

Tuesday 23 June 2009 - Estimates Committee B (Bartlett) - Part 2

CHAIR - Welcome back and I hope everyone enjoyed the lunch break and that we are ready for a fairly long afternoon.

DIVISION 13

(House of Assembly)

Output group 1

House of Assembly Support Services

CHAIR - I am going to start the House of Assembly Support Services with a statement. In connection with the established practice this committee will not examine the Estimates of the House of Assembly. This recognises fully the independence of House from another. That is the principle of comity between the two Houses and the powers possessed by each. The principle was recognised also by the House Estimates Committee last night when the Estimates of the Legislative Council were called. .

Mr BARTLETT - I wish all my Estimates were like that.

DIVISION 14

(Legislative Council)

Output group 1

Legislative Council Support Services

CHAIR - We will move on to Legislative Council and welcome our Legislative Council colleagues and staff to the table. Mr Dean, have you anything in that particular area?

Mr DEAN - No.

CHAIR - One of the important things to highlight, Premier, about the Estimates process is that it does give staff and departments an opportunity to put together what they all know very well but to put it in that format so that other people can also appreciate the level of commitment and work that is provided. It is a process that is appropriate in that regard.

DIVISION 15

(Legislature-General)

Output group 1

Parliamentary Reporting Service

1.1 Production and printing of parliamentary reports -

CHAIR - I invite Mr Finch to start off in this area.

Mr FINCH - At last we see some forward Estimates on the rise. Some \$923 000 this year to \$1.04 million in 2012-13. It would not be otherwise of course. Without *Hansard* we would

perish. There is a potential savings with new technology. Can we outline what is being looked at for *Hansard*?

Mr PEARCE - Madam Chair, it is the voice recognition technology. I understand that Jenny Batchler is continuing to look at this. There is still some way to go with that, Mr Finch. That is the area we are aware of. Jenny is not here this afternoon. I assume she will pursue looking at other areas but principally that is the main focus of her attention at the present time.

Mr FINCH - As I indicated earlier we could not operate without *Hansard*. It works very well for us. This is the digital age of video recordings and the technology to access videoed speeches. Without trying too hard to predict the future, can we get some idea of how *Hansard* might look in, say, 20 years from now? What are the projections and what might we expect?

Mr PEARCE - If I could take that question on notice. The Editor of Debates is not here. It would be better if she considered some of these issues. We will take that on notice, Mr Finch, and give you some idea of the long-term projections.

Mr FINCH - Thank you very much.

CHAIR - Does any other member of the committee have any questions that may arise out of production and printing of parliamentary reports? If not, we will move to 2.1 Parliamentary Library service.

2.1 Parliamentary Library Service -

CHAIR - I have a question in relation to this. Obviously the Parliamentary Library service is a very valuable asset to the Parliament. It certainly delivers me some useful information often at short notice when I am in Hobart. But I did note and I am not sure if it is entirely appropriate to talk about it in this line that there has been some carpet that has been purchased and stored for the library. It has obviously not been laid because of the cost of laying it. On my understanding it is about \$37 000 to move all the items that would need to be moved and then the carpet then laid. We would probably expend there may be some painting that might take place. I know we are in difficult times but I am wondering if the Premier would be able to say whether we could allocate in forth coming budgets enough funds to actually complete that task.

Mr PEARCE - There are no funds in this Budget to do that. You are quite right. Carpet has been purchased and is ready to be laid but the cost of laying it is quite substantial as well. Every endeavour will be made to get that carpet down into the library as soon as possible having regard to the financial parameters within which we have to work with this current budget.

CHAIR - I did say in the next one to two years when we see ourselves coming out. These are obviously issues Premier that you might not have been aware of. It was a good opportunity to bring them forward.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes.

Mr WING - On that I think it is correct to say that there were funds available a year or two ago for this - or it was considered that they could be found. With the upgrade of the House of Assembly chamber and the new carpet laid as part of that, the carpet in the library is now looking out of place and it spoils the general appearance of the Parliament. With the House of Assembly

looking so splendid, if you walk into the library area, it looks quite messy. In the interests of the appearance of the Parliament and it all being compatible with the new image of the House of Assembly, it is an aesthetic blot on Parliament. To think that it is available ready to be laid but no money for laying it in the context of the amount available for the refurbishment of the House of Assembly -

Mr BARTLETT - It is not very much.

Mr WING - No, it is not very much at all. It is \$37 000. It is a lot to lay a carpet but in the total context of the Budget it is not a great deal. I hope money will be found at an early date so that we will not have that aesthetic blot.

Mr PEARCE - I accept that.

CHAIR - If there is nothing else in that area, we will move on to parliamentary printing and systems output group 3.

Output group 3
Parliamentary printing and systems

3.1 Parliamentary printing -

Mr DEAN - I want to look at the Budget moving forward here. If we look at 2008-09 budget papers, the projected increases were \$427 000 for 2008-09 and went on to \$439 000 for 2009-10, \$444 000 for 2010-11 and up to \$453 000 by the year 2011-12. However the forecasts in this year's Budget certainly does not go anywhere near that and remains at \$427 000 through to 2012-13. Where are we going to find the decreases that are necessary to be made in this area? What are we going to do to ensure that we come in on budget? What is the program?

Mr MENADUE - Usually with printing, because a lot of it is controlled by the way Parliament sits and sessions of Parliament, it is very spasmodic. It can vary from year to year. I have been here 15 years and I think in about 14 of those I have had to apply for a request for additional funds which have always been granted to cover the shortfall in the parliamentary printing area.

Mr DEAN - What we are saying there is that obviously if the money needed then quite obviously printing has to be done and the money will be available and will be found from somewhere else to do it. I think that is a reasonable situation. That is the only concern. The only other concern - and I have raised this before and I will raise it again - there does appear to be a lot of printing done that is not necessary at the end of the day. I look at a lot of the bills that come in where we are getting two or three copies of the bill. We are given a copy of the bill and later on when it comes into the House we get another copy of the bill and so on. Is there an opportunity to try to streamline those processes? I do not understand it.

Mr PEARCE - I think there may be, Mr Dean, but of course members like hard copies of bills, we have endorsed and unendorsed paper copies of bills which members are required to receive in the House for the purposes of a debate. Bills are loaded on to the web when they are introduced into the Parliament. So there is an opportunity there for not only members but others to access the bill as introduced. But of course it all changes as it moves through both Houses. It is important that bills presented for the consideration of members have any amendments that are

made in the Assembly. The best way that we see of doing that is to continue with our endorsed second proof, which is supplied. But it does mean of course that we have to reprint them. I know that we make amendments in the Council these days, more often than not where we used to reprint them with a buff insert, we have a third run with the bill as amended for consideration in the in the Assembly. What we are trying to do these days is to copy them internally, copy the amendments and save that reprinted buff amendments. We are doing that more other than not these days. That is a small saving.

Mr DEAN - It all helps at the end of the day.

Mr PEARCE - I could add too that the Legislative Council continues to produce its Notice Paper and Votes and Proceedings in-house with the resources that we have in-house to do that. We have done that for the last decade or so. That has brought about a great efficiency but also a saving to the printing account as well. There is not added pressure of our Votes and Proceedings and Notice Papers on the printing account. We see that as a positive.

Mr WING - Do the House of Assembly do the same?

Mr PEARCE - They do not Mr Wing, but they do have a much greater number of notices of motions, as you would appreciate. Their Notice Paper is more considerable than our Notice Paper so it is far more efficient for them to use what was the old printing authority - now Print Applied Technology - to produce that. But it is convenient for us to produce our own in-house, given the nature of our papers.

3.2 Parliamentary systems

[2.30 p.m.]

CHAIR - Obviously, if I had any questions from other members of Parliament about their regional offices and their communications requirements, I feel sure they would have handed them to me. So, obviously there are arrangements in place with additional staff in the IT area, and that has provided the outcome that was designed to look after members' offices. Is that a fact?

Mr PEARCE - I would agree with that. I think that is one of the positive outcomes.

CHAIR - Having those resources allocated to go around to regional offices has been very positive. I have never had a problem myself that has not been attended to in a very speedy manner. Anyone else with any question related to that? No.

Mr DEAN - The only question I raise is the fact that the facility does not provide us with the ability to have a laptop in front of us to be able to access a lot of the issues within the Parliament itself. I would have thought that, if that were ever considered moving forward, it would provide us with an opportunity to access stuff more easily and more quickly without the need for a lot of the printing that is done. It comes into both areas.

CHAIR - There are two computers in the Chamber.

Mr DEAN - It is not the same as having one right in front of you.

Mr PEARCE - The President is looking at aspects of the work environment in the Chamber. He is looking to engage our architect to have a look at aspects, including the use of the technology you are talking about.

Mr DEAN - Thank you.

4.1 Buildings and operations management -

CHAIR - Mr Wing, you take the lead there. Is there anything you would like to put forward as a question?

Mr WING - Probably not so much on this item, except that looking into the future, I am concerned about the fact that the annex building is part of the proposed sale of Parliament Square. I suppose that comes into buildings and operations management, although there would be nothing allocated in this Budget. We do have a bill that we will, no doubt, be dealing with soon. Looking at the long-term future of Parliament, I think it will be seen as very short-sighted that we are selling every other part of the property except the small area surrounding the existing Parliament House. The section at the rear will probably be demolished some time because it is incompatible with the general architectural style of Parliament House. But it leaves little space for car parking in the future. I know there is a desire to have it moved from the front of Parliament, it being such a special historic heritage building. It is only a matter of time before it was banned, I would have thought, at the front of Parliament House. To accommodate that and future needs of Parliament, I would have thought it was very desirable to retain at least the annex building site. Even if it is developed into parkland in the short term to allow for future expansion, that would be sensible. I just seek your views on that, Mr Premier.

Mr BARTLETT - My views on it are, I guess, related to the redevelopment of the whole of Parliament Square up to Davey Street. I do not know if you went and looked at the public exhibition through the public consultation of some of the designs which relate to -

Mr WING - That is why I mentioned the park, the trees and lawns involved in one of them.

Mr BARTLETT - That is right. I think all three of them represent an improvement in terms of the public open space. I do not know which one will be selected by the selection panel. I know which one I like the most. I tend to favour public open space, because public open space brings people in and around Parliament and around the precinct, and I think that is a good thing. Having said that, I recognise what you are talking about in terms of planning for the future and so on.

My understanding - I do not have all the detailed designs - is that the Presiding Officers have made some decisions about this - I might have this wrong - and have at least agreed to that legislation going forward so that Parliament can consider that. In the new designs, there would be discussion around the right amount of space.

Mr WING - I hope the title is retained for at least that area of land for possible future expansion as will be needed in the future. Thank you.

CHAIR - If there is nothing else in that output group, we will move on to joint management services.

Output group 4

Joint Services

4.3 Services to members -

Mr DEAN - I am just wondering what are the 'Other committees' referred to under that area. Services to members, it provides services not directly related to the Legislative Council or House of Assembly for certain parliamentary committees. What are those certain parliamentary committees it talks about?

MR PEARCE - We are talking, Mr Dean, about the Public Accounts Committee -

Mr DEAN - No, I am talking about 4.3, services to members. That is the one we are currently on. If you look on page 15.7, it says:

'This Output provides for services not directly related to the Legislative Council or House of Assembly or certain Parliamentary Committees and the Leader of the Opposition.'

I just want to know what certain parliamentary committees come under this umbrella.

Mr PEARCE - Committees not directly related to both houses specifically, which means the joint statutory standing committees, the one I just mentioned, because they are not directly related to each House individually. They are joint committees. They include Public Works, Public Accounts, Subordinate Legislation and the two standing committees - Community Development and Environment, Resources and Development.

Mr DEAN - That has answered that.

Mr PEARCE - They are joint committees, and that is where they sit.

CHAIR - Thank you. I think that that has pretty much done the DPAC area. I do, however, have one question, which is just an overarching question before we leave DPAC. I am of the understanding that Treasury has introduced a fine system on all departments relating the payment of accounts. Do you have any knowledge of how much DPAC has had to pay -

Mr BARTLETT - No, I do not think it is a fine system as such. If I understand what you are referring to, I think you are referring to what we committed to in support of small business in Tasmania - that is, we would pay interest to small business, and all businesses effectively, on accounts that were overdue in terms of payment from government. Now, previously, that was something business could come to the Government and claim, but now we do it as a matter of course. It would probably have to be a question to ask the Treasurer in terms of a whole-of-government impact of that. But it certainly encourages agencies to speed up their payments to business.

CHAIR - It is an incentive, and obviously Treasury have taken the initiative. As I said, there are requirements that you need to meet, and this is an incentive to do it. I was just wondering whether it had cost your department any fines -

Mr BARTLETT - I am not aware of any. I will be able to get you that information specifically for DPAC, I suspect.

CHAIR - Thank you. And thank you very much for coming to the table and providing that information relating to DPAC.

The committee suspended from 2.40 p.m. to 2.42 p.m.

DIVISION 2

(Department of Education)

CHAIR - Premier, as I indicated this morning, the committee would appreciate a brief overview of the Education department.

Mr BARTLETT - I might get John just to pass over a copy of this document. It explains in graphical terms the plan under which we have been working for some years since 2006. This is the coming together of that work and our plan moving forward in the portfolio over the next four years. It has key targets drawn from Tasmania Together, with key areas that we are focused on achieving. You will see over the course of this Estimates session that our budget is aligned with that. So, effectively, just by brief way of overview, I want to talk about three things - that is, the plan that you have in front of you, the set of partnerships that are significantly influencing the Department of Education budget this year and over the four years that the plan covers, and also the priorities we have in our budget, particularly given that, even though the bottom line of the Education budget is a significant increase year on year on last year's Budget, there are still significant savings that the Department of Education will need to make.

The plan that you have in front of you - at least the graphical representation of it - means that we are all about providing better outcomes for learners at every stage of development. In the early years, we have a key kindergarten development check as a measure. We are investing in things like our Launching into Learning program. There is some \$20 million provided over the forward Estimates in this Budget. Some \$70 million is provided in this Budget for the child and family centres. We are ensuring that primary school students have the sound literacy and numeracy skills they need through programs like Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap. In secondary school, which is an area where we recognise we need to do more, particularly in the personalisation of pathways and in setting up our pre-year 10 students for their future post-year 10 qualification, we have made improvements. We are focusing on young people attaining a post-year 10 qualification to start their career and adults developing their work skills to be innovative and continue to produce productive outcomes for the Tasmanian economy. Lastly, we want to ensure that community can learn through things like the Learning Information Network Centres - LINC's - online access centres, State libraries and so on, but also provide a pathway - you will see the ring, if you like, the virtual cycle - back into second chance, third chance learning for those people in the community who might not have the adult literacy skills that they need.

There is no right place to start these sorts of things, but, essentially, we are tackling them on all fronts. One of the criticisms, I suppose, aimed at some of the more high-profile reforms is, 'Oh, yes, but you should be starting at the other end.' Well, my view is that we should be doing all of these things, because that is how we will lift to our overall goal, which is to lift Tasmania's level of educational outcomes from what has been below average in Australia to the top of the nation within 10 years. The trajectory we are seeing in things like a 12 per cent increase in our enrolments in post-year 10 institutions is positive. There is a significant lifting of our literacy and

numeracy rates through the national testing where we have seen Tasmania go from in the last three years what could be described as low or lowest in the table to mid-table. In some places, particularly in the early years - year 3 and the PIPS testing, the performance indicators in primary school - we are seeing those trajectories. If we can continue that investment, those trajectories are heading towards the top of the nation just over the last three years.

That is the plan. I want to talk for a little while about partnerships. While there is a significant ask in the Education budget for the Education department to find savings for the Tasmanian Treasury, I was very pleased that during what was a critical year, 2008, I was chair of the ministerial council on education, MCEETYA, and obviously I was fortunate enough to have a role at COAG as well where a series of national partnerships were developed by MCEETYA and signed off by COAG. There are partnerships in low SES schools, literacy and numeracy and teacher quality and in early years as well, which absolutely align with the plans that we have been executing over the last three years and which will offer some \$122 million extra over the course of the forward Estimates for the Tasmanian education system through those national partnerships.

There are co-payments by the States as well to make sure we maximise our money, so we are investing ourselves, but we are attracting significant amounts of Federal money in these areas. These partnerships align perfectly with our plan, and we are continuing to add funding to things such as Launching into Learning, Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap in our literacy areas, such as the reforms we are doing through the Southern Midlands and Bridgewater High redevelopment, through our Teacher Learning Centre partnership with the University of Tasmania. Of course, on top of that, there is the significant \$350 million for Building the Education Revolution within Tasmania. That, of course, has been predicated on the fact that we are not allowed to drop our own forward Estimates when it comes to investment in capital as well. So that is a bonus, and we will not be taking any money out of our own capital works.

Thirdly, then, the prioritised budget for this year does give priority to front-line services. We will not be compromising front-line services, but we will be finding savings across the rest of the agency in a whole range of areas that we have discussed and you have discussed, no doubt, in yesterday's committee with other ministers. Education is not getting off lightly. There are some challenges and some changes that we will need to make in terms of meeting those savings, but one of the good examples I mentioned to you earlier on is around the fact that the money is coming in through national partnerships, and because they are absolutely in keeping with the plan that we have for education, we will be able to align some of our staffing needs into those. Individuals will not lose jobs, but we will be able to make the savings that we need. On top of that, there will be strict vacancy control. There will be a limited number of voluntary redundancies and so on as well within this department.

Overall, though, my number one priority or philosophy at the core of what the Student at the Centre is about - which I talked to you about three years and which we have been implementing ever since - was about having a leaner, smaller, more effective and efficient centre of the department with more and more resources going out into and through the school gate under the control of principals and educators who are in schools. We have achieved a significant amount there; \$20 million of structural efficiencies have been delivered from the centre directly into schools per annum. That is not new money coming in from Treasury; that is money we have saved from the centre and have put through the school gate. On top of that, some \$34 million of new initiatives per annum, meaning some \$44 million extra is going through the school gate for school education per year since the time I first fronted this committee as Minister for Education. That is the overview.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Premier. Are there any questions relating to that? What the Premier has just delivered is pretty broad, so if there are no specific questions on the overview, we will go straight into 1.1.

Output group 1
Pre-compulsory and compulsory education

1.1 In school education

Mr GAFFNEY - Premier, it is acknowledged that the Government has clearly and rightly identified the importance of education. I think the Budget for this coming year and the following years reflects that. You did touch on the partnerships and how they have impacted. I am still interested to know how the Government works out with the shift in populations and changing demographics and potential impacts that has on school closures how to forward plan that process so that you can, five years from now or 10 years from now, make sure you have got the money going into the right areas within school education?

Mr BARTLETT - Essentially, the overall budget to schools follows students. So more students, more money goes to a school. As students move or students decline, less money goes into a school. But your question is broader than that. As you know, I said some two years ago that I believed we had too many schools, particularly inner urban primary schools, in Tasmania. I believe we need about 15 to 20 fewer schools in Tasmania over the course of the next 10 years. Our public policy response to that challenge was to set up the School Futures Fund, which was an original initial bucket of some \$6 million. The first example of that was Winnaleah and Branxholm who decided that, by merging, they could deliver better outcomes for their students and they could pull down \$2 million for redevelopment of the new shared campus.

I have been very clear on this. I, as minister, will not be naming schools that should close, because I think that causes enormous grief and heartache, but if you provide incentive, you will get local leadership emerging to lead positive change. I cannot claim that the School Futures Fund achieved this, but it certainly was, I believe, the right policy approach, because when a really massive incentive came along - being the Building the Education Revolution - through locally-led and community-led agreement, signed up by school associations, principals and wider communities - not by me naming schools - we will have achieved a reduction of some 13 schools across the State within the next two years. That is basically well on track to the target that I set for 15 or 20 less in the next 10 years. That has come about because of the policy settings we set, but, of course, it has been enhanced greatly by the opportunity through the Building the Education Revolution funds.

Mr GAFFNEY - I think that is a feather in the Government's cap to actually use that strategy. It is obviously working and will continue to do so.

Mr BARTLETT - What essentially this means is you have got this big a pie for school-based education in Tasmania. We continue to grow that pie, as you can see. You can divide it 200 ways and it goes X, but if you divide it 185 ways, it means more for each school, and you are able to build capacities in schools.

Mr GAFFNEY - Now, there are some schools which are combining the management but perhaps keeping the two campuses for efficiency.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - There are other situations, like Somerset and West Somerset where they are actually moving to another campus, or perhaps even moving to a new school.

Mr BARTLETT. That is right.

Mr GAFFNEY - What is the Government's policy on a school that is vacated? What is the policy on the sale of the school or the future of the school or actually clearing the school so that is not left as an empty building?

Mr BARTLETT - It will be horses for courses. In some cases, those campuses will continue to be used. In other cases, I can see those campuses being used - such as at Rocherlea - for very good community outcomes. In other cases I can see them being used for affordable housing, so that they might be transferred the sites from the Department of Education to the Housing department. In other cases, they will be sold for commercial return. For example, school A and school B that have decided to merge but on to a new site - there are a few examples of this happening in the northern suburbs of Hobart particularly - both school campuses may be sold, both schools have access to Building the Education Revolution money and some State money for a fantastic new school facility to be built to advantage everyone.

Mr WING - The former Charles Street school in Launceston was developed into housing units and office combination.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - I am thinking of the worst case scenario, as you have to sometimes, and I am looking back at the old Devonport maternity hospital, where it was vacated and it has just been an eyesore for years now because there has been no cleanup or pulling down or whatever. It was sold to a private investor who did not put any funds into it. It now stands there. The council -

Mr BARTLETT - Where is that?

Mr GAFFNEY - On Don Road, and it really is a blot on the landscape and an eyesore. What I am thinking there is what guarantees, if, say, for example a school cannot be sold, there is no private investor. It is in an area where it has not got any potential. What commitment or what responsibility would lie with the Government?

Mr BARTLETT - The best guarantee I can give you is that the other part of the stimulus package, of course, together with our own money going into affordable housing, means that we are committed to building some 500 new houses over the next three years - I think I have that time frame right, but I might not have that exactly right - but a significant number of houses will be built. Therefore, we will be looking for infill housing areas to achieve that.

Mr GAFFNEY - I am not sure 20 houses in Waratah -

Mr BARTLETT - No, that is true. Although then we would need a primary school.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr GAFFNEY - I am pleased you mentioned the Building the Education Revolution fund, because that has had huge impacts on schools. It has just been a godsend really, plus it is serving an important role if getting us out of the GFC as well. I was interested to note in Tasmania I think it was \$207 million that was provided, with \$151 million for government schools and \$56.1 million to non-government schools. The breakdown of that funding, that came from the national Government or did it come through advice from the Tasmanian Government?

Mr BARTLETT - I will ask Greg to answer that if a moment. What I would say is that it is roughly a split of 70-30 from what I have seen so far from the funds that have been allocated. That roughly equates with 70 per cent of kids in State schools and 30 per cent in non-State schools. It is about a population split up. Greg can tell you a bit more about the process about how that has been arrived at.

Mr GLASS - That is quite correct. It has been based on student enrolment numbers nationally. For 2009-10, there are two components for Government, which is the National School Pride, which is \$19.166 million, and the much larger Primary Schools for the 21st Century component, which, of course, is \$132.146 million and \$98 million the year after. So it is very, very significant funding coming into the State. It is unprecedented.

[3.00 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT - We would be very happy also to explore this in great depth in the output, because Andrew Finch who we call our fat controller -

Mr FINCH - I was wondering where he was. Have you sacked him?

Mr BARTLETT - He is our State controller - what do we call him - the comptroller-general, for this program. He can go into great detail about where the money is going and how it is being expended and so on.

Mr GAFFNEY - I am really pleased that there are three platforms being the very early years, numeracy and literacy and finishing in year 10.

Mr BARTLETT - A post-year 10 qualification.

Mr GAFFNEY - I just have a couple of questions around that, because I know other members have got some good questions to do with this. The first one is: I notice that part of the funding is for science and language centres for the twenty-first century schools.

Mr BARTLETT - That is part of the funding, yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - I just want to put on notice that, in fact, if that is to reinvent science within some areas - you know what I am going to say - with the Devonport Imaginarium Science Centre, which provides a centre for all the primary schools and the high schools in that region. Because they cannot continue the funding, that is going to have to close. So I just need to -

Mr BARTLETT - That has been on my mind. We will get Andrew Finch to go to the schools in the area and bring them together. If they wanted to put a shared submission in for a single what-have-you, that would be good. I have also talked to the Devonport council about it, and I said to them, as I have said publicly, that if we can get some corporate support, some local government support and community support, then the State Government will not rule out getting

in there. But the easy thing for us, of course, is capital. I have said to the Devonport City Council that I would be happy to look at some capital to help out, and they can apply for BER capital. But, actually, the problem with the Imaginarium is the ongoing running costs. So, it needs to be a partnership. We are not out of the partnership; we have a contribution to make somewhere along the line, but others need to come to the table.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Thanks for that. I am just interested in the school resourcing review. Some \$136 000 was allocated to conduct that review by the University of Melbourne. We did not have that capacity here at UTas to undertake that review?

Mr BARTLETT - I will let Jenny answer that.

Ms GALE - We needed to go through the appropriate procurement exercise. The University of Melbourne far and away had the most expertise in this area, because they have done work right across Australia in relation to school funding, particularly in Victoria. So they had the appropriate experience and the methodology that we required for our review.

Mr GAFFNEY - A good answer. I am happy with that. That makes sense. The other one is the pathway planning. I am not going to dwell on it, but that is important in years 8, 9 and 10, and I think it is more so to do with the fact that some of the students who find it difficult to get their own pathways actually do connect with on an individual basis that pathway planner.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - When that resource is moved or taken over by a classroom teacher, that student does not have that one to one.

Mr BARTLETT - What I can say is pathway plans and pathway planning will continue in Tasmanian schools. We did a review. The University of Tasmania, in fact, did the review for us, you will be pleased to know. It found key things. It was clear from the research that greater success could be achieved if pathway planning was part of the culture of the school environment rather than an add-on and that pathway planning must be a mainstream component. Pathway planning is absolutely the core of the high school renewal strategy that we are investing in, and I am happy to talk about that as we get into that area. The VELDO role - the vocational education learning and development officers - that connect schools with business and industry and those sorts of programs, the YLO role - the youth liaison officers - which is a really intense case mix at the pointy end of those kids who are most at risk of not continuing with their education, will continue. The pathway planning roles will continue, but just as everything we have done over the last three years has delivered some \$44 million extra into schools, we will be pushing closer to schools with that resource so that principals have more control of it. At the core of the philosophy of the Student at the Centre is that we should not be doing things to schools; we should be providing schools with the capacity and the support to enable them to do them themselves.

Mr GAFFNEY - My last question: being in the profession, seeing the exodus of young teachers going to other places, particularly Western Australia, and looking at that as a career because now here in Tasmania people are saying, 'Well, maybe I have to teach for another couple of years. It is too sensitive at the moment for me to retire or resign or whatever.' Is that an issue, and how is it being addressed?

Mr BARTLETT - The whole work force management is an issue, and it is an issue that I have talked about in this committee and other committees for the last three years, because it is significant. The facts of the matter are that some 337 teachers graduated from the University of Tasmania, yet we are only getting some 190 overall retirements and resignations and departures from the department. That is a trend. So there is a big gap. There is an oversupply of teachers in Tasmania. There are a few strategies we are taking to deal with that. We are working with the university in partnership through the Teacher Learning Centre, which has paid great dividends for quality teaching, and it will be invested in through the national partnership.

Why this is happening, I believe, is that teachers in Tasmania since 2001 have had a 55 per cent pay rise. That is pretty significant since 2001. Because of nexus, there have not been any realisable changes to their working conditions. So most professions, if you got a 55 per cent pay rise, you would have bargained off a fair few conditions or hours or something. No change. No, that is not true, in the last nexus we renegotiated, we gained some three teaching days across the State on average. Yes, there are significant work force issues. This will turn around in the next 10 years, because the average age of a principal is 52, and the average age of an advanced skills teacher is 49.

CHAIR - Young, very young.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, very young, no doubt about that, Madam Chair. But many of them, of course, came through the whole studentship thing, so their superannuation maxes out at 55. However, interestingly enough - this is another aspect of work force management that really does need dealing with but is very hard to deal with - the effect of having more female teachers than male teachers is exacerbated by that because the males did not go on maternity leave and, therefore, lose their superannuation, as was the terrible policy of the past where female teachers who went on maternity leave, lost their superannuation effectively, or had a break in service, therefore, have to work through to 65, whereas the males are retiring at 55. That is creating an even more significant imbalance in the male to female ratio of teachers. So, yes, there are significant work force issues that we are dealing with, and we are dealing with them in a number of ways.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you, that just balances the wear and tear on males, I think.

CHAIR - I have a couple of specific questions, Premier. Reducing class sizes from years 2 to 7. What are the current class size figures, and is the program on target?

Mr BARTLETT - I will ask Jenny to talk about that.

Ms GALE - Since 2002 we have had quite significant improvements in the average class sizes of prep and year 1 classes. Some \$2.1 million was allocated in the 2007-08 Budget. In 2002, the number of prep and year 1 classes exceeding 25 students was 163. In 2009, that has been reduced to 51 classes. So there has been a significant reduction in the number of classes in prep and year 1 exceeding 25 students. The average class size now across prep and year 1 has fallen from 23.1 to 22.4 in 2009. So we are well under the 25 target.

Class sizes in years 2 to 6 have also improved, with the average class size falling from 24.3 in 2008 to 23.9 in 2009. So, again, it that is under the 25 target. An extra \$3.08 million was allocated in the 2008-09 Budget to reduce class sizes not only in years 2 to 6 to 25 or less but also

to improve the student-teacher ratio in year 7. That work has just started, and we will start to see that rolling out over the next few years.

Mr BARTLETT - This is an important point, too, because it goes beyond teacher ratios. Over the last three years, we are consistently decreasing our student to teacher ratio across the board in the public education system, but we also in Tasmania have the lowest ratio of non-teaching staff to students as well. So the best of every State in Australia. We are improving significantly our ratio of teachers to kids. In primary, we are 7.6 students to non-teaching staff. This could be teacher aides and other staff in the classroom. We are 7.3 in secondary schools and 7.5 overall. That is a better ratio than the average across other States in Australia.

CHAIR - My next question is related to early childhood reform. Will funding be available to those schools that want to provide more than 15 hours of kindergarten a week or is this the minimum figure and also the maximum allowed?

Ms GALE - It is the maximum. The Commonwealth is funding universal access up to 15 hours for every kindergarten-aged child in Australia. It is a maximum figure. So the funding at the moment is a ceiling.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr GAFFNEY - Excuse me, Jenny, just on that last point regarding staffing in schools, a lot of the other States have their special needs students in separate facilities or separate institutions or schools or learning centres. We have adopted a model where we have put those students and their staff and aides and whatever into our larger cohort, which would obviously reflect in our numbers. Is that why we are so much better off per person?

[3.15 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT - It rolls everyone in across all the other States. It is from the Productivity Commission.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - I just want to start, if I can, on pathway planning. There are some issues there. It is to be subsumed, as I understand, into the role of the teachers -

Mr BARTLETT - No, not necessarily.

Mr DEAN - Well, they can retain them, as I understand it, if they wish. Is that the system that will apply? At this stage, Premier, I will just identify a couple of other issues that were raised with me. These persons carrying out those functions are not teachers. They do not have teaching as a background at all. They are level 6, as I understand it. So, what will become of those who are not employed by their schools moving forward? Where is it all going?

Mr BARTLETT - Well, I can tell you that Tasmanian high school students will continue to develop pathway plans and pathway planners will continue to support schools.

Mr DEAN - Who will do that, though?

Mr BARTLETT - Pathway planners, will.

Mr DEAN - So they will be retained?

Mr BARTLETT - Many of them will be retained. There will be a reduction overall in numbers of pathway planners, but not to the extent that we will not be able to meet the overall targets - that is, delivering pathway plans for 95 per cent of Tasmanian school students. We are improving and increasing the focus on students having a future pathway with the ability to follow. With career planning we have further integrated that into the curriculum, not just by pathway planners, but pathway planners will still exist, but also by teachers who can best develop a students' aspirations into an education program. This responds, as I said, to a University of Tasmania review of pathway planning that called for sustainable programming and stated, as I said, that it is clear from research that greater success can be achieved if pathway planning is part of the culture of the school environment rather than an add on.

We have developed and maintained pathway planning. Much of the initial big burst of work was building resources to do this, and there are fantastic resources, and we are committed to maintaining those resources. There are big folders that kids can use and they can be integrated into the curriculum. Much of that work has been done, though, and it does not have to continue on to make sure that every student has a pathway plan. Those resources will support year 8 through to years 9 and 10 students. Some of the critical areas, like the YLOs, which are the ones working at the really pointy end of kids at risk of not going on with education, are all maintained and carrying on.

There will be an opportunity to embed more in schools pathway planners. One of the issues - and I spoke about this yesterday - is that I talked to many principals who are very rusted on to pathway planning. They want embed it deeper into their schools, and that is a good thing. I speak to other principals who do not feel their kids are getting the best out of the pathway planning add on. The philosophy of the Student-at-the-Centre approach is that we let principals have access to more and more resource so that they can deliver for their kids. That principle alone or that philosophy of the Student at the Centre has delivered, as I said before, some \$44 million extra each year into schools that principals now have control of to improve educational outcomes for their students. It is working, because we are seeing our literacy and numeracy rates improve. We are seeing our post-year 10 enrolments improve.

Mr DEAN - Having been spoken to over the weekend by a number of teachers and having listened to a principal only a few days ago criticise this position in relation to pathway planning officers, I have a concern about it. They are saying that perhaps each school is different. Each school needs to operate differently and in accordance with the students that attend those schools.

Mr BARTLETT - Agreed.

Mr DEAN - Therefore, what was being said was that there ought to be consistency right throughout the organisation. This person does have some control as to whether or not they continue on and/or not. Then he is saying that teachers that will have this responsibility, where are they to put that into their schedules? Do they drop something else they are doing to be able to take it on? It normally entails, as I understand it, four and five contacts with each student during the year as a pathway planning officer -

Mr BARTLETT - And pathway planning officers will still be available to do that work. What we are talking about here is a couple of things. This fits in, by the way, with the secondary

school renewal strategy that we have worked through with principals. The principals have come up with this strategy. It involves school leadership, personalised learning, working with feeder primary schools better, the extended networks out into the academy, polytechnic links and so on and our partnership in teacher education - that is, teacher excellence. They are the five elements of our high school renewal strategy. Embedded deep in that is better personalised learning for every young Tasmanian. Embedded in that is pathway planning, absolutely. So we are not killing the goose that laid the golden egg here.

Having said that, these are non-school staff at the moment. Therefore, they are no different from any other non-school staff across our agency at the moment - that is, we have vacancy control. As positions become available, they will not be filled at the moment. That is the nature of the \$1.5 billion shortfall in revenues. But pathway planning is absolutely core to our ongoing improvement of post-year 10 outcomes and pathways through to post-year 10 education. We are committed to continuing pathway planning. It may not be in exactly the form that it was created in. But a program that is created creates all the materials - that is an enormous amount of work - is reviewed, and the recommendations say that it would work better if it was embedded in schools, that is what we are doing.

Mr DEAN - What will be the position where a pathway planning officer no longer has that position and it is taken over by a teacher? Where do they go? What will they do in the organisation? The permanent staff, that is.

Mr BARTLETT - It will not happen. They will continue to be pathway planners.

Mr DEAN - So they will continue that role? That is the role they will take?

Mr BARTLETT - That is the role they will continue.

Mr DEAN - Interesting.

Mr GAFFNEY - Can I just ask a question on that one?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - It is interesting, talking to staff at colleges, they have been very impressed with the students coming through in this cohort understanding their pathway planning. There are obviously advantages of the program.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, no-one is doubting the advantageous of it.

Mr GAFFNEY - That is fine.

Mr BARTLETT - All we are talking about is delivering it closer to schools rather than as an add-on to schools.

Mr GAFFNEY - Fine. So my question would be: we have done an assessment of how effective it has been up until now. We are now going to a different model, although still involving the pathway planners there. I appreciate that. Will there be some type of assessment to see in three years' time when the next cohort of students come through whether that is as an

effective model as what has been completed over the last three years? That would be the opportunity to measure those.

Mr BARTLETT - This is relevant. The review concluded, in fact, that the benefits of pathway planning may only emerge over many years, and it would be difficult to clearly link any benefits specifically to pathway planning. When the review was commissioned, the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms were, in fact, in their infancy, but I would describe it as this: it is about supply and demand. The pathway planning and guaranteeing futures and raising the age level and all of those things, the better vocational pathways through years 9 and 10 and so on are all about creating demand - that is, kids come through the system saying, 'Yes, I want to go on with education.' The Tasmania Tomorrow reforms are all about the supply side and saying, 'When you want to go on with your education, we have got a much wider array of qualifications and courses and opportunities for you to choose from as well.' So it is the two things together that will make the difference. You cannot have a whole bunch of demand being created and then rocking up to the front door of the institute and saying, 'What do you mean I have to do pre-tertiary maths and English and I can't do certificate III in metal fabrication because that is what I want to do.' Equally, you cannot create all these opportunities and not encourage kids and give them a pathway to get there. But that pathway to get there, of course, actually starts right back in the early years, as we know.

The best thing we can be investing in for the next generation is the early years, literacy and numeracy in primary years, the pathway and personalised learning in the high school years and then the supply of the opportunities and options that suit everybody's skills, not just those kids who happen to be academically inclined to access when they get to post-year 10. So it has to be a holistic approach, and planning those pathways in high schools needs to be at the core of what high schools do.

Mr DEAN - I want to go to the bullying situation. We are in this State leading the way in school bullying and cyber bullying and text bullying, right across the whole spectrum of bullying. If I could be given an indication of where we are and, I guess, more importantly, what we are doing about trying to move it out of schools.

Mr BARTLETT - I am happy to talk about that.

CHAIR - Let us not say stamp it out.

Mr DEAN - No, I did not say that, I said 'Move it out'.

Mr BARTLETT - Mr Dean, you would probably agree with me that our schools are, if you like, a microcosm of the wider society. If you have social ills in wider society, chances are they will be reflected in our schools. That includes violence, intimidation, substance abuse, whatever else happens, will be brought into our schools. The schools in and of themselves cannot solve those problems. They can certainly be a contributor to solving those problems, but they cannot solve them by themselves.

The study that you refer to which was reported widely in Tasmania that Tasmania has the worst cyber bullying incidents, was a study that only included nine Tasmanian schools. That number included State and non-government schools. The study did note that in regards to Tasmania there is, however, a relatively high uncertainty in the estimates of prevalence due to the smaller sample size as can be seen in the competency intervals detailed in chapter 5 of the study.

The extent that Tasmanian school staff, interestingly, felt that they were very or moderately skilled to deal with cyber bullying is the second highest in the nation. So I think that report was misreported a fair bit.

But, what I can say is that we do have an approach to cyber bullying, just as we have an approach to bullying in general. There are some adjuncts and add-ins to the cyber bullying sort of message. This publication is about to be released and go home in school bags and so on. It is about educating parents and educating kids about the proper use of IT and so on, telecommunications technology. The best approaches I have seen across schools in Tasmania is the school-wide positive behaviour support program. I think 100-odd schools have implemented it. But the key to this program is not the punitive measures or the one-off approach of trying to stamp out bullying. It is a recognition that to achieve real outcomes here involves all the community - parents, police, community members, staff, students - in an understanding of what is going on and how to resolve it working together. The schools that have invested in this approach in this program show results in years 2, 3, 4 and 5. It takes a long time to shift cultures. That is ultimately what bullying is - it is an aspect of a particular culture.

The key components of the school-wide positive behaviour support in Tasmania are that it assists schools to shift their focus from punishment to teaching and learning; it does not remove the need for rules and sanctions or anything like that. It is not some airy-fairy thing. It aims to place the use of these into a broader educational framework. A critical element is the collection and use of school-based data in identifying areas of greatest concern. The schools that I have been in where this is really working and I have seen it working is where they collect data on incidents. So if it is out by the bike shed that these things are happening, they know that, they track it, they put in place methodologies to deal with that and they track the data going down.

School-based teams comprised of parents, community representatives, teaching and non-teaching staff provide leadership in planning and implementing positive behaviour support approaches. It is a systems approach rather than isolated strategies or reliance on single programs. It is research validated as well. So it actually is proven in the research that it works if you apply it consistently over a period of time.

Mr DEAN - The other question I have is the number of teachers that have been subjected to assaults and so on in schools. Is that drop off? Are we seeing decreases in that?

[3.30 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT - No change, very low, is what I am advised.

Mr DEAN - That is good if it is. We do not want to see teachers on stress leave.

Mr BARTLETT - We can certainly do all those numbers for you. Those on workers compensation claims for stress, the number has dropped from 66 to 57 year on year. In teachers, that is 45 down to 34. The 66 to 57 figures were for the whole department.

CHAIR - Obviously when we are talking about staffing with the holiday structure as it is in the education system, how much accrued annual leave and long service leave is the agency liable for at this point in time?

Mr BARTLETT - Total long service leave liability is \$87 million. That is a lot of money.

CHAIR - That is a lot of money.

Mr BARTLETT - Total recreation leave liability is \$8 million. The number of employees, though, with long service leave balances of more than 100 days has dropped from 88 in 2004 to 76. The long service leave liability for excess leave over 100 days has dropped from \$57 000 to \$50 000.

CHAIR - So there has been a concerted effort by the department to look at -

Mr BARTLETT - I do not know about a concerted effort, but they are dropping. The number of employees with excess recreation leave has dropped from 109 to 68. So the costs have gone up, but that is the nature of a 55 per cent pay rise. Just to make sure that \$87 million is put in context, that is across 10 000 employees.

CHAIR - It is still a significant number, though.

Mr DEAN - The next question I ask is that I received some answers in Parliament the other day to some of these issues, but the matter of truancy is one I want to raise in this venue. It has been suggested to me that truancy is causing and creating many of our problems by way of anti-social behaviour and by way of criminal activity. My question is from that: what emphasis are we placing on truancy within schools? What satisfies the criteria to be a truant? The answers I was given the other day give me some difficulty in understanding just what being a truant is. The definition of it, because -

Mr BARTLETT - I would be very happy to go through all the numbers, which I will in a second. Overall, in answer to your question, keeping kids connected with school, some form of education, connecting to something formal, is a very high priority for us. That is why yesterday I announced the establishment of a flexible learning school which effectively provides services statewide but will provide for kids who are disconnected from formal schooling to have avenues and opportunities to remain connected to education effectively.

We have implemented in Education Performance Services a database of chronic absenteeism. All the data we are collecting now is going into our education performance reports that we are releasing publicly, and through that we are able to collect data on the kids who are chronic absentees, those who left school without destination, those sorts of things, so we are doing better at tracking them and, therefore, can feed that data back to schools to take action on them.

I will give you some numbers. There are some definitional things. There is the category that is unexplained by parent but the school is confident that the parent is aware of the absence yet no explanation has been provided - that is, mum did not get around to writing the note. There is school and parent/carer aware of absence and agree that the absence appears to be wilful avoidance of attending school. There is pretence on the part of the student that he/she is attending - that is a truant. Then there is absence authorised by parent, of course. Then there is the yet to be explained, authorised by parent absence. The vast majority of kids not at school are authorised by parents, and it is explained through illness or incapacity or whatever. Then there is the category of authorised by parent other than for incapacity, and exempt from full-time attendance for whatever reason. Yes, that is the definition that we use of truant.

Mr DEAN - Do you have the figures there for suspensions?

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Mr BARTLETT - Absenteeism, I will go to first. That is 8.85 per cent. The rate of truancy is less than 0.07 per cent. So the vast bulk of the average number of daily absent students is based on illness or parental-explained mechanisms. We are collecting data on daily absences from students from prep to year 10.

Mr DEAN - I ask the question every year, Premier, as to whether or not we continue to go down the line of suspending students from schools. It is an archaic method in my opinion, and in the opinion of a lot of other people. It is like sending coal to Newcastle.

Mr BARTLETT - I agree with you that the best outcome is to keep kids connected at school.

Mr DEAN - That is right.

Mr BARTLETT - But I also defend the right of educators to make a decision based on the wellbeing of all the other kids and parents and the teachers in the school as well where an alternative to keep that kid connected is not available. I think our job - that is why we announced the new flexible learning school yesterday and alternative education settings - is to provide more of that support to schools where possible within budgetary constraints. I agree with you that in Nirvana or Utopian world there would be no suspensions, because the principal would say, 'Right, I'm not suspending you, but you're going to be connected to school through this or this or this opportunity.' But it is not a perfect world. We are growing those opportunities, but they are not always readily available to everyone. Rate of suspensions for 2008 was 10.92 per 100 FTE. Average number of students suspended for a school on a daily basis -

Mr DEAN - That is 10 per 100 students, is that what it was?

Mr BARTLETT - In suspensions per annum.

Mr DEAN - Is that 10 per 100 students? That is pretty high.

CHAIR - It may be the same student reoffending.

Ms GALE - That is 10 suspensions, not students. So it is 10 suspensions per -

Mr DEAN - Ten suspensions per 100 students.

Ms GALE - Yes. It is roughly about 4 per cent of students suspended at any one time throughout the year. Often there are multiple suspensions.

Mr DEAN - That is a lot.

Mr BARTLETT - It is flat-lining roughly in terms of the data across the year.

Ms GALE - It is not increasing.

Mr DEAN - Not increasing. But that is still a lot of students.

Mr GAFFNEY - I actually do not think it is a lot of suspensions. I think you will find that schools in Tasmania do an extremely wonderful job of trying to keep kids connected. The last

stage after a list of things is suspension. We cannot go there, because they just do a wonderful job.

Mr DEAN - They do. My son is a teacher, so you are right. It is still a high percentage in my view. One last question, if I may, the member for Mersey raised the schools and what will happen with the schools, et cetera, going forward where amalgamations or whatever occur. The St Michael's School - how are we proceeding with that? That is one of those schools that maybe if we had done it a long, long time ago, and the member for Launceston and I have been working at this for many, many years to get a reasonable outcome -

Mr BARTLETT - I know, because I know your interest in it.

CHAIR - You were expecting the question, Premier?

Mr BARTLETT - I think I have had it for three years, and I promised you I was going to fix it three years ago.

Mr DEAN - I think you have done well.

Mr BARTLETT - We are working on it, and it is a complex set of circumstances. I will let Greg go through the detail.

Mr GLASS - I can give you an update as of last week. The Department of Education, Housing Tasmania and St Michael's Association have agreed on the boundary locations for the subdivision, subject obviously to obtaining relevant approvals required in accordance with the Crown Lands Act. An application for subdivision has now been approved by the Launceston City Council. An application to rezone a portion of land to be sold to Housing Tasmania for residential purposes as outlined by the minister earlier for public housing is currently being processed by the Launceston City Council. There has been engineering design work required for the relocation of some services to service St Michael's as well as Housing Tasmania. The design work has now been completed by consultants. I understand there was a couple of issues and delays, but that has now been completed.

The consultants are now finalising documentation to call tenders for that service separation work. Again, that is happening in consultation with Housing Tasmania and St Michael's Association. I understand that the transfer price of the land to St Michael's Association has been agreed, again, subject to obtaining the relevant approvals and the transfer price to Housing Tasmania will be determined by market valuation completed following the subdivision and rezoning and the issue of title. So it is now progressing quite well. It has been a very long-winded process.

Mr DEAN - Welcome news, Premier, and thank you for moving that ahead.

CHAIR - In the major initiatives outlined in the Budget, there was reference to community use of school facilities. Which schools will be part of the two-year proposed trial, and why were they chosen?

Mr BARTLETT - All schools, you will be pleased to know. This is essentially one of those fantastic initiatives, and it stems directly from the engaging our school communities task force that I set up a couple of years ago. Essentially, as was announced in my state of the State speech

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last year, we will provide some \$150 000 a year - I will go through the exact detail for you. Essentially this is to cover community groups using school facilities. One of the big hurdles for the local whatever it is -

CHAIR - Community forum.

[3.45 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT - Community groups, yes. One of the big hurdles to use a school gym is the barrier of public liability insurance. This will provide a blanket public liability insurance for all community groups using all Tasmanian State school facilities, which will encourage and unlock an enormous amount of community use of school buildings, I believe. That is something I really wanted to achieve over the years. Insurance covers not-for-profit organisations which are not otherwise insured. The insurance covers hirers whilst using DoE facilities, including the 36 pools owned by DoE. However, the policy places certain conditions on the use of the pools. That is the only thing. That is around having guidelines provided by the Royal Life Saving Society.

There is work taking place with DED and DoE to prepare advice to relevant organisations about the new arrangements. People will be able to view available facilities online throughout Tasmania by a simple click of a mouse. The Department of Education web page will contain general information about the project as well as the hire and fee structures and so on.

CHAIR - I will move on to the digital education revolution. When will the rollout of this technology be completed so all students will have that access?

Mr BARTLETT - Over the last 10 years, the number of computers in Tasmanian schools has gone from the bottom of the nation to the top of the nation in ratio. The Federal Government is now adding their bit to this, so the digital education revolution is federally funded. There are grants for ICT in schools, and they are already rolling out. Greg might be able to give you an exact update of where they have gone so far.

Mr GLASS - As at 30 April 2009, we have had the round 1 schools announced last year - which was 13 schools with a total of 634 computers. As at April, 474 of those have been rolled out. The round 2 was announced earlier this year for 48 schools and a further 2 179 computers. That rollout process has just been initiated. About 230 of those are out, so that is obviously a phased process, but it is progressing quite quickly now.

CHAIR - There is still a way to go then?

Mr GLASS - Still a way to go, yes, but -

CHAIR - Do you estimate a time, given what has come before?

Mr GLASS - The intent is to have an effective PC ratio of 1:1 for students in years 9 to 12 by December 2011, so we have still got a bit of an extended time frame there, about two-and-a-half years. As I say, we are progressing quite well now with rounds 1 and 2.

CHAIR - Has it been estimated what costs schools will incur when they join up to the new optic fibre broadband system? Has that been looked at?

Mr GLASS - Most definitely. We have estimated a cost of \$953. That would cover \$116 for software, \$107 for data centre support, \$206 for local area networks, \$341 for ongoing IT support, \$35 for electricity to the PC - sorry, this is the cost over the life of a year - \$46 for security and \$35 for a laptop trolley so that those computer purchases that are laptops are mobile. Again, in giving you those categories of expenditure, they are the same categories of expenditure that have been used by other jurisdictions, so they have been agreed nationally between jurisdictions and the Federal government department. You may recall there was a fair degree of discussion and negotiate about the ongoing recurrent costs of running the equipment.

CHAIR - The same costs will be for every school? It will not vary?

Mr GLASS - There may be some slight variation. A good example is electricity. It would depend on the nature of the usage within the school and how often the PCs are utilised in a classroom situation.

CHAIR - Right, so Whitemark School may incur a higher cost?

Mr GLASS - On some items, and it could be slightly less on others. That is our best assessment of costs across the system for Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you. Another initiative, Premier, is the sustainability learning centre. Where will the centre be located and have tenders been called for the construction of that centre?

Mr BARTLETT - It is up at Mount Nelson - the polytechnic campus on Mount Nelson. It is a joint venture between us and the Catholic education system funded by us and the Federal Government.

CHAIR - What proportion of recurrent funding, then, will be provided by the State Government?

Ms GALE - I could probably give you a bit more background information as well, through you, Minister. There are just 25 of those projects nationally, and we have been able to pick one of the first ones up in Tasmania, so I think that is a real feather in the cap for Tasmania. Only eight projects funded nationally in 2008-09, and we have got one of them. It will be a partnership agreement, as the minister has said, with the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools and also with Greening Australia and the CSIRO. It will be an innovative facility, which will also incorporate what is known as the Australian sustainable schools initiative, which is locally called the Aussie project in schools, so you may be aware of that.

In terms of recurrent costs, Madam Chair, Greening Australia is going to assume responsibility for the overall operation and maintenance of the building and management of the facilities. Students, for instance, will be able to monitor, record; and manipulate the building's performance. That will be including the operational carbon footprint, the carbon emissions. It is going to be really cutting edge. An architectural concept plan has been developed for the centre, and it will have two distinct precincts which will be linked by green space and it will also have a biodiversity demonstration garden. I am not quite sure what that is, but it sounds very impressive.

It will have an educational nursery, propagation areas with associated storage and operations, et cetera. The building itself will have environmentally sustainable design incorporating

maximum use of solar energy, recycled storm water and sewage and it is intended to be carbon neutral in its construction and ongoing use.

CHAIR - It almost seems that you had a look at my notes while I was out for lunch. The next initiative, Premier, is the Teacher Learning Centre: does this centre provide professional development services for teachers in the non-government sector?

Mr BARTLETT - No. Essentially this is referring to Mr Gaffney's question earlier about managing the teacher work force and quality issues. What I said to this committee two years ago was that we did not believe at the time that while there was an oversupply of graduating teachers coming out of university, we did not necessarily believe that we were getting the quality of teachers. We know that the very best education systems get the right people to become teachers. They develop them into effective teachers, and that is what the Teacher Learning Centre is all about. It is a partnership with the University of Tasmania where we select or our department selects after the first year of an undergraduate teaching degree or qualification the teachers to come into this centre.

CHAIR - How many?

Mr BARTLETT - Twenty this year. I had a firm belief that the qualification for teaching in Australia has swung too far to the theory and too far away from the practical. So this takes a young teacher, undergraduate, after their first year of university, into a school setting in a less advantaged area. There will be an annex at Rosetta, and we are going to spread this statewide as we go. They can do their lectures and their university and their theory, but, day to day, they are in the school working with behaviour management, working with professional teachers. This is a double benefit, because it is great for the student teachers, but it is also great for the teachers in the school, because they have more adults around, young adults, of course, working in the school. Rokeby High School is the most improved high school in Tasmania on the evidence of the data that we have just brought out. Part of the reason for that is that they embrace some of the innovative approaches, and this Teacher Learning Centre is physically located there.

CHAIR - Premier, you will probably appreciate in this particular output group that it is very difficult to just keep to the line items, so I will just go around the committee and see if there are any other -

Mr BARTLETT - Are we still in overview, Madam Chair?

CHAIR - We are in 1.1, in-school education.

Mr BARTLETT - Right.

CHAIR - We have drifted quite a bit.

Mr BARTLETT - The key for me, anyway, is that if we do groupings of 1.1, because I have all the people I need for that. Group 2 will be a different group of people, and group 3 will be a different group of people again.

CHAIR - That is pretty much what we have done.

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Mr BARTLETT - Could I ask Jenny to clarify that suspension number, because I do not think we quite clarified that.

Ms GALE - Just in case there was any confusion around the suspension figures, I probably need to clarify that approximately 4 per cent of students are suspended annually. This is fewer than one student in each school each day.

Mr DEAN - How did we get the 10 per cent before?

Ms GALE - It was not 10 per cent. It is the way that the data has been presented over a period of time. It is 10 suspensions for every 100 students, but there are multiple suspensions for individual students. So the more accurate figure or the more commonsense figure, if you like, is about 4 per cent of students are suspended annually.

CHAIR - So the total number of students in Tasmanian schools, just so we can put that into perspective?

Ms GALE - About 56,500, prep to year 10.

CHAIR - So we can work out that 4 per cent in the tea break. Mr Dean.

Mr DEAN - I am just wondering where we are now with the teacher aides. We have had lots of issues in this area with their holidays and employment conditions.

Mr BARTLETT - The AEU, the CPSU and the department signed up to an agreement last year. It still has over 18 months to run, so it is an agreement through to April 2011, I believe. That agreement was ratified by the industrial commission, and it provided for some \$3.6 million extra going into the pockets of teacher aides across Tasmania. Employment arrangements for teacher aides have shifted up the scale. The current teacher aide industrial agreement between DoE, CPSU and AEU was ratified by the Tasmanian Industrial Commission in March 2008. The agreement is for a period of three years to March 2011. The agreement provides for the option of two extra weeks employment per annum, it confirms the nature of employment for a maximum of 42 weeks a year and provides a significant increase in salaries and conditions of employment.

So they got 4.5 per cent on 1 December 2007 and 5.5 per cent on 1 July 2008. About a year before that agreement runs out, so April next year, we will be intending to enter into negotiations to further that agreement after it expires.

Mr DEAN - So teacher aides are much happier in the work place than they were.

Mr BARTLETT - They certainly are.

CHAIR - I certainly have not had any contact from teacher aides. How many teacher aides do we have in the public system? They are obviously an integral part of the school education system.

Mr BARTLETT - They are. Some 1 530 in head count. That amounts to 807.5 FTEs.

CHAIR - Thank you.

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Mr BARTLETT - That has significantly increased over the last 10 years.

CHAIR - I want to ask a question in relation to staffing numbers, and obviously the commitment has been given to not make any cuts to staff numbers in frontline education services. How many people since the e-mail went out on the Thursday of budget day in the Education department and the system have put their hand up so far to explore a voluntary redundancy? There was an e-mail that went out on the Thursday of budget day asking for expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy.

Mr GLASS - As of Friday, my understanding there were approximately 50 informal expressions that had been received.

CHAIR - Across the whole of the State?

Mr GLASS - Across the whole of the department.

CHAIR - Did the department anticipate what number you might be expecting?

[4.00 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT - No, but, whether the full 50 are realised will depend on what other savings we can make, what other transitions to other funding sources we can make, what other vacancy control measures that might be in place anyway. It is an ageing work force, there is no doubt about that, and therefore voluntary redundancies might be better described in some cases as early retirements. If you are three years off retirement and a redundancy gets your super to the place you need it to be, there are those sorts of considerations.

CHAIR - Given that superannuation funds have not performed all that well -

Mr BARTLETT - Long-term public servants are in a better place than you and I - I can tell you!

Laughter.

CHAIR - We hope to be here for some time.

Mr BARTLETT - Some days we do!

Laughter.

CHAIR - We have pretty much covered output group 1 across the board, so if we stay with staffing -

Mr GAFFNEY - On the staff redundancy where you have called for a show of hands for a number of areas - leave without pay et cetera and those wanting to move on. If you get an interest shown by a number of teachers -

Mr BARTLETT - No.

Mr GAFFNEY - So it doesn't relate to teachers at all?

Mr BARTLETT - No. The e-mail specifically says that.

CHAIR - But the e-mail went to all teachers.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, but they are part of the group. The group at the top of the list includes all DoE staff and one of the things we don't want to be doing is not sharing information. The e-mail specifically says that it is not available to teaching staff.

Mr GAFFNEY - There is a \$3.5 million increase to Early Years funding, coming from the Federal Government, which is great. What percentage of that goes directly into schools - not buildings but into -

Mr BARTLETT - In Early Years?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes - resources and staffing, I suppose.

Mr BARTLETT - There are a few elements to these things. There is our own Launching into Learning funding, which was an original commitment for four years in the first Budget when I was minister. We have now extended that for another four years so there is an extra \$20 million there. That employs people to work with Early Years. There is a capital component in this year's Budget - some \$72 million over the forward Estimates for the building of child and family centres over three years. Then there is the national partnership money, some of which is about the universal access to 15 hours of preschool education - so that is kindergarten effectively. As a State we are further down that track than most other States because we already have universal 10 hours kindergarten. Some States are well behind that. We would be in the lead, so effectively we will be getting our top-up for the following five hours.

Ms GALE - The \$3 million basically is for the universal access - that is the 15 hours - and the vast majority of that goes to staffing for both teachers and teacher-aides to enable the appropriate support to be given. There is a small amount that we will need to invest in capital works but we will not be doing that for at least two years and that will be just in those schools where at the moment they may need to have an additional kindergarten class. At the moment they have two classes sharing the one classroom. When we go to 15 hours they will not be able to do that so we may have to go to additional classrooms, but we don't have the figures for that at the moment. It is only a very small proportion of schools where that will happen.

Mr DEAN - The relieving positions in schools - is that where a teacher is to be moved forward into a higher position within a school. Is it advertised only at that school or is it advertised within the Education department? If it is advertised within the Education department for relieving in a higher position, who sits on the panel to make that decision?

Mr GLASS - I suppose there are a number of approaches to that. The very short-term positions can be filled within a school. For period of six months or more there needs to be an expression of interest - and of course you can still do an expression of interest for a period less than six months; I suppose it depends on the circumstances and whether there is someone on staff that can move into the position. If you want to open it to a wider target audience you can do an expression of interest. For anything that is 12 months or beyond, there is a requirement that you can fill on a permanent basis or on an expression of interest basis, which is the focus of your question. For anything that is 12 months or more there is a requirement to do an expression of

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interest through the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* which obviously opens it up not only to the wider State Service but also the public.

Mr DEAN - So for a period from, say, six to 12 months, who sits on the panel to make the decision?

Ms GALE - Usually it would be a school-based panel, often with a community representative.

Mr DEAN - The reason I ask the question is that it has been suggested to me that it is slanted very much in favour of a teacher within that school getting that position each time because the panel consists of - so I am told - the principal, and a number of other people from that school. It has been suggested to me that it is not a fair process.

Ms GALE - Usually that would be the case - that it was a school-based panel.

CHAIR - I have a question in relation to the middle management review, Premier, and obviously there are target savings all across departments, so can you give specific examples of where positions will be included in that review.

Mr BARTLETT - Through the Student at the Centre work that we have already done, we are a pretty lean, mean organisation, and we will be doing our fair share with the other budget constraints. Again it will ultimately depend on how many we might get through redundancy and how many we might target through vacancy control and how many we might be able to shift to other positions that are funded federally and so on as to what that might mean. We achieved \$44 million extra a year going back into the schools through the reduction of senior staff and the reduction of middle management over the last three years. So this does present a challenge for the secretary of the department because there are savings to be made, but we have been doing the right thing for three years and making those savings so that we can put more money into schools and it gets harder and harder to find the savings within the department, particularly when I impose a quarantine on schools.

CHAIR - Will you be looking to cut the number of schools?

Mr BARTLETT - Well, we are going to have 14 fewer of those.

CHAIR - Mr Finch, I think you had a question in the area of grants and financial assistance.

Mr FINCH - That is right. Output 1.5 provides for students' assistance, bursaries and allowances. Given the problems that many Tasmanian students in rural and remote areas have in getting their education, do you think the system is adequate? I realise that it is sort of flat-lining - it is \$8 427 000.

Mr BARTLETT - Well it is flat-lining because I recognise that in a place like Tasmania we need to do two things to support regional and remote students in gaining a post-year 10 qualification. We need to deliver more courses in regional towns - and that is what Tasmania Tomorrow will do. From next year the Polytechnic and the Academy will be delivering more courses in more towns through district highs, through LINC's, through learning centres and through other formats. That is one thing so that you keep kids at home to start their post-year 10 education.

The other thing we invested in was many millions of dollars in new student accommodation and refurbished student accommodation. At Newstead College we are building a whole new set of student accommodation, and more innovative programs in student accommodation as well - increasing home stay and those sorts of things across the State. And thirdly at that time we increased the student accommodation allowance for senior students by 33 per cent in that year.

Mr FINCH - And that comes into this budget item?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, I believe so. The other things in this budget item are: accommodation allowance for tertiary students; childcare grants; senior secondary accommodation allowance; special bursaries; spectacles allowance-

Mr FINCH - Students making spectacles of themselves?

Mr BARTLETT - That is it - the student assistance scheme for disadvantaged students; and the sundry educational grants scheme. I am happy to give you details of what they are as well, if you want them.

Mr FINCH - What form might that take in the future in an ideal world? Do you feel the program is adequate at this time?

Mr BARTLETT - It grows with the number of students. We have increased it by 33 per cent. That was a good thing to do. But ultimately the number of students who are eligible for it will get it. I want to see more and more students eligible for it, because that will mean we are retaining more students and getting more students with qualifications.

But having said that, the flip side of delivering more courses out into regional Tasmania means that fewer students will have to actually travel. As a hypothetical example, the polytechnic will be delivering more vocational courses through the NEET centre at St Helen's. Therefore, a student who previously at 16 years of age would have had to go to Launceston College or Newstead College will be more likely to be able to stay home for another year or two and get to certificate II or certificate III in a particular qualification. Then if they want to go on to the diploma they might need to travel for three days a week into Launceston but stay at home two days a week. Ideally my utopia in this area of where we want to head is that Tasmanian students for the most part have opportunities post-year 10 in their home town which are aligned to the economic opportunities in that home town. In St Helens those opportunities might be around tourism, hospitality, aquaculture and forestry. In Oatlands they might be around agriculture, stonework, heritage, stonemasonry and tourism. And in Strahan they might be around something very different again. But we will be tailoring through the Polytechnic and the Academy the delivery of those courses to the economic conditions of any given region so that students gaining a qualification are then also able to gain employment in their home town. I also believe it is good for students to get out of their home town but have an opportunity to return to it.

As they progress through, not every course is going to be offered in every town to every student to the highest possible level so they will have to travel to urban centres to complete a diploma or to go to university. At the other end what I would like to see is better student accommodation and supervised student accommodation, because that is what our consultation with the parents of isolated children told us they wanted so that you are not sending your 16-year-old on the bus to live in a flat in Hobart or in Launceston for the first time. Our capacity for

supported accommodation for students in 2005 was 142; in 2008 it was 238; and in 2009 it is 267. So we are significantly growing the capacity of supervised accommodation for students across the State who have to travel.

Mr FINCH - Thanks, Premier.

CHAIR - Premier, I might suggest we have a cup of tea and return to the table by 4.30 p.m.

The committee suspended from 4.15 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

**Output group 2
Post-Compulsory Education and Skills Development**

2.1 Skills development and contestable funding -

CHAIR - Premier, I'll take this opportunity before we get started to acknowledge our former colleague in the Legislative Council, Tony Fletcher.

Mr BARTLETT - Hear, hear.

CHAIR - He's here and it's great to see Tony still taking an interest as he does in the parliamentary process. I had my first year in Estimates with Tony Fletcher as Chair and it was a good learning opportunity.

Mr BARTLETT - He gave me a good education as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee while I was on that for a couple of years as well.

CHAIR - It's always good to have him around the Parliament. I now hand over to Mr Dean who is going to look at skills development and contestable funding.

Mr BARTLETT - During this output group I will probably bring a few advisers to the table and identify them as they do so.

Mr DEAN - There is a huge increase in here and an explanation in the footnotes, but what will it accomplish in this area moving forward this year?

Mr BARTLETT - I will ask Mark Sayer, General Manager of Skills Tasmania, to come to the table. He has recently returned from somewhere off the east coast of Flinders Island.

Mr WING - Right - very adventurous.

Mr BARTLETT - Ha, ha! I had to get that on the *Hansard*.

Laughter.

Mr BARTLETT - By way of helicopter and rescue beacon. Welcome, Mark, it's lovely to see you.

Mr SAYER - I'm not dead yet!

Laughter.

Mr WING - So is the order we deal with these three institutes in order of importance?

Mr BARTLETT - Just in order of the outputs, that's all.

Laughter.

Mr DEAN - Looking at the budget, there is a huge increase in this area moving forward, but what will we get out of that through the year? What is the program in this area - what's happening?

Mr SAYER - I will speak as the purchaser of Vocational Education and Training. There are two purchases of education and training within the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms - the Department of Education and Skills Tasmania. Our responsibility is to purchase the VET side of the budget equation, so we purchase from the polytechnic and the Tasmanian Skills Institute informed by skills strategies for the State. I think I showed you last year a draft of what that strategy would look like and now that has been released and is being developed at the moment. The reason for the increase in funding and eventual further increases in funding is all based on demand, the number of students wanting to participate in the polytechnics or Skills Institute.

Mr DEAN - Does the building at Inveresk, the old ATC building, fit into the system?

Mr BARTLETT - No, that's been purchased by the Catholic system. The old Australian Technical College has essentially now become the Catholic system's answer to our polytechnic, if you like, in providing post-year 10 vocational and educational opportunities for their students.

Mr WING - Have they actually purchase that building, not leased it?

Mr SAYER - It's been handed over by the Commonwealth.

Mr BARTLETT - There was certainly an MOU between TAFE Tasmania and the ATC and there are opportunities to work together on lots of things. We have a whole lot of facilities that we would make available through MOUs and what-have-you to students from other sectors.

Mr DEAN - I only ask because I am told that the uptake in that college is very poor and I just wondered where it fitted into the system.

Mr BARTLETT - It had been extremely poor, in my view, when the Federal Government established these things, but I suspect the Catholic Education Office know what they're doing and will shift those numbers and do a good job of it, I suspect. I think a bit of competition, innovation, sharing of knowledge, services, equipment and curricula and all those sorts of things will be a good thing overall for Tasmania.

CHAIR - I have a question in relation to table 3.6, Premier, where it talks about the performance information related to this particular output group. It's about the apparent retention rate for years 7-12 and it has a target for 2009-10 of 70 per cent. What does that figure mean?

Mr BARTLETT - I will hand over to Jenny Gale to talk a bit about this but I will just give a bit of an overview.

CHAIR - It's obviously higher than last year.

Mr BARTLETT - I think one of the achievements we have made over the past two or three years, although we have some significant work to do, is that we have raised the level of debate in Tasmania about post-year 10 education and the fact that we have the poorest statistics in Australia when it comes to post-year 10 qualification rates. There is a host of ways of measuring that, and over the past couple of years we have really dug into this. Do you measure apparent retention for kids leaving grade 10 and arriving in grade 11; do you measure from grade 10 through to grade 12 even though they don't have a qualification; do you measure only when they get a qualification, whether it's a TCE or a vocational qualification of some sort? There is a whole range of ways of measuring this and we are doing a lot of work to bring together how we measure this stuff, because the best way we can track our performance - whether it is through pathway planning or the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms - is by adding good robust measures that are well understood and are robust in terms of the data going into them and that provide us with a guide going forward. One of the initiatives that came out of the COAG meeting hosted here in Hobart was a reward fund for States shifting towards the COAG target of 90 per cent by 2015.

CHAIR - So that target's still a long way off.

Mr BARTLETT - We are the State that has the most ground to make up but therefore we have the most to gain from the reward fund as well, so there is an opportunity there.

Ms GALE - Just to clarify that the COAG target is about 90 per cent retention in either education and training or employment up to 25 hours a week, and our current apparent retention rates don't include training or employment, so in fact we will need to change our measures and have better measures to be able to reach that COAG target. So it's probably greater than what's reported there because we don't have employment in there at the moment.

CHAIR - Right, so they're not entirely accurate, then.

Ms GALE - It's the national definition of 'apparent retention' which I will just explain really briefly. For years 7-12 it means that we take the cohort of students that we have in year 7 in a particular year and then when that cohort should be in year 12 we then measure again how many people we have in year 12, but there are movements in and out all the time so it's not direct retention and we don't include things like training and employment, or we haven't in the past, and they're not included nationally either. It's the best national picture we have at the moment but it's not a very good one and we need to build a much better and more robust picture about teaching into the future. What the minister was referring to is that we hope to have in place a system where we can measure the number of students who are in employment up to 25 hours a week or more and those in training, as well as those in education, in future years.

CHAIR - Are the appropriate measures already in place to measure that at this point in time or will that need additional resourcing?

Ms GALE - We'll need to develop those measures.

CHAIR - So there will need to be additional resourcing in the future?

Ms GALE - Well, Educational Performance Services and the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority will work together. They each have different parts of the data jigsaw, if you like, and they will work together to see how they can use the information they currently have, so it's not possible to predict yet whether we'll need extra resources or not, but we'll work together to try to get that picture.

Mr FINCH - Under the skills development contestable funding, 2.1, there are some really good increases in that process because of the national partnership agreements. I was wondering if I can get some elaboration on those partnerships and how they work.

Mr SAYER - The contestable funding has two streams to it, an area that is quarantined -

Mr FINCH - And that's what's provided by the State Government?

Mr SAYER - Well, the funds come from the Commonwealth and the State; 70 per cent come from the State and 30 per cent from the Commonwealth. In the contestable funding area we use a high proportion of those funds to ensure that the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute offer services to most Tasmanians interested in vocational education and training. We also set aside a proportion of funds that we put out to tender that any registered training organisation that meets the criteria can tender for.

Mr FINCH - I have a question regarding Skills Tasmania and how you develop agreements between enterprises in the community that need certain skills and the funding of that and the development of these skills. How does that process actually work?

Mr SAYER - That's a very good question and I won't go into all the complexities of it -

Mr BARTLETT - I will get Malcolm White to come to the table as well because there's a sort of shared thing here.

Mr SAYER - There is, yes. First of all, the principle that we use is ensuring that whatever we purchase on behalf of the community is very well informed, so we need to collect really good data about the demand that industry has in terms of the skills required for future employees. We always have that at the fore of our minds, but the other key driver - and I'm glad Malcolm is at the table here - is that we work in collaboration, so if we are working with the Polytechnic or the Skills Institute to figure out demand in the economy, what employers want, and how to encourage learners, we share quite a lot of data and talk a lot to reach a point where we can agree on what is going to be purchased and what quality standards need to be met in that purchasing arrangement. So it's quite a collaborative approach with the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute. There are other funds which are open to competition in the marketplace but there's a very special relationship with the Skills Institute and the Polytechnic.

[4.45 p.m.]

Mr FINCH - I am curious about the development with industry. How do you develop that relationship?

Mr WHITE - We have put in place what we call customer relations managers and their role is to work very closely with industry, whether that be the HR manager or the owner of the business, and so they establish how many apprentices are going to be put on in a period, what the

skill requirements are and so on. So there's a high degree of information coming back, as Mr Sayer just said, and that feeds into the process of understanding demand. We also track what we call the contracts of training, which are the agreements between the employers, Skills Tasmania and us over the training of the apprentice or trainee, so we have very forward information.

Mr DEAN - You say under this area that you are targeting those areas of the work force where there are shortages. When do you start targeting the students who want to take up those professions, in what years? Do you do that or do you simply rely on the employers coming forward and identifying to you a certain person or student or what-have-you? How are you doing it and are you getting enough coming into those areas where there are shortages?

Mr SAYER - The process starts quite early, before year 10, through the pathway planning and Guaranteeing Futures arrangements in schools.

Mr DEAN - We've been trying to point out the importance of the pathway planning officers for a long time, but keep going.

Mr BARTLETT - Which I have been agreeing with very much.

Mr SAYER - So the process starts quite early and by the time the Polytechnic and Skills Institute are working with those learners that path will be clearer to learners but then another force comes into play and that is a stronger sense of the kind of demand that is in the economy and coming from employers for the kinds of skills that are required and the opportunities for those learners. That is identified in a number of ways, through the data we collect, through ABS data and through industry intelligence because we have people on the ground, so the picture becomes more complete as people go through the system.

Mr DEAN - Are you getting enough students coming forward for the areas where these shortages have been identified?

Mr BARTLETT - I am sure Malcolm and Mark can answer this as well but some of the gains that have been made by the Skills Institute this year might be worth talking about and some of the areas of strength and weaknesses as well.

Mr WHITE - Before I answer that specific question I think there's another factor and that is raising the esteem of the trades because it is the trades where there has often been an historic shortage. With things like the graduation ceremonies for trades around the State we really celebrate those achievements and it is lifting the esteem of the trades in society and so it's becoming more aspirational for young people to say, 'Yes, I will be a plumber; that's my passion'. I think that has really worked to our advantage. Also during the current times we've noticed a much greater sophistication with employers about understanding the need for investment in training to make sure we don't lose the skilled people we've trained. Just as an example, we've been really heartened that employers who have had perhaps a few weeks without work have arranged to send their apprentices for perhaps a whole year of training fitted into one long block and then work picks up, so that flexibility has been able to contribute to that commitment to training. But I think we've seen some really solid gains in the allied trades this year, particularly in plumbing, electrotechnology and construction, so it's heartening that even when the global economy is in a downturn that employers in Tasmania are able to see the need to train apprentices.

Mr DEAN - We were told at one stage that bricklayers would probably be a thing of the past, we were not going to get enough in and the ones we have are 50 years-plus and so on. How are we going in bringing students into those areas?

Mr WHITE - Bricklaying is an interesting one because the bricklayers work in gangs. It is an interesting work force arrangement. We have been able to lift the allied trades through focusing more on the allied trades as a worthwhile profession, particularly plastering, flooring, glazing and bricklaying. So we are seeing gains there. I do not think there are yet enough bricklayers for industry but I think we are doing our bit.

CHAIR - Any other questions in that particular area? If not, we will move on to 2.2 which is the Tasmanian Polytechnic.

2.2 Tasmanian Polytechnic -

Mr BARTLETT - I might ask both Mike Brakey, CEO of the Tasmanian Academy, and Belinda McLennan, CEO of the Tasmanian Polytechnic, to replace these people at the table. They will have to hang around because there may be other questions.

CHAIR - Yes, 2.5 is Skills Tasmania, so do not leave the State.

Mr BARTLETT - If I can open with a comment. We are going through what is a two- to three-year implementation of Tasmania Tomorrow reforms. The reason I want both these fine people at the table at once is that there is still a long way to go in settling down and refining these budgets. You will notice they are simply a line item in the State budget but, of course, now that these two organisations are statutory authorities they will be required to present a full annual report to the Parliament. You could mount an argument that perhaps statutory authorities should be examined in GBE Estimates at that end of the year rather than at budget Estimates so that you have the financial data available to you. That is a debate probably for another time but a debate I would happily enter into. The resolution of the final funding for these organisations will not be resolved or arrived at until the complete transition occurs, which will not happen until 1 January 2011, and obviously the final transition phase will be over that calendar year.

With that caveat I will give you one example. Following some work that I had the department do on international education - that is, education as an export both on island and off island, and I think we have great opportunities in that area - we have brought together all of our resources from TAFE, from the department and so on into one international education unit that is housed within the Polytechnic, but in this year's budget the funding for that is actually allocated against the Academy.

Further to that, there is a whole range of interrelated disaggregation issues where we disaggregate budgets and then re-form them. The chairs together with the three CEOs - with Malcolm being the third CEO of the Tasmanian Skills Institute - regularly meet and are working their way through these issues. I expect they will continue to do that over the coming six months at least and probably for the duration of the two-year disaggregation process. With those comments, we are very happy to answer questions.

Mr WING - After I have made a comment or two, I would like to ask you, Mr Premier, if you would give us your view about how the Polytechnic is settling in. I have heard conflicting reports and maybe because of the matter you have mentioned we need to make adjustments in a

lot of areas. I visited the Polytechnic at Newnham in Launceston a month or five weeks ago to assist a nephew to enrol. While we were waiting for something to happen, the gentleman we were dealing with was waxing lyrical about the success of it as he saw it. He said it was hard work and you needed to give a lot of time to it but he said it was doing very well. A colleague of ours during the Budget debate read a letter from a teacher at a polytechnic on the eastern shore who had been brought to tears by frustration. One thing that I recall happened was the computer failed and she lost all the reports that she had prepared which had to be out that day. There were had other problems. I have a feeling that the Don College has some problems but I would like to ask your view.

Mr BARTLETT - Sure. I will open and then I would be very keen for Mike and Belinda to also talk because they are working through a significant disaggregation and reallocation of resources and organisations. I would be very happy for them to give the committee a view about how that is going, what the issues and challenges are, and how they are dealing with those issues and challenges.

At the outset I would say this: we have a 12 per cent increase in enrolments in the new institutes over and above what they were last year, and that to me is the number one measure of success. I believe we can put that down to the fact that the new organisations are providing a far greater array of opportunities for direct grade 10 school leavers that they did not have in the past, particularly for those 75 per cent of kids who will go down the para-professional vocational and traditional trades pathway. It has opened up opportunities for them and that is responsible largely for the 12 per cent increase. We need to see those sorts of gains year on year for a few years to go anywhere near meeting the COAG targets and our own targets when it comes to gaining post-year 10 qualifications.

So in the macro I think we have made a very good start at that. In the micro any organisation that tries to bring together five different organisations - and there are still another six or seven colleges to come in - in a relatively short period of time will experience challenges. I have made unannounced visits to many campuses where I have just shown up in the common room or in the staffroom and talked to teachers and to students. There was a really good article in the *Advocate* last Tuesday, 16 June. I am pleased to see that the *Advocate* are tracking a whole group of students from grade 10 last year and they are going to track them for three years through the new Polytechnic-Academy-Skills Institute system, whatever they have chosen to do. The reports from the students in this article, and certainly what I hear when I talk to them in common rooms, is overwhelmingly positive. Yes there are always comments that you could fix that or you could do that but the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. They like the choice that they have been given. They like the environment that they are in. There can always be improvements and we want to make further investments.

On the other side of the coin the teaching staff have been through a significant change, which has produced real challenges in some areas. In different campuses there are different approaches and views to that. But I am also confident that, between Belinda and Mike, they are putting in place the organisational bits that need to be place. But they are doing this with one hand tied behind their back to a certain extent because they still have colleges - and therefore resources that will be available to them in the future to complete this transition - not available to them yet, but that will happen over the coming two years.

[5.00 p.m.]

I guess the main challenges that I hear out there are related to systems challenges. That is, bringing together on 1 January this year two disparate systems - more than that because each college had different systems and different bits and pieces - into something that worked for everybody. We have certainly had some issues with it but I also believe that those issues are being worked through. I know myself that a large-scale IT re-implementation, redevelopment and redesign is an extremely complex beast, and it has proven to be. One of the things I have been talking to the CEOs and chairs about is a significant re-investment in information technology both in the back-end systems like the student management databases and so on and also in the front-end systems, the teaching and learning systems and what the students get access to in terms of their learning outcomes in technology as well. It needs a significant investment.

But that investment would have had to have happened in the old institutes anyway, and that investment in the old institutes would have caused inefficiencies, because part of the reason behind this is that we cannot afford to have nine different institutes in Tasmania. We had TAFE and eight colleges all wanting to create a state-of-the-art digital media centre to train in digital media. What we need is a really great state-of-the-art digital media centre in three centres around Tasmania. Or take the example of automotive workshops: we cannot afford to have eight colleges plus TAFE investing in nine state-of-the-art automotive technology workshops to train kids in the best environments for automotive technology. What we can afford to do is place our investments in three regions and make sure that students get access to them from the Skills Institute, from the Polytechnic and less so from the Academy in that example. That is what these new reforms will also deliver: an ability on a statewide level to invest in critical infrastructure that will make a difference in the future. I am not sure whether I have answered your question, but with that I will now hand over to Mike and Belinda to give a view of some of those challenges and issues they are dealing with.

Mr WING -Yes, if you would like to do that.

Ms McLENNAN - I am happy to talk a bit about what we have been doing in the Polytechnic. I do think the evidence is there that particularly the students that are on what were the college campuses are happy with the greater options they have. The evidence that we have for that between the Academy and the Polytechnic is a greatly reduced attrition rate than we usually have after Easter. Easter is quite often the time when a lot of students drop out. It was less than half of one per cent this year, which is significantly less than what it has been in the past. The *Advocate* article tends to reinforce that with students saying, 'Yes, we think it is a good deal,' and 'yes, we are enjoying ourselves,' and 'yes, we have the opportunities that we did not have before.'

In the case of the Polytechnic we are operating currently on 14 campuses. We will be operating on 18 or 19, depending on how you count them, with the other four colleges. That does mean that we have a large-scale statewide operation, which inevitably means there are systems and process issues that need to be worked on. We have a very effective shared corporate services area supporting the Skills Institute, the Academy and the Polytechnic. They are very well aware of the challenges of working on a statewide level and are working hard on particularly IT but not only that. We had to put all the human resources systems together; we had to put all the student admin systems together; the finance systems and so on. That has been and continues to be a big undertaking.

In terms of the Polytechnic there has been, as the Premier suggested, a significant challenge for teachers, particularly for those that were college teachers. The polytechnic education model is certainly a greater change for them than the model in the Academy. It is certainly a greater

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change for the TAFE teachers than those that have gone to the Skills Institute. We are working hard on developing that polytechnic education model. We had nearly 300 teachers in Launceston last Friday starting a month of activities on teaching and learning across the Polytechnic. That is with a view to shaping up what we will have that is common across the Polytechnic and then how we will address the regional and individual campus issues and the different cohorts of students issues. I think that the transition of the remaining four senior colleges will almost inevitably be smoother than the start-up of the Polytechnic and the Academy were at the beginning of this year, just because we have learnt a lot through the process. We also have a lot of the systems that we were working to put in place at the beginning of this year now under development, which will make a difference.

Mr WING - Thank you. Mr Premier, you mentioned the overall increase in the number of students at the three institutes, are you able to give a percentage of the increase or decrease in student numbers at the Polytechnic?

Mr BARTLETT - Let me get Jenny to explain that 12 per cent number because then you will know exactly what that 12 per cent is measuring, and that might frame the question.

Mr WING - I would like to know what it is for the Polytechnic alone in addition to that.

Ms GALE - In relation to the 12 per cent figure the four previous college sites - Hellyer, Don, Newstead and Hobart - in April 2008 had an FTE enrolment of 3 470 and now with the combined Polytechnic and Academy there is an enrolment of 3 888. So that is an FTE difference in the positive of 520.3. It is a 12 per cent increase on 2008.

Mr WING - That is on the Polytechnic alone?

Ms GALE - No, that is the combined Polytechnic and the Academy.

Mr BARTLETT - You cannot actually measure the Polytechnic because it did not exist last year. What Jenny is saying is that in those campuses that now form the Academy and the Polytechnic - and there are four colleges that are not part of that - the increase in student numbers in those campuses has been 12 per cent across the Academy and the Polytechnic. There is one thing I would say about the split-up: Where I think we are headed in the long term - and Mike might disagree with me on this - is about a split of 70:30 meaning that the Polytechnic would cater for about 70 per cent of students and the Academy for about 30 per cent of students statewide. The reason I say that is that the Academy is focused - and I will ask Mike to talk a bit about the interaction with the universities - on channelling our students to the university and best preparing them for the university.

One of the things that is working very well that I will ask Mike to talk a bit about is the relationship with the university. Daryl Le Grew used to say to me that what is really hard about lifting university student numbers - people coming in to do bachelor degrees and go on, so his throughput - is that if you wanted to form a relationship with anyone to create better pathways he had to go and deal with eight institutes - in fact, nine because there was TAFE as well. Now he knows who he deals with - he deals with Mike and Belinda because there is a pathway to university from the Polytechnic as well. Mike can give you some statistics about a whole range of Academy students doing first-year university courses while they are at the Academy and a whole range of university lecturers coming back and delivering in the Academy. So those linkages are starting to work and there is one point of contact - Daryl Le Grew meets with Mike Brakey, and

those things happen statewide. I will go back to the 70:30 split because I think it is now about 50:50, is it not?

Mr BRAKEY - It is 60:40.

Mr BARTLETT - But my view is if we were to take our university qualification numbers to the national average - currently I think we are at 19 per cent and the national average is 24 or 25 per cent - then 25 per cent of young people would be getting a bachelor degree effectively. Therefore about 30 per cent going through the Academy directly on to get a bachelor degree would be about the right numbers, and about 70 per cent of kids is about the right number to be doing a para-professional, vocational or trade course. That largely is the area that we have not been catering well enough for in the old system.

Mr WING - So for the reasons you have mentioned, I take it that you are not able to give a percentage increase or decrease separately for any one of the three institutes because none of them existed?

Mr BARTLETT - They did not exist last year.

Mr WING - Yes. How many apprenticeships were awarded in 2009 compared with 2007?

Mr WHITE - Firstly, because the Skills Institute does not operate on a calendar, semester or term model, the apprentice is signed up whenever the employer employs them, so the keeping of statistics is a little bit problematic in that regard, considering our newness. However, I can give you a strong indication. Firstly, 2008 was possibly an aberrational year in terms of the training of apprentices in that the economy was very strong, so we had very high numbers. Nevertheless, just on the figures we have taken at the end of May compared to late last year, if we take a snapshot of the number of apprentices in training in November and the number of apprentices in training at the end of May, it appeared we had a 6-8 per cent increase. It is granular in that it is in some areas and not others. As you can imagine anything to do with mining and metals is down. However, construction, particularly plumbing and electro-technology is up. I can give you those percentages if you wish.

Mr WING - I am asking for numbers in this case not percentages - the number of apprenticeships awarded in 2009 compared with the number in 2007. It may not be possible to provide them just now.

Mr WHITE - I can certainly take that on notice. Also whilst we train the majority of apprentices and trainees we do not train them all. I can give you the 1 June numbers, would they be of interest to you?

Mr WING - Numbers for 1 June 2009?

Mr WHITE - Yes. We had contracts of training, which is the proxy for apprentices, 6 624 trainees and apprentices. If you like, I can break them down by skill areas.

Mr WING - Into trainees and apprenticeships?

Mr WHITE - No, I do not have that figure.

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Mr WING - Could you provide that later?

Mr WHITE - Absolutely.

Mr WING - Thank you. And then for 2007?

Mr BARTLETT - He has statewide commencements.

Mr WING - Thank you. I do not mind who provides them.

Mr WHITE - We train a high proportion of the apprentices and trainees in the State but not all of them.

Mr SAYER - The 2009 commencements are not in yet but I can tell you the last couple of years if you want.

Mr WING - All right, 2008 then.

Mr SAYER - In 2008 we had 8 500 commencements in apprenticeships and traineeships and the year before 2007 it was 7 900 commencements and 7 400 commencements in 2006. So there has been quite steady growth there. In terms of the numbers in training, it has been around the 13 000 mark for 2008 and 2007 and growth from 2006.

Mr WING - Thank you very much. Has there been any increase or decrease in the number of non-government school students studying at the Polytechnic - or polytechnic subjects?

Mr BARTLETT - Mike or Belinda might be able to answer that. I know that anecdotally there was some evidence of some swing out of the grade 10 Catholic system, particularly in the north-west, into the Tasmania Tomorrow system. I would put that down to a wider array of choice that we are able to offer.

Mr WING - Are there any figures?

Mr BARTLETT - Do you have any statistics on that?

Ms McLENNAN - I do not have any figures on that. I could possibly find out. It depends on the accuracy of the information that the individuals provide.

Mr WING - Thank you. That is all non-government school students, including the Catholic students, but not limited to that. On the question of staff, has there been any increase in retirement of staff or workers compensation claims, resignations or other separations among the staff in either the Polytechnic or the Academy since they have been functioning this year?

Ms McLENNAN - I can give you figures on WorkCover or workers compensation. The figures on workers compensation are across the three entities. We have had seven staff who have accessed our employee assistance program.

Mr WING - From which of the three?

Ms McLENNAN - From the Polytechnic, Academy and Skills Institute together.

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Mr WING - You do not have them separate?

Ms McLENNAN - No, I do not have them separate.

Mr WING - Could you provide them separately later?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes. We have had 20 claims for workers compensation, six of those were stress-related and of those six stress-related claims, only four were from teachers across the three entities. We will get you a breakdown.

Mr WING - They are the numbers this year. And also resignations or other separations?

Ms McLENNAN - I think we will take that on notice.

Mr WING - Thank you.

CHAIR - On resignations, do you do exit interviews?

Mr LUTTRELL - We do not do them centrally.

Mr WING - Could I give notice I am asking whether there has been any increase or decrease. I appreciate the figures we have had so far but I would like an indication whether they are greater than normal or fewer than normal.

Mr LUTTRELL - We do not do exit interviews centrally but that is not to say the staff or managers do not conduct an exit interview at the time of resignation.

Mr BARTLETT - Mike is a former college principal and therefore might be able to provide some anecdotal commentary on this.

Mr BRAKEY - I do not think that the numbers that we have provided when compared to previous years in my college principal role would indicate either an increase or a decrease. Certainly from the Hellyer campus perspective, there is no change and certainly from the Academy principal's point of view and what they are reporting to me, no increase in resignations for any purpose than we would normally expect given the age profile of our work force. Anecdotally I would be confident that if we explored those figures further we would find that this year is very similar to previous years when the colleges were in operation.

Mr WING - Yes, but you will provide us with some comparison at a later time. On that same theme, have there been any significant officials in the Tasmania Tomorrow implementation team who have retired or resigned recently or this year?

Mr BRAKEY - Not from an academy perspective.

Ms McLENNAN - Ron Nash, who is the principal at Hobart College, was a part-time member of the implementation team and is now a director of student support and development in the Polytechnic. He has indicated he will be retiring at the end of July.

Mr WING - He is the only one, is he?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes.

Mr WING - What has been the impact of non-registered teachers on the support required for students in the polytechnic environment?

Ms McLENNAN - I will perhaps start by briefly explaining that the Polytechnic is a registered training organisation, which means that it must comply with the Australian Quality Teaching Framework which is a national quality assurance framework. So that has certain requirements in it about all of the staff in the Polytechnic and their qualifications. In terms of impact on the way that students support them, I do not think there would be any difference in the way they were supported from how they were previously in TAFE or in the colleges with most of the same staff in the same roles.

Mr WING - With particular reference to non-registered teachers?

Ms McLENNAN - The teachers that came into the Polytechnic from the colleges were registered because they came from the college system. Those that are not registered are complying with the Australian Quality Training Framework in terms of their minimum qualifications that they require and the supervisory arrangements that go with them. I do not know there is any difference between them.

Mr DEAN - One of our colleagues raised this matter last week during the Budget speeches. There were a lot of problems being experienced partly in the movement between campuses. He was specifically referring to Hobart and I think also the Rosny College where they were able to move from one campus to another to take on their special training that was necessary, getting to one area and not being able to get transport back. I think it was happening to teaching staff as well. There was a lot of confusion in that regard. Is that happening? If it is, what is being done to correct it?

Mr BARTLETT - I am not sure exactly what you are referring to and I will ask Belinda to comment after I have made some opening comments. Rosny College is not part of the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms as yet. One of the challenges in this implementation - because change is a difficult thing - is that we must be diligent not to apportion problems to a new system that existed anyway in the old system. In fact, I am convinced that this new system when fully implemented will provide much better mobility for students between various disciplines, between courses, between enrolments and so on. I will give you the example that I have used on many occasions: the young fellow I met out at Claremont. Claremont College and Claremont TAFE are literally separated by one brick wall. This young fellow said to me that he had spent a year and a half at Claremont College and it took him a year and a half to find his way, with all the assistance available and all the advice and all the rest of it, over the wall to Claremont TAFE to do the course he actually wanted to do. There was very poor mobility between the college and the TAFE system previously. I am talking about changing courses and so on. This implementation will reduce those barriers massively over a period of time. In terms of physical mobility - bussing between campuses or whatever the case may be - that situation would be no worse than what it was last year. It may not be any better but certainly transport has been raised with me by students as an issue but a lower order issue than some of the other issues they have talked about.

Mr WING - Some of the issues that were brought to my attention were the movement in my area between the Newstead campus polytechnic and academy to I think the campus in Alanvale.

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There were difficulties being experienced there with movements of students. The area down here referred to has been Claremont - transportation between New Norfolk and Claremont.

Mr BARTLETT - Those are issues that have existed in the old system. I think we need be to really careful. I recognise that student transport is one of the significant factors in improving our retention. It is a funny thing in Tasmania. The kids I talk to who live in Ulverstone say to me, 'I want to get to one of the campuses at Burnie or at Don but if I miss the 8 a.m. or the 8.30 a.m. bus the next bus is not until 12.30 p.m. and why would I bother getting on the bus'. Then they have missed three days and then they drop out. What is absolutely clear from the statistics we are seeing is that there is a much lesser dropout rate in the new system than in the old system. There were all these predictions in the media and plenty of politicians feeding these predictions that at Easter we would have this massive dropout from the new system. Well, in fact the reverse was exactly true. The issue of transport I know well between New Norfolk and Claremont College, which is not part of the new system at all, by the way, has existed for some time. I used to deal with David Hamlett, the principal at New Norfolk High, about these issues. He explained to me two years ago that he knows of 50 kids sitting at home not studying because in winter the bus trip from New Norfolk to Claremont at 7 in the morning is hellish. They drop out and they do not do it. So we have to find solutions to it that. But what I am saying is we should not be apportion the problems that we have in this State around a whole range of things that relate to post-year 10 education to all of a sudden being the fault of the new system for some reason. I think there is a great danger in that. I am certainly not accusing anyone on this committee of that but there is a political desire to do that because it suits a political argument at the time.

Mr DEAN - It does not fit my argument.

Mr BARTLETT - No, I know that. I certainly was not making that comment about this committee. But having said that, I would be very happy for Belinda and/or Mike to talk about some of those student issues around transport because they are things that we need to deal with.

CHAIR - I will be bold and provide some *Hansard*.

Mr BARTLETT - I listened to the speech the other day.

CHAIR - Okay. Maybe the department might like to see it because they are significant issues and as a committee we felt that they ought to be noted.

Mr BARTLETT - Absolutely.

Mr DEAN - Sorry, so you are saying there are no problems -

Mr BARTLETT - No-one is saying there are no problems.

Mr DEAN - There are not insurmountable problems, any issues arising, say, between the Newstead College and Alanvale? All of that is in place, the transport is there?

Ms McLENNAN - I would not suggest that there are no problems and certainly we have had quite a few discussions during the year with transport providers about the availability of buses. What we do have across the three entities is 12 buses and 104 passenger vehicles to move staff and students around. But my view - and I would thin, Mike's - is that particularly for younger

students as much as possible we try to provide their programs on the campus they are enrolled in. However, they are also developing adults who need to develop life skills such as those that you would find in having to get yourself around on time. So there are students that have the opportunity to be able to move around campuses and particularly if they want to pick up something that is particularly unusual, we try to facilitate that happening, even if it is on another campus.

Mr BRAKEY - I think the transport issues are more of an indication of our attempts to broaden student choice rather than an issue goaded by the change in that at Newstead College in 2008 students in VET would have had just the VET choices that were able to be accessed on their own campus with limited access to the facilities that might have existed say at Wellington Square or at Alanvale. Whereas this year students do have access to those other two campuses to have courses and with it may have come some attendant transport problems but they are actually being caused for a pretty good reason and that is to give them the opportunity to study programs that they have not been able to study in the past.

Mr FINCH - Premier, I want to underline something you mentioned in the introduction to the Polytechnic in respect of IT and give you some feedback of what I have had from the northern parts of Tasmania. We heard a lot last week about the millionth word in the English language and it is web 2. Tasmanian Polytechnic students cannot have open access and they have no access to web 2 technology. Just some feedback on the issues they are dealing with.

Mr BARTLETT - That is interesting because web 2 technology includes Facebook and I get Facebook messages all the time from Polytechnic students telling me what they are doing, where they are going and what their issues are.

Mr FINCH - On the subject of IT this is some feedback I have had. Fifteen to 45 minutes every morning for lecturers and staff to access e-mail and other services. Students cannot configure their laptops into the polytechnic area network service. Polytechnic students have to go home to access it because they cannot have open access at school. That is feedback. Can you tell us when Tasmanian Polytechnic students will be able to move into the twenty-first century and have access to web 2 technology?

Mr BARTLETT - I dispute that they cannot have access to web 2 technology because in fact I got a Facebook message from a guy at the Polytechnic campus in Burnie just today while we were in this committee. It was from Facebook, which is a web 2 technology. Admittedly he was e-mailing me to complain about the CAD system he was working on in the class at the time.

Mr FINCH - But it was from the campus, it wasn't from home.

Mr BARTLETT - It was from the campus. He was complaining about a particular IT issue so I will not deny that. But I will ask Tony Luttrell, who is the general manager of the shared services unit. As I said, we fully recognise there have been some implementation issues with IT but more to the point what the gentleman was messaging me about today was to say that it was no better than last year when he was at TAFE, to which my response to him will be 'No, it is not yet.' The technology that he had in his TAFE class chances are it is exactly the same technology he has in his Polytechnic class now. He's doing the same qualification and the same course in the same classroom, with a different sign over the door but essentially it's the same, and miraculously he expected that all of a sudden all of this would change.

[5.30 p.m.]

I can tell you that I have a clear view that we need to invest much more in both student systems or support systems like HR and finance, but much more in teaching and learning systems in IT as well and we will be doing that, there's no doubt about that, because one of the areas of engagement that I believe we can use much better is using technology like this and I-Pods and whatever that every young person has to deliver their lectures, their lecture notes, their learning items to them, and we can do much better at that but that will take months and years to invest in; things don't change overnight. Having said that I will ask Tony to talk about some of the challenges and where we're at in terms of overall IT implementation.

Mr BRAKEY - Before Tony speaks, there is an educational debate around social networking and it is one that is not resolved. With things like Facebook, the question that educators would raise is where is the inherent educational value in social networking? We're providing IT services to students for their education and some would argue that spending hours on Facebook social networking with friends - even if some of their friends include the Premier -

Laughter.

CHAIR - I don't think that gentleman's a friend.

Mr BARTLETT - I'm working on it.

Laughter.

Mr BRAKEY - might not be the best use of the resources. So I think in a sense we've hung back from some of that technology until we can get our heads around that debate because we want to be able to use things like Facebook for those educational purposes; in other words, to facilitate better learning communication on campuses rather than just social networking. So I think that debate will rage and will go for some time, accepting that it is probably inevitable that we will move into that technology.

Mr LUTTRELL - My understanding is that there will be initially some concerns around the access to the Web - that was when the students first came back. My understanding is that that has now been resolved, but in talking about that it's worthwhile understanding that we've inherited about 3 500 computers ranging in ages from current 2009 models to ones which are seven years old, so some of the computers in the labs have limitations. I think you have referred to log-on times and the like, so the capacity of the PCs in some of the campuses to have the latest technology is somewhat restricting and we are reviewing the PC replacement policy so that we have a front for replacing computers that students use and we then have replacement computers for teachers to support those students and then that flows through to the support group areas such as client services and into the rest of support. So there is a real mixture of capabilities across the 19-odd campuses and this will take some time, as the Premier said, to all be on the same age or fleet of current technology.

Mr FINCH - Is there an expectation that the volume of demand by teachers and students will rise?

Mr LUTTRELL - Yes.

Mr BARTLETT - Moore's law of computing says that volume of demand will double every 18 months and that has been the case for 30 years and will continue to be the case. That's why bandwidth goes up and up and a soon as you increase bandwidth it's full. Computing power goes up and up and as soon as you increase it it's full. That's the nature of information technology. I can tell you, though, that over 2009 the Hobart campus will receive 365 new computers; Hellyer campus, 84; Don campus, 273; and Newstead campus, 197. The current ratio of PCs available to polytechnic students is approximately 4.62 students per PC, which I reckon would be the best in the nation or close to it across the TAFE system. Every staff member at 0.8 FTE and over has access to a dedicated PC or laptop and I'm sure that's the only TAFE-style system that would have that. The ICT helpdesk dealt with and closed 5 000 requests from February to June and the number of outstanding requests decreased every month from February to May.

Mr FINCH - Okay. I just wanted to project to you that frustration in respect of delays and lack of access - delays of up to 45 minutes waiting to access the services for students and lecturers.

Mr BARTLETT - If they were using Facebook less there'd be more bandwidth available for work - I think that's what Mike was saying.

Laughter.

Mr GAFFNEY - Premier, I have been following that story in the *Advocate* too and with all due respect, I think most year 10 students when they go to year 11 and find themselves in the common room really appreciate that instead of being back in high school. My question is about strategies. There was some dissatisfaction apparently that at the polytechnics there has been talk of lack of on-ground leadership for some staff because their management might come from another campus that could be some distance away, and I know that's being addressed. I am pleased that funding has been raised through the IT. A relief teacher at Don College and Hellyer said he really enjoys what is happening at polytechnics but wonders what consideration is being given to resourcing and providing new infrastructure and course development for courses in the north-west. It would require some external infrastructure so the educational experience approximates the real world of automotive. What he's saying is that they want to do this stuff but they just don't have the resources to put them into the real world of automotive or construction. I know that's being addressed in the budget figures.

Polytechnic staff coming from colleges feel as though they're not being listened to or supported as much as the staff coming from TAFE; they don't believe they're being heard around the table, but the one that concerns me the most - and I could be wrong here - is that somebody who has been a staff member for 30 years at the Education department has been moved over to the Polytechnic and is now being paid by Tasmania Tomorrow and I have been told that if they now try to apply for a position back in the Academy if one becomes available they may not have permanent status when they go back. One of the issues that has been raised that they have been moved over to the Polytechnic, they teach there, a position comes up in the Academy and -

Mr BARTLETT - I can clear that up. They are permanent public servants employed by the Crown and they have the normal rights and privileges of a normal public servant. It may be the case that like a normal public servant employed in the Department of Primary Industries and Water who moves to the Department of Economic Development doesn't have a position automatically saved for them to go back to and they would have to apply for a position back there

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like any normal public servant process, but there is no change to their employment status due to the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms.

Mr GAFFNEY - Or conditions?

Mr BARTLETT - No.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay, that's fine, thank you.

CHAIR - Would you accept, then, Premier, that there is a lack of communication? If people are getting that message -

Mr BARTLETT - No, I wouldn't necessarily accept that. I think the problem with all of these sorts of changes include a whole range of things. Regarding communication, this is a really interesting one; I always like this one, particularly when I'm dealing with teachers who come up to me in the shop and say, 'We didn't know this was going to happen until we read it in the newspaper' - whatever the issue of the day is - and I say, 'Well, I've had a real attitude that I will tell teachers things before they read it on the front page of the papers', so we send out whole-of-teacher e-mails, for example, so they don't read it first in the paper. 'Oh', they say to me in the shop, 'I'm too busy to read my e-mails; how would I possibly get that?'. So there's communication but it has to work in two ways, doesn't it? You have to be prepared to be communicated with as well. I'm not casting blame, I'm just saying that I don't believe it's necessarily a lack of communication. What I believe it is that through a challenging change period like this, a story like that that you might hear anecdotally and legitimately raise in a committee like this, if I'm not here to cut that off and say it is simply not true, it gains legs and then you have other politicians saying it and before long I get a question in the House from Sue Napier and someone is writing it on the front page of a newspaper. It is not true. There are lot of those sorts of things around the place that gain legs and need knocking on the head. But people need to want to be communicated with and to understand those things.

I also have to say that there are people out there who generally spread misinformation. Recently I heard from a staff member at one of the colleges within the system of someone who e-mailed all his colleagues telling them that this was all a ploy to take away teachers' holiday rights and that if they joined this new system they would lose their entitlement of 12 weeks holiday per annum. That is a complete lie, but because he decided to e-mail that to everyone in that particular college, it went right through the system and all of a sudden it becomes a fact. It is not a fact; it will never be a fact. No existing conditions will be tampered with, except by agreement.

A good case in point is in the Skills Institute, which is an organisation that is deeply aligned with business. What business tells us is that the baker wants his or her apprentices trained at 4 a.m. on the shop floor in the bakery, which means that certain working conditions need to be met to achieve those things. But those things are achieved by agreement with staff who might take home more salary to give up some conditions. It is not a case of joining the Polytechnic and all of a sudden losing your rights. There is a lot of misinformation out there - there is no doubt about it - and there is a range of reasons why people spread misinformation. But I can assure you that that is not the case.

CHAIR - Premier, can you tell the committee how many times the CEOs of the three different parts of Tasmania Tomorrow have visited their campuses?

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Mr BARTLETT - You can ask them that. They are all sitting here.

Ms McLENNAN - I would not be able to tell you unless I went back to my calendar because there are so many.

CHAIR - Six, seven, five?

Ms McLENNAN - Well I have 14 campuses and it would be at least five visits to each, I suppose, except to a couple of the smaller ones like Bender Drive and Claremont.

Mr BARTLETT - So in the dozens - 60-odd.

Mr DEAN - Seventy that would make it.

Mr BRAKEY - I live on one of the campuses so I am usually there at least once a week and would visit the other three campuses at least once each fortnight.

Mr WHITE - The same - I am on a campus and it would be weekly.

CHAIR - It is interesting when we hear stories like that from members that, when there is such close contact, we still seem to have a communication breakdown. It means they are not reading their e-mails.

Mr BARTLETT - I will also give the example that I have spent a bit of time, not a huge amount of time, visiting campuses unannounced.

Mr WING - Anonymously.

Mr BARTLETT - That is a bit hard to do these days, unfortunately - just talking to students. But I have noticed that once I get there, it goes through the place like wildfire and the students come to me and want to have a chat. After one of the visits I did get a very grumpy e-mail, 'Well, you didn't tell me you were here. How could I possibly...' and all that sort of stuff. The reason I go unannounced - though it is not unannounced because I ring up the day before and I say that I am coming - is that I do not want it to turn into an official visit where you are shepherded through the corridors to see only the things that you would want me to see. I want to see the things that I want to see.

Mr WING - Premier, you are probably aware that the Catholic Education Office have some concerns and some questions, and the following are included in the questions that they have. The first one arises from statements that you and the secretary have made that there will be access for non-government students to the Polytechnic. The question is: What is the Premier's definition of 'access' in his promise to non-government students for access to the Polytechnic?

Mr BARTLETT - It is a broad question and we would need to get down into details. But I have had a conversation with the Catholic Education Office along the way about this. I would put it on a cost-recovery basis. The Catholic education system is a bit different but to a high fee-paying private school I think it would be reasonable for there to be some sort of cost recovery involved with students accessing services from the Polytechnic. I will ask Belinda and maybe Malcolm to update you on this but I know that, during the TAFE years, TAFE and the Australian

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Technical College signed up to an MOU which allowed them to share curricula, share floor space, share resources and so on. I imagine the Polytechnic is heading down the same path.

[5.45 p.m.]

Mr BRAKEY - The Academy has an arrangement with independent and Catholic schools on some campuses. That is on a cost recovery basis of \$750 per 150-hour course taught. So they have come from their independent or Catholic campus to the Academy campus to undertake those studies, and that dollar amount has been in place for a number of years.

Mr WING - Yes, they have not asked about the Academy side. I do not think there is a concern there. They have a particular concern which will become apparent later about the Polytechnic fees.

Ms McLENNAN - In terms of the Polytechnic we have quite a range of arrangements in place that are very similar, regardless of whether it is a Catholic college, one of the other colleges that has not yet come into Tasmania Tomorrow or in fact from the schools in order for them to be able to access vocational education and training programs.

Mr WING - Yes, I am asking on behalf of all non-government schools.

Ms McLENNAN - The cost is \$112.92 per hour.

Mr WING - An hour?

Ms McLENNAN - For the provision of the program.

Mr WING - That is per student?

Ms McLENNAN - No, for the provision of the hour of teaching, so it could be a group of students.

Mr WING - I see. Given that at present by law some courses can only be offered by the Government, does the Premier agree that it is only fair that non-government students have reasonable fee rates?

Mr BARTLETT - I presume that is referring to the fact that some of the trade areas are quarantined and only go to the Skills Institute. But we are lifting those quarantines. Mark might be able to say more about that.

Mr SAYER - A decision was made around the quarantining of some trade qualifications, and those include automotive, metals, agriculture -

Mr BARTLETT - That does not actually make sense either, because that would only be for apprentices who have employers and therefore would not be in the Catholic education system. So I cannot think of anything that by law they could not offer themselves.

Mr WING - But this is not only the Catholic Education Office students but all non-government. They are asking on behalf of all the non-government students.

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Mr BARTLETT - I cannot think of anything other than they would need to meet the Australian quality framework around registered training organisations to deliver some courses. But that is not by law that they could not do that -

Mr SAYER - The funding we provide is not for school students. It is for employees.

Mr WING - The substance of the question is: Do you agree that it is only fair that non-government students have reasonable fee rates?

Mr BARTLETT - Of course.

Mr WING - I doubt if you would ever suggest that they have non-reasonable -

Mr BARTLETT - I am a reasonable man. I would not say they should be unreasonable.

Mr WING - We will come to that in a moment, because you may not be aware of the fee increases. Has the Polytechnic increased fees for the non-government students without negotiation when students are already enrolled? And has there been a repudiation of the arrangement that previously existed with TAFE?

Ms McLENNAN - There has been a change in the level of fee charged. We only charge on a cost-recovery basis, and the salary increases for our teachers that have ensued since TAFE negotiated those fees have now meant that those fees have increased.

Mr WING - Even when there has been a prior agreement with TAFE on a different level of fees. That is so, is it?

Ms McLENNAN - There may have been an agreement with TAFE, but those agreements need to be renegotiated with the Polytechnic.

Mr WING - I gather that there have been some increases in fees from previously agreed fees with TAFE without negotiation with the non-government school students.

Ms McLENNAN - I am not aware of those specific instances.

Mr WING - Does the Premier believe that this is a fair process when fees to non-government students studying at the Polytechnic have been increased by 63 per cent when wages for teachers and lecturers have increased by only 19.15 per cent prior to this year? I do not know if you have been aware of that, Mr Premier.

Mr BARTLETT - I gather this is a bit of catch-up and that we have not applied CPI or renegotiated for a number of years. As I said in my opening comment, this should be done on a cost recovery basis, and the new fees represent cost recovery.

Mr WING - But I just wonder how you expect to achieve an increase in retention rates with a 63 per cent increase in fees for a certain range of students?

Mr BARTLETT - As I said, we have to do this on a cost recovery basis. What appears to be the case is that we have not been doing that for some reason and we have let it slip. We have re-benchmarked that at a cost recovery basis. We cannot afford to run these things at a loss either.

Mr WING - I take it that it is accepted that there has been a 63 per cent increase?

Mr BARTLETT - You are talking about non-government students, but those increases have applied across the State to State schools and Catholic schools. It is not different for the non-government schools.

Mr WING - A 63 per cent increase?

Mr BARTLETT - The increases or the current cost recovery rates are no different for State school students than for non-government school students.

Mr WING - In view of the fact that this whole scheme is based largely on increasing the retention rate, has any consideration been given to making the increase transitional rather than a sudden 63 per cent?

Mr BARTLETT - I would say that in the future it should be transitional. That is one of the problems when you do not increase things regularly. We get a whack every year when we increase things by CPI, but that is much better to do than wait for six years and not do anything and then do this sort of increase.

Mr WING - Substantial increases are never popular - parliamentary salaries, school fees or whatever - and transitional is much more.

Mr BARTLETT - Much better - agreed.

Mr WING - Can there be any variation in this substantial increase?

Ms McLENNAN - The increase is a cost recovery increase only. It does not include any profit margin or any organisational overhead in fact for the Polytechnic to provide those programs. So we are still subsidising them in a way. From here on, what we will do is link it to CPI and salary increases that we have.

Mr WING - Is there any consideration of having the substantial increase to try to encourage students at non-government schools to relocate totally to the Polytechnic to increase the numbers there?

Mr BARTLETT - I think they will do that via choice because they have access to a program or a course in the Polytechnic that they do not have at their own school as opposed to a cost driver.

Mr WING - Because most of them would be studying only some subjects. They would be very much part time and just selecting particular subjects that may not be available at their schools.

Ms McLENNAN - If I can just clarify that: What I have been referring to is the fees for students who are either at college or at school who want to undertake a VET subject that is not available at that school. However, if they individually want to come and enrol in a subject at the Polytechnic outside of a school arrangement, the same fees apply as apply to anybody else who wants to come and enrol.

Mr WING - It applies the same for all students - full-time, part-time, enrolling through another school or individually?

Ms McLENNAN - Yes.

Mr WING - Thank you. In terms of VET in schools funding, Mr Premier, can you confirm that the total amount of funding for VET in schools to Tasmania from the Commonwealth has been reduced this year?

Mr BARTLETT - Sorry, on that last question, of course the State does also fund non-government schools to the tune of 25 per cent of every student in there as well. It is not like they are not getting that 25 per cent in the other direction as well. I could take that money out of there and reduce these fees, but ultimately it is the same money.

Mr WING - So with the 63 per cent increases you are not trying to match the independent school fees.

Mr BARTLETT - Sorry, back to your question.

Mr WING - Could you confirm that the total amount of funding for VET in schools for Tasmania from the Commonwealth has been reduced this year?

Mr BARTLETT - VET in schools, total funding from the Commonwealth has it been reduced this year?

Mr WING - Has been reduced this year.

Mr SAYER - Yes, it has been reduced. The reason is that with the negotiations between the State and the Commonwealth there was an agreement that we would get a population proportion amount of the money. In previous years we did far better than that. As part of the new negotiations we received a population share and that did decrease our overall funding.

Mr WING - Has any of the VET funding in schools been redirected to Skills Tasmania?

Mr SMYTH - Yes is the answer to that. The funding that we had previously paid directly to schools for VET in schools, which was around \$3 million, has now been transferred through into Skills Tasmania so that they can pay into the Polytechnic through their MOU so it is skills funding rather than education funding.

Mr WING - Yes, to the extent of \$3 million, you say?

Mr BARTLETT - But really all that simply is is rather than the education department providing that directly to schools, it is Skills Tasmania providing that to the providers like the Polytechnic.

CHAIR - Is there a handling fee on the way through?

Mr SAYER - No, it just makes it more streamlined so that we handle all vocational education and training.

Mr WING - Two more questions: Can you confirm that the percentages allocated to each of the sectors represent participation in vocational education and training?

Mr BARTLETT - In the VET in schools budget?

Mr WING - Yes, it is in that context.

Mr SAYER - That they reflect the industry sector profile in Tasmania?

Mr BARTLETT - No, I presume this is the 70:30 split between students in government and non-government schools?

Mr WING - I will read it again because it is not immediately clear what it means. Can the Premier confirm that the percentages allocated to each of the sectors represent participation in vocational education and training? But if it is not clear, we will pass on that.

The last question which I will read: COAG requires embargos on specific VET courses such as building and construction to be lifted. Would the Premier please advise in what year the embargos will be lifted for each relevant course? And in brackets it says 'embargos mean only TAFE, Skills Tasmania or the Government can offer that course'.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, quarantines. I announced in my state of the State speech this year that on 1 January next year we will begin the lifting of quarantines. I suspect we are going to be the first State to achieve that or to go through that process. We are not doing a vertical quarantine lifting as in this trade or this trade or this trade; we are doing a horizontal lifting of quarantines so that the first apprenticeships next year would be contestable. Have I got that right?

Mr SAYER - That is right.

Mr WING - Thank you very much. No further questions.

CHAIR - We will move on to the Tasmanian Academy.

2.3 Tasmanian Academy -

[6.00 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY - I have just one question here. The Academy seems to be going quite well. From what I have heard across the board there does not seem to be major discrepancies or disturbances. The funding seems fine and appropriate for the next three or four years. We were given some extra information regarding the Academy, the Polytechnic and Skills Institute. It is just interesting in the Tasmanian Academy section it has three dot points: First, all students complete year 12 and be fully prepared for university studies, which seems reasonable. Then it says:

All teachers are highly qualified leaders of learning and are committed to excellence and continuous improvement, and the Tasmanian community understand, value and support the Academy's goals.

I thought that was fine. I did expect to see those two dot points reflected in the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute in the commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. It goes back to Malcolm's point about how we perhaps undervalue the esteem of the trades and those students striving for excellence in the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute. I believe there have been times where the community is beginning to think Academy, Polytechnic and Skills Institute. And I think that is how some of the students are starting to see some of the courses outlined. I think that has to be addressed so that all three sectors have a pursuit of excellence, whether it be a trade or whatever.

Mr BARTLETT - I will ask each of the three CEOs to respond to that after I make some opening comments. I am convinced that all three CEOs and boards are committed to excellence. But I am also convinced that each of them will develop their own corporate culture, if you like, over time focused on different styles of teaching and learning. The legislation requires that each of the organisations provide a corporate plan, which I think has been completed and about to be formally submitted to me - one of them has and I think the other two are coming. I think they would be better documents to expand on rather than three dot points in a Treasury document. But I would be happy for the three of them to give you a brief overview of their corporate plan.

CHAIR - If you can be mindful of the time.

Ms McLENNAN - I can be very brief. This is the endorsed corporate plan of the Polytechnic. It hasn't been published yet. I am particularly reminded in your comments of the values that the Polytechnic board has decided to own, and they are to be 'learner centred, connected, innovative, resourceful, accountable and excellent'.

Mr BRAKEY - From our point of view the dot points are actually drawn from our draft corporate plan.

Mr WHITE - You will be very pleased to see excellence is in the corporate plan.

CHAIR - I did ask you to be brief but you could almost have said 'ditto ditto'.

Mr WING - Last year Launceston College had some extraordinarily good HSC results. Among the top 100 students in Tasmania they had 13 or 15 - I cannot recall the exact number. They have been resisting being involved in the new structure. I have not spoken to anybody at Launceston College about this this year, but I am wondering what the future holds there. If they wanted to remain being just an academy-type institution, is it going to be possible for them under the structure and the proposals to remain basically as they are and just be known as the academy; or must they have a polytechnic service on their campus or a Skills Tasmania service?

Mr BARTLETT - We have had some conversations recently about this and I might ask others to talk to it, because in the medium term and longer term where campuses end up and what they end up doing will take two or three years to sort through. But there are some thoughts that yes, Launceston College could potentially be just a simple academy site with a Polytechnic at the Wellington Square site or at Newstead; or you could have the Academy strictly at Newstead and the other bits and pieces. There is a whole range of permutations and combinations that could happen.

Mr WING - I am very pleased to hear that, because it does seem to be an appropriate solution to the attitude that Launceston College has. I would have thought there was a lot of merit in one campus providing just one of the three aspects of the new system.

Mr BRAKEY - We differentiate between the use of campuses and its students. The students that currently attend Launceston College will make a choice to go either to the Polytechnic or to the Academy. And that is a separate process to the way in which Belinda, Malcolm and I might ultimately work out how the campuses in Launceston might be used. One thing about Launceston College not coming in until 2011 is that it gives us a longer lead time to have further conversations about how they set those campuses up and make some decisions with the staff and the communities both at Launceston College, at the Newstead Academy and Polytechnic and at Alanvale Polytechnic and Skills Institute.

Mr WING - I must say that when I first heard about this new structure - the Premier had kindly appointed me and the honourable member for Windermere to the advisory committee in the north - I assumed that the Academy would be on one campus, the Polytechnic on another and Skills Tasmania on another. I assumed that they would have separate campuses. But I do see some advantage in having Launceston College just be an academy and the Newstead College offering the Polytechnic as well as the Skills Institute.

Mr BRAKEY - It comes down to, in terms of the facilities each offer, which are most appropriate. It is a conversation that we are having rather than have had. It is not one that is over yet.

Mr WING - I am very pleased to hear that that is an option if all parties found that to be in the best interests of the students.

Mr BRAKEY - And that is exactly the point.

CHAIR - If there are any other questions in these particular areas, I will move on to 2.4 post-compulsory education in schools.

2.4 Post-compulsory education in schools -

CHAIR - Premier, I believe most of this has been covered in what we have already spoken about. We have spoken about the opportunities and you gave the St Helens area as an example.

Mr BARTLETT - And really all these outputs are deeply interrelated. Yes, I am ready to move on when you are.

2.5 Skills Tasmania -

CHAIR - I know you have been waiting to get back to the table.

Mr FINCH - We have covered it in previous discussions. This is a question through you, Premier, that I would like to ask Malcolm White: if you could give some sort of discussion please in respect of our linking up between enterprises and the business community two bodies developing now with Skills Tasmania. I would be particularly interested in any new areas of expertise or skills that might be becoming evident that we have not developed and worked

towards before that may create new opportunities for apprenticeships and skill training in the future.

CHAIR - That is a question to you, Malcolm, directly.

Mr WHITE - I assume that is okay with the Premier.

CHAIR - It is okay with me.

Mr WHITE - May I respond with an example: a new initiative this year has been to train people in what is called the licensed skills. You would be aware there are a number of skills for which you require a ticket and they are generally considered to be hazardous occupations. We have commenced a new initiative in year and it will be shortly featured on television which seeks to train people in those areas which are very necessary for our industry. That has received very significant take-up and very significant interest from enterprises in Tasmania. We are very strongly encouraged by that. So that is one area.

Mr FINCH - When you say it is going to be featured on television, do you mean in encouraging people to join?

Mr WHITE - Yes. The reason we are keen on it is that people who have those licence skills are more employable and find good jobs in industry. I am particularly interested in the north-west where there have been some displaced workers that they enter into gaining these licensed skills because their job prospects are increased quite significantly once they have those tickets.

Mr FINCH - You may give me a positive answer here, but I am hoping you will be as honest as you can be. How are you getting a sense of Skills Tasmania's acceptance in the business community as far as their requirements are concerned? Is this the answer to their requirements?

Mr WHITE - TAFE Tasmania had two purposes or two goals: one was career preparation for people who were contemplating a vocational qualification to enhance their careers or enter a career; and the other was workforce skills development. Our part of the world is one of those goals which is work force skills development, and I think the general view of industry - and, indeed, nationally of the Australian Industry Group - is that it is a logical segmentation. It makes sense. It is a clear purpose that industry wants; it is a training partnership between employers, trainers and the students who will be the employees. The principal reason they see it as important is because one of the ways in which you can increase productivity is to increase skills, and also closely tied to that is innovation. I think work force skills development adds to productivity, which adds to the prosperity of an enterprise and of the community.

Mr FINCH - Finally, has anything been recognised that may enable students to stay in Tasmania if a course is developed here rather than travelling interstate to develop their skills?

Mr WHITE - There are very few instances where apprentices travel when there is not sufficient demand here to constitute it. An example I am very excited about is the development of marine skills. You are obviously aware that we have two strong manufacturers here in that and allied areas. I think we are gaining a reputation in particular for the welding of thick plate aluminium and that is spreading well beyond our shores, indeed, beyond the shores of Australia.

2.6 Tasmanian Qualifications Authority -

CHAIR - I have a question. Obviously the budget papers are well noted, Premier, but this one actually has no note and it has a significant decrease. Can you give me an explanation for that?

Mr BARTLETT - Unfortunately the CEO of the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority is about the only person we do not have here, but I reckon Nick May might be able to help us out with that one.

CHAIR - Welcome, Nick. I believe this is your first Estimates experience.

Mr BARTLETT - Is that right?

Mr MAY - No, I was here yesterday.

CHAIR - His first enjoyable Estimates experience.

Mr MAY - That's right; I've seen both extremes now. The simple answer is that it is simply a result of the budget management strategies that have been applied.

CHAIR - What will we be diminished in the way of services in this particular area? Is it just wages?

Mr BARTLETT - Again it is travel, management positions and those sorts of things and it will be up to the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority to determine how they make that saving. Unfortunately we do not have anyone here from the TQA but if you want to put it on notice, I am sure I could get a written answer to how they intend to deal with it.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mark is going to jump in.

Mr SAYER - I think I could answer. Skills Tasmania has a very close relationship with the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority we work with them to develop quality standards for institutions like the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute when we are purchasing vocational education and training. That provides an opportunity for the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority to do some commercial work and we would employ them to do that. I think some of that shortfall could certainly be made up by some additional commercial activity that they will get involved in.

CHAIR - So this will really put them on notice to go out and seek some additional opportunities.

Mr SAYER - I'm not saying that.

CHAIR - Perhaps the Premier will say that.

Mr BARTLETT - I would prefer to take it on notice because I do not know enough about it.

[6.15 p.m.]

CHAIR - Thank you. As I said, everything else is well noted in the papers but that had no note to it.

2.7 Grants and financial assistance -

Mr DEAN - I wanted an explanation. If you look at footnote 6 it says the decrease here is due to the cessation of assistance for group schemes in 2008-09. If we go across the page to 2.7 grants and financial assistance, it says this funding is for a number of things plus group schemes for apprentices and trainees. Where is the difference here? What is the position?

Mr MAY - The situation there is that at a point in time when the budget papers were prepared, we had not received final confirmation of the continuation of the group schemes. Since these budget papers have been prepared, that money has been reinstated, so there will actually be an adjustment to the budget and therefore the decline that is showing from 2008-09 to 2009-10 will be reinstated.

Mr DEAN - Okay; I thought there would be a plausible explanation somewhere along the line. Some students are upset with some of their living-away-from-home allowances and you might want to cover that, but I want to go into a situation that was brought to my attention on the weekend before last by a very upset and annoyed parent from George Town who came to me with their son who currently has to travel to Alanvale to undergo a part of his music course. He is currently paying I think it is about 69c per bus trip, which is reasonable either way -

Mr BARTLETT - I'm happy for you to ask the question but I'll just tell you that unfortunately you will have to ask it of the DIER minister.

Mr DEAN - I thought there might be some allowances here, though, because it is for training purposes.

Mr BARTLETT - The grants are all run out of DIER in transport issues, if that's where you're going.

Mr DEAN - It is. I would have thought it might have fallen under financial assistance for students attending.

Mr BARTLETT - Transport concessions are under DIER.

Mr DEAN - I will have to ask them, then.

CHAIR - It was worth a try because it is a big issue.

Mr DEAN - Yes, it was worth a try because it is a big issue. It is going up to \$5.90 that he has to pay each way. There have been some issues raised here with the support and living-away-from-home allowances and all of those issues. What are we doing in that area? Are we trying to retain kids at school into these programs and so on?

Mr BARTLETT - This is back in the 1.5 output group and what you are referring to is that there has been some debate, I think, about the Federal Government's approach to this, but in State Government terms we have only increased by 33 per cent the student assistance scheme. It is the Commonwealth loan that has been getting some heat.

**Output group 3
Community Knowledge Network**

3.1 Information services and community learning -

Mr BARTLETT - I thank Mark Sayer and I welcome Siobhan Gaskell, Director of the Community Knowledge Network, which incorporates online access centres, the State Library and branch libraries et cetera, Adult Education, the Tasmanian Archives and the Heritage Office.

CHAIR - I will start on this one because I have a couple of questions about the table in this particular area. Premier, this relates to the performance information that relates to this output group. The explanation for the performance measures for the number of heritage documents and artefacts publicly available in digital format says that the measure will be reviewed in 2009-10. It is clear from this explanation that the performance measure is not very useful as a performance measure. Why has it been chosen in the first place and how long will the review take?

Ms GASKELL - I am trying to think back to the history of it.

CHAIR - It is table 3.8 - heritage documents and artefacts publicly available in digital format.

Ms GASKELL - I guess we are looking to review it because you can have any range of items digitised. You can digitise a photograph and you can do convict records, which can be a really expensive item, so how you count that and how you represent it is difficult. I guess on one level it is about obviously wanting to see an increase over time because we want to put into digital format more than is available for Tasmanians to access and indeed globally.

CHAIR - How long will the review take?

Ms GASKELL - It probably gets down into the technical. We would like to get that resolved pretty quickly so that we have a better measure of that. There are other cultural institutions too that have this sort of thing as well so it is about trying to find other solutions in a way that we can then compare that activity, particularly in the museum and art gallery here but also in interstate institutions as well. We would look to get that going in the next couple of months.

CHAIR - So we can expect a more meaningful performance measure in place by next year's Estimates?

Ms GASKELL - That one is a Tasmania Together project, so we do need to work in with that process as well to get any change in that. It will take a bit of time to work through that process.

CHAIR - I noticed that the Tasmania Together targets of identified areas was fairly reduced this year. It is down to only 15 target measures so it will be interesting to see whether they will look at that particular area.

Mr BARTLETT - There is still a comprehensive suite of targets underneath. The 15 may well be the key ones.

CHAIR - It has dropped considerably, if I recall, from about 25 back to 15, so it will be interesting. Looking through the papers I thought that needed some attention so I am glad that is

happening. Obviously there will be some questions about Adult Education. Mr Finch, I think you deserve the lead.

Mr FINCH - Premier, I am wondering if you can apprise me of your developments in respect of Adult Education. I know it became quite an issue. You addressed it and gave some assurances in respect of the future of Adult Education and where it is placed in our learning community. Perhaps you could apprise us of where we are at.

Mr BARTLETT - I appreciate the opportunity because I think there has been a lot of misinformation about Adult Education and that it is somehow under threat. Yes, there are organisational changes around Adult Education but let me explain why those are occurring first and then give you some statistics to debunk this myth that people are trying to whip up here.

The organisational changes are as a result of a strategic approach that we took after I became minister. I am happy to own these changes because they will make a significant difference to information, knowledge and learning available to all Tasmanians. If you go back to the chart I handed out this morning, in this part which is about access to information, access to knowledge and access for second-chance learners in the community, that is what this section of Estimates effectively is all about.

What was happening before these changes is that we had 66 online access centres delivering online access centre programs. We had a whole bunch of Adult Education sites delivering Adult Education - in very few sites, by the way. We had 50-odd branch libraries delivering library information and we had Heritage and Archives offices delivering Heritage and Archives information. All of the assets that those organisations have are knowledge and information assets that, in my view, should be available anywhere you want to get them in Tasmania - and this is the utopia - whether that is on your PC at home or on your wireless modem device you carry around in your pocket.

Mr FINCH - Web 2.

Laughter.

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, and via web 2 technologies at your local online access centre in your small town - in Beaconsfield at the online access centre, at Scottsdale at the new LINC we are building. Indeed, if a school makes available a room for an Adult Ed class they should be available ubiquitously, in my view. What we had was a bunch of organisations delivering in silos, so Adult Ed only delivered in Adult Ed sites, online access centres only delivered in online access sites, libraries only delivered in library sites, et cetera. What we have essentially done and what the Community Knowledge Network does is take all of those knowledge and information assets that Tasmanians own - from library books to the digitisation of our convict records through to the project that you and I are both passionate about but unfortunately the global financial crisis has stopped us from doing it this year -

Mr FINCH - Oh no, surely there's money in here for that.

Mr BARTLETT - in terms of Tasmanian story-telling and histories - all of those assets should be available to all Tasmanians, whether they walk into a LINC or online access centre or library or Adult Education site, in my view. The Community Knowledge Network breaks down all of those silos and enables the best distribution network in Australia when it comes to

information assets to access all of those information assets that we have rather than their just being delivered in silos. That is the conceptual overview of what we are trying to achieve here.

There are a number of factors affecting Adult Education quite outside of that, but I believe it is a good thing that Adult Education courses can be delivered in the traditional way, or might be delivered online through an online access centre, or in a primary school room setting somewhere in Winnaleah or somewhere or other, rather than simply only being available in an Adult Ed centre. There is only an increase in Adult Ed.

What I would also say is that I am increasing the focus on adult literacy. We have the worst adult literacy rates in Australia and we need to shift them. So while we are maintaining the full suite and the full funding and are the only State Government in Australia to provide \$1.8 million of public money - every other adult ed around the country is fully cost recovered by fee-paying students - for pottery classes to massage for couples to whatever other courses you have there in the Adult Ed guides that will continue to come out and be branded as Adult Education, we will also be focusing more attention but not detracting from those things on adult literacy, because adult literacy is what is going to transform the place, not pottery, frankly. But pottery classes for Adult Education will continue.

Mr FINCH - I will be having a massage.

Mr BARTLETT - Correct. Given that is the context we are working in and the \$1.8 million is still going into Adult Education - nothing has changed there - what has changed in the adult education world over a number of years is that universities of the third age and schools for seniors are massively growing around the place, and many people are choosing to go to a U3A rather than enrol in an Adult Education course. But despite that, the number of Tasmanians enrolled in Adult Education in 2008-09 rose by 10 per cent on the previous financial year, so anyone who tells you Adult Education is in decline or I am killing it or it is dying or there is less, the number of Tasmanians who enrolled in Adult Education rose by 10 per cent. It went from 14 529 Tasmanians to 15 910 Tasmanians. This should once and for all put to bed the misinformation that is being spread about this. In the three and a half weeks since the launch of the winter course guide, more than 5 500 enrolments have been taken. This represents some 65 per cent of the total enrolments in viable classes taken over the 15-week period of the 2008 winter program. So within five weeks we are at 65 per cent of the 15-week equivalent of last year. So good, strong enrolments through a good, strong course guide. The winter program offers a range of programs from \$11 courses, with 50 per cent of courses reaching required minimum enrolments or were full as of 17 June. The important thing to note here is that some 30 new classes have been added as well. I hope this allays any fears in anyone's minds about the demise of Adult Education in Tasmania. It is a great frustration to me.

I will also add, because I listened to Tim Cox the other day rabbiting on about the web-based enrolment system, that that is an adjunct. You are still able to send your cheque in if you want to, or enrol by phone if you want to. But for years people like me who have enrolled in Adult Education courses have been saying, 'Where is the web interface?'. Let us face it, 65-70 per cent of people now will be doing their banking via the web and will be doing their bookings. If you want to buy tickets to a show in Melbourne, you would probably go online and do it these days. If want to buy air fares these days you would probably go on line and do it.

Mr FINCH - Get your seat allocation ticket.

Mr BARTLETT - Get your seat allocation, get your ticket and your boarding pass printed out - all of that. What we have done is create this new service for Tasmanians in Adult Education bookings. Somehow the people who are running this campaign have turned that into a negative, even though the existing channels are still there for those people who cannot or do not want to book online.

Mr FINCH - Premier, on reflection, where do you think you went wrong in not taking people on this journey with you?

Mr BARTLETT - On reflection, I think that the people who have been working in Adult Education have been not as exposed to change rigour and improvement as they perhaps should have been in the past.

Mr FINCH - So a good future for Adult Education?

Mr BARTLETT - Absolutely.

Mr FINCH - I hear what you say about the changing world and people needing to embrace technology, but I think it is a reflection here with Adult Education that there are people who are finding it very difficult to make that change.

Mr BARTLETT - But they do not have to make the change; they can still fill out the form and send a cheque; they can still ring up - this is misinformation. I heard people ringing that radio show saying, 'I can't do all these other bookings any more'. It is a lie; it is completely incorrect.

Mr FINCH - What I am probably suggesting is that the information -

Mr BARTLETT - Where do you enrol in Adult Education? You pick up the winter guide.

Mr FINCH - But take the people along with you.

Mr BARTLETT - No, this is deliberate misinformation. I believe it is being run by my political opponents - and I am not including anyone here necessarily in that - but it is deliberate and it is false. The guide has not changed. For two years now they have been accusing me of the demise of Adult Education. But the guide keeps coming out with the same range and number of courses involved. The number of Tasmanians enrolling is increasing, despite massive increases in the University of the Third Age and School for Seniors enrolments as well.

Mr DEAN - Kerry has been bollocked out. I am too frightened to ask you a question now.

Laughter.

Mr BARTLETT - Forgive my passion about this, because it has got to a point where I am deeply frustrated that the media continues to swallow a line that simply is not true. I hope you will join me in assuring Tasmanians that that is the case, based on these facts.

CHAIR - Premier, I was going to congratulate on how passionate you were about Adult Education, so do not apologise. It is good to see. I was one of the members of Parliament who attended the meeting in Launceston at the ... 6:34:50 centre.

Mr BARTLETT - Did you pick up your Tasmanians Against the Pulp Mill propaganda as well?

CHAIR - I actually sat on that information.

Mr DEAN - I have a question but I think it comes under grants and subsidies on the High Street adult education building.

CHAIR - It will come under that. If there are no more questions on the future of Adult Education, which we know is secure, we will move on.

3.2 Tasmania Archives and Heritage Office -

Mr FINCH - Chair, there was something that the Premier mentioned and I think would fit into this particular category - our online oral history digital -

Mr BARTLETT - It absolutely fits into this category, you are dead right. It is a project that I have been committed to. We have been working through the planning of it, and essentially it was supposed to be funded in this budget but it was not funded because of the budgetary constraints we have. But I am deeply passionate about that project. I believe it is a perfect project for the Community Knowledge Network because it links heritage, archives, story-telling, digital collection with online access centres and with an adult ed course. It is all of those things put together, so it is perfect.

Mr FINCH - The report may not have come back to you, but the ABC has agreed to contribute the series of *Kerry Finch's Tasmanians* that I recorded with the ABC some years ago, some 300 oral history interviews, to this development.

Mr BARTLETT - Great.

CHAIR - Is this self promotion?

Mr WING - I do not have any problem with this because it is good to see an increase in the funding in each successive year in view of the great history and heritage that we enjoy here, being the second-oldest State, Hobart the second-oldest city, Launceston the third-oldest city and George Town the oldest town in Australia.

Mr BARTLETT - Is that right?

Mr WING - Yes. They did not realise that until about 10 years ago but they do now and they promote it a little. We have so much history here, unlike the junior States of Victoria founded 35 years later.

Mr BARTLETT - By us.

Mr WING - Yes, that is right. I would like to know what is planned with the increases here.

Mr BARTLETT - Do you want to respond to that, Siobhan? I would add in terms of any increases digitisation is a particular key area. The reason for that is that we have these fantastic

documentary records, and if you have not been to the Archives I can arrange a trip for you, Mr Wing. It is fantastic.

Mr WING - I would really like to do that.

Mr BARTLETT - There are some great assets there. What we want to do, as we have done with the convict records, is digitise them so that again you can walk into your online access centre or pull up your own PC and look these things up without having to go to the Archives Office. Once they are digitised they are available for everybody and those sorts of things.

Mr WING - Very good.

Mr DEAN - You said the same thing last year about going to the Archives Office.

CHAIR - Nobody took up the offer. When we get over this Estimates process we might well have some time.

Grants and subsidies

Mr DEAN - With all the Commonwealth funding that is being made available and, Premier, you made a statement at the beginning that the projects that the State had on the books must be continued and that you cannot use the Commonwealth grants and funding for that purpose in school programs -

Mr BARTLETT - We are into CIP here, by the way. I am happy to go there.

CHAIR - Grants and subsidies beforehand.

Mr BARTLETT - Let me tell you what grants and subsidies is and then we can probably move on from it. It is some hangover money for Australian government investing in our schools; it is Commonwealth grants to non-government schools, it is non-government schools' capital assistance programs, non-government schools grants and non-government schools student assistance. So it is essentially a post box for us to send money off to the non-government schools.

Capital Investment Program -

Mr DEAN - The Adult Education centre in High Street in Launceston is an issue that has been raised on many occasions as to the future of that building. Will money be expended on it? Will it be brought up to a reasonable standard or are there other plans in place for that building?

Ms GASKELL - At this stage there would be scope for improvement on that building but we have not really set a process in place to do anything around High Street or York Street. I think part of the process in establishing the urban LINC and the bringing together of the services of the library, Adult Education and the online access centre in the Launceston area is to look at the facilities in the broad sense. High Street itself will cost a lot of money so I think that whole process is worth investing in or whether there are other options that should be looked at. But whatever we do, we will consult with the appropriate groups. It is really important to do that.

Mr DEAN - I guess they want to be assured that it will not be sold out from under them.

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Ms GASKELL - No. I know the new manager of the Launceston LINC has already met with the groups, particularly the School for Seniors, that meet there to reassure them of that, and that will continue, but as I said, if we look at what we should do with facilities in that area we will obviously consult with all of the relevant parties.

Mr DEAN - The majority of these people are volunteers providing their services to Adult Education and so on and it is critical they be supported.

CHAIR - Premier, in relation to the capital investment program that has been identified there are serious dollars in investment going in, and I would like your comment on whether the Art in Public Buildings policy, given that the GFC at this point in time, could be reviewed because it is 2 per cent contributed by the State. I do not want to single out the Winnaleah High School but their Art in Public Buildings policy will be \$26 800 and I am sure there could be a piece of art put into that building for much less than that. I asked the question yesterday and I ask it again. We could save significant dollars in capital investment just by cutting back in these times if we cut back that 2 per cent policy.

Mr BARTLETT - I would be reluctant to cut it back because I think it has been a really successful program.

CHAIR - I do not dispute that.

Mr BARTLETT - It does add to the utility or amenity of buildings and spaces for kids. I think it is generally a good thing to have good design and art as part of school buildings. It also has an economic impact because it is money that goes to practising artists and keeps them putting food on the table and in a job, gainfully employed. Much of the art I have seen that has come out of this program has been terrific. I do not know who the artist selected for Winnaleah is.

CHAIR - I do not know either; I only used that because I knew how much that piece of art was going to cost. I am just putting it forward to the Government which is looking to make significant savings.

Mr BARTLETT - I don't think we're taking 2 per cent out of the Building the Education Revolution money.

CHAIR - That is why I am putting it to you.

Mr BARTLETT - My answer to you is that I would be reluctant to do a policy change like that. One of the interesting things about the budget, particularly in Education, is that we are not short of capital. In fact, we have the largest capital works budget for Education in the history of Tasmania, I suspect. We are short in terms of recurrent funds but this would not necessarily fix that problem.

CHAIR - My response to that is that people who may lose their job within the public service sector may say, 'If we cut back on significant pieces of artwork in public buildings through this capital investment program we would have a part-time person'. I just put that to you, Premier, on behalf of the people I represent.

Mr BARTLETT - Fair enough.

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Mr FINCH - I have a question about this \$1.8 million for the Beaconsfield early learning and care centre. I was thinking that is not a State Government contribution, it is Commonwealth Government, but it clarified on the next page anyway. They are exciting developments.

Mr BARTLETT - They are fantastic - Child and Family Centres, the LINC's, the Building the Education Revolution. Jenny may wish to add to that.

Ms GALE - In addition to the Commonwealth funding we are also contributing State funding for the Child and Family Centre as part of that complex, so we are capitalising on both the Commonwealth funding and the State funding and through the Building the Education Revolution funding to have a really fantastic Early Years Centre at Beaconsfield, which will be a child-care centre, a Child and Family Centre and an early learning centre through the BER funding. It will be a brilliant complex.

Mr FINCH - Do you have that detail yet as to the State contribution? It is my assumption that this \$1.8 million would be Federal dollars, and then on top of that there is the State Government contribution. Has that been detailed because it might be a nice figure for the State Government to present to the community as to the extent of the State Government's contribution?

CHAIR - I feel sure there has been a media release about it.

Mr ANDREW - It is part of the \$76 million for the Child and Family Centres, with \$27 million for 2009-10. So it is one of those first eight centres.

Mr BARTLETT - It will be a couple of million dollars.

Ms GALE - We are just developing the plan so it is very difficult to put an actual specific cost estimate to the Child and Family Centre but it will be part of that funding.

Mr FINCH - As I say, there has been a major contribution to the site and also the support that has come from the State Government.

CHAIR - Is there any work being done on the next 22 centres before next March?

Mr BARTLETT - The work we are doing on these eight will of course inform our work on the next 22. We did a list of priority centres and picked the first eight.

Ms GALE - We had a list of 14 initially, which was based solely on a needs analysis, from which we picked the first eight. With the Commonwealth funding I think we have now taken that up to 10 centres. We still want to do a bit more analysis on the remaining four but it is likely they will be in the next tranche. The early years interdepartmental committee, which met again I think last week, has now started the process of identifying the next round, which we hope to have to the minister for approval fairly quickly.

CHAIR - Is Bicheno in the next four, Premier?

Mr BARTLETT - I do not know, but I understood that Bicheno was supposed to be in this Federal Budget as a funded child centre. I have not seen whether it is or not. I put Bicheno and Campbell Town as the top two next to Maxine McKew when she was scanning around for Commonwealth-funded projects.

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Ms GALE - The Commonwealth funding has stopped after the first tranche and we have no understanding yet of when that might be resumed, so we are not able to say. We are still looking at the data -

Mr BARTLETT - What is the BER project at Bicheno?

Mr ANDREW - The BER at Bicheno is for some new classrooms and for the multipurpose centre.

Mr BARTLETT - I would not rule it out as a State Child and Family Centre.

CHAIR - So we could hear about that before March next year?

Mr BARTLETT - You never know. I reckon you'll hear a few more before March next year.

CHAIR - That thought had crossed my mind and I am sure other members' minds as well.

Mr DEAN - The Port Dalrymple school, obviously there is expenditure there. It is certainly welcome because there are some very old parts of that school. If you go into that school it takes you back about 100 years and a lot of the brickwork has been eaten away.

CHAIR - Malcolm White is addressing the brickwork problem as we speak. He is training brickies.

Mr DEAN - The next lot of expenditure, I do not know if it is part expenditure to take place in this budget, 2009-10.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - At Port Dalrymple they have a CIP project that is well under way at the present time. That was announced in the last budget. There is also a trade training centre about to be commenced there.

Mr DEAN - The trade training centre, that is being developed as a part of the school, is it?

Mr ANDREW FINCH - Yes, it is on site, and it is also the likely site for the child and family centre.

Mr DEAN - When is the trade training centre likely to be completed by?

Mr ANDREW FINCH - I think it starts in September and is to be completed by 30 June next year.

Mr DEAN - I just want to mention the Invermay Primary School, another one in my area which I think is referred to in there somewhere. A lot of work was done on that school only two years ago by the church group, so obviously this work is outside of that.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - Yes, that was one of those school playground programs that did not really get into the classrooms and structural areas. That was more landscaping and outdoor

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playground equipment. This was high up on the priority lists and got funded for some much-needed classrooms.

Mr DEAN - I would like to take this opportunity to thank Andrew for his support in everything that happened at the Rocherlea Primary School.

CHAIR - Premier, we thank you immensely for your time and for the way you have gone about answering the Committee's questions today. It is appreciated by the staff. I said before and I guess I will continue to say that the work and effort that has gone into putting together the information is a credit to not only the Education department and DPAC but also your Government. With Education being 27 per cent of the State's Budget, it is a significant amount of money. We have been from the kitchen to the music hall today. Premier, you talked about the sausage machine this morning and then conducting the orchestra. On behalf of our Committee we thank you.

Mr BARTLETT - Can I also say thank you for the constructive approach in the Committee. It has been really good to get some of the good policy and challenges and issues we face out on the table. I put on the record my thanks to John Smyth, Secretary of Education, and all the people from Education, and also to Rhys Edwards, Secretary of DPAC, and all the people from DPAC who have done such a great job in supporting me for quite some time now.

CHAIR - I thank the members of the committee.

The committee adjourned at 6.55 p.m.