the cost and demand model to be able to deal with the kinds of costs that those students attribute.

I think we are probably in a better position than we have been previously because we have the modelling processes in place. Again, it will always depend upon the rate of the movement into the state. They will not all come into public schools, of course—many of them will. That information is relatively new, but that planning has formed part of our thinking with our forecasting in terms of student numbers and costs.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Has that also been looked at in relation to promoting people, if there is a move now or a push to try to get people, rather than doing FIFO, to actually relocate to the regions, to the Pilbara, so there might be a massive explosion in the Pilbara region? That is where the Roy Hill

project is and, one would assume, other projects up that way. I know we are doing some massive developments in the Pilbara, but has that been taken into account—that they may actually not stay in the city?

Ms O'Neill: Yes. Part of that is crystal ball-gazing at this stage; it is a little early, but you can anticipate them going into those higher growth industrial areas. For example, in the Karratha area and the Pilbara we have good development on the ground with the new schools in Karratha. It is a little uncertain about where those people will move to and whether they will actually move with their family. As you say, FIFO is hard to anticipate—whether they will relocate to the specific place or they will move from Perth. We have to be agile enough to be able to cope with that as it comes. We will be looking to other departments to give us pretty clear advice about what those sorts of patterns of movement will be and over what time period.

The CHAIR: I am just going to check with Hon Philip Gardiner. Do you have a brief question?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Are we starting the next one off at 4.30 pm?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Perhaps not much longer; do you mind?

The CHAIR: I am going to allow a 15-minute break. We will go for another 10 minutes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We are meant to finish at four o'clock.

The CHAIR: That is okay. These things happen; we do run over. I am sure we will manage.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Was it not 4.15 pm?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No; four o'clock we are meant to finish.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: On page 394, "Year 7 Students in Secondary Settings", midway there it says "Implementation in 2015 will give families time to plan for their children's schooling." It refers to the planning issue. Part of the thing in regional schools anyway is the planning and adjustments that are going to take place in small towns. How many teachers do you think are going to be removed from those primary schools by the time you get to 2015 as the classes reduce to year 6? Are you liaising with local governments about how big that is so that they can plan some adjustments?

Ms O'Neill: In terms of country locations, like any other primary school, schools are staffed and funded on the number of students they have. If you can imagine any primary school, we will determine the number of staff that school requires in accordance with the number of students that are there. As you are aware, in some country schools, the whole school is fitted out with permanent staff. If they are not permanent, of course, our capacity to relocate them goes into a different area. But if they are all permanent staff, there are processes that are used to reduce the number of staff in the schools. That will be done on a school-by-school basis and it will obviously be done very sensibly. I think it needs to be looked at, though, alongside the fact that we do have increased population growth in the early years. We anticipate that some of the reduction in staff that will accrue at some of those primary schools will be offset by some of the enrolment growth as well.

At the end of the day, though, if a school were deemed to be overstaffed, it is our normal process that we have right now. Whenever a school is overstaffed, there is a process that we go through to determine how that staffing will be brought back to its appropriate level. The process that will be used is the same process that has always been used in staffing schools and making sure that the school is staffed at the appropriate level and, if indeed there are supernumerary staff, they will be managed. Remember also that there is the opportunity for primary staff to be retrained and for people to choose. Some people do want to take the opportunity, and there is \$22 million in the budget to allow for retraining of primary people into secondary.

This can happen at any time; population changes do happen at any time. I know you are aware that in some small communities when three families move you can almost decimate the entire population of a school. It is the same process. The minister has said publicly that we will work with individual schools to make sure that the process is as seamless as possible.

[4.10 pm]

In terms of local government, when we put our implementation team in place, which we are going through the process right now, one of the roles of that team will be to work and liaise with local government. We expect our principals to do it. I mean, our principals have managed huge scale change around starting age and leaving age before. We do expect them on the ground to be working with local government to make sure we can get the best possible transition so that all of the students either move into secondary in 2015 or make use of that three-year window that the government provided in country locations for transition for families.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: So I think I get out of that that local government will definitely be involved as you get your implementation plan worked out, I guess, during the course of this financial year, is it?

Ms O'Neill: We would expect principals particularly to be working with local governments so that they are informed and so that people are aware of what is going on and I think, quite rightly, offer some support, which we know that they do. Yes, we would want that to happen during this coming financial year.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: The second question, if I can, Madam Chair —

The CHAIR: We were supposed to finish at four o'clock.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: It was almost a compliment, but I should not make it.

The CHAIR: Please.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: It is just that on page 396—I know I am cribbing—but it suggests to me that your plan of actually getting more students to graduate based on those which are retained is improving by 1.2 per cent over three years. I was going to ask how you got there, but I will not ask the question. But it is just an observation that of those students you are retaining you are getting more to graduate. I would like to know whether that is a strategy based on an outcome which has had a plan to it.

The CHAIR: Maybe I could offer a supplementary; if we make that A12. Maybe you would like to think about an answer to that, just in the interest of finishing somewhere near—Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Just in the interests of finishing, I would ask that these questions be taken on notice. The first one deals with the efficiency dividend. I notice that there is going to be \$317 million in savings over the forward estimates. I also note with some interest that, of course, Education has never fully met the efficiency dividend, to the best of my knowledge. What I really need from the department, through you, minister, is the full list of cuts or where the savings have been made for the following financial years: 2009–10, 2010–11 and 2011–12. What we really want is for you to itemise where the cut is made in terms of whether it is a program cut, a staffing cut, a capital works cut, so forth and so on, and the amount that it has been cut by, so that we can then reference it back to the budget papers. That is the three per cent, full list of the efficiency dividend cuts for those three financial years.

[*Supplementary Information No A13.*]

Hon PETER COLLIER: The three per cent is finished. Are you talking about the one per cent?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You had three per cent for 2009–10? Yes. You had three per cent in 2010–11?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, so I am right. You had three per cent in 2011–12?

Ms O'Neill: No, we did not.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What did you have? You did not have any cuts in 2011–12?

Ms O'Neill: We balanced the budget in 2011–12.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You balanced the budget. Okay. We will take it from 2009–10, 2010–11. If you have made any cuts in 2011–12, let us know. I have also got a question that I have put on notice; we will be asking you for the savings to be made in terms of the \$13.43 million for 2012–13.

[*Supplementary Information No A14.*]

Also, can I have, in the interests of saving time, the total spend on Churchlands Senior High School for the following financial years: 2009–10, 2010–11 and 2011–12?

[*Supplementary Information No A15.*]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Madam Chair, with your indulgence, can I also have the list of any schools that are yet to receive air conditioning?

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

The CHAIR: I remind members that if you have further questions, you can submit them to the committee clerk. I will just do that bit now. Thank you. We do need to conclude. We could spend the rest of the evening here having fun, I am sure, but we did say we would finish at four o'clock or thereabouts.

The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the minister in writing in the next couple of days, together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions that have been taken on notice. If members have any unasked questions, I ask you to submit these via email, as requested, to the committee clerk at the close of this hearing. Responses to these questions will be required within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. Finally, on behalf of the committee I would like to thank you very much for your attendance this afternoon. We will close the hearing.

Hearing concluded at 4.16 pm
