

Tuesday 24 June 2008 - Estimates Committee B (Bartlett) - Part 3

[7.15 p.m.]

Madam CHAIR - My question is about allied support staff. I believe in the Health arena there are sufficient speech therapists, but that is not the case in the Education department. I am happy to be corrected on that. I would like to know how many speech therapists there are for the regions and also the number of guidance officers and any other allied support staff, as well as whether there are any vacancies at present.

Mr BARTLETT - I can give you the number of professional support staff by headcount or by FTE in the various regions. In the north, there were 16.5 FTE speech pathologists, north west 12, south 9.9, south east 8.8 so a total of 47.2 in April 2008. For social workers, the north had 17.1, north-west 13.4, south 10.2, south east 12.3 so a total of 53. For guidance officers, the north had 13.9, north-west 13.2, south 9.6, south east 14.9 so a total of 51.6 and a total of 151.8 across those professional areas.

There are identified vacancies, both fixed-term as a result of resignations and as a result of variations in workload or to fill in when a person is on leave, such as maternity leave. Vacancies advertised, or vacancies filled via the *Gazette* or Infostream from 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2008, were for permanent speech and language two, guidance officers two, social workers one with total advertised vacancies being five and for fixed-term one social worker. Vacancies filled in that period were permanent speech and language zero, guidance officers two, social workers one for a total of three. For fixed-term we have recruited four speech and language staff in that period for a total of four fixed-term vacancies being filled.

On top of that the \$35 million literacy funding in this Budget will deliver to the schools most in need, essentially the 26 schools where kids are not meeting the benchmarks in literacy, funding for seven new positions in allied professional services.

Madam CHAIR - Could you clarify - and I do not mind if you table a map - what areas your regions described as south and south-east cover.

Mr BARTLETT - We can give you a map from the annual report and I can tell you that for the first time those demarcations line up exactly with the four regions that Health and Police use. For the first time in history these three agencies have four regions which line up, which made a general manager like Liz Banks have an equivalent in Police and one in Health and Human Services who cover exactly the same geographical areas.

Mr DEAN - I take it that questions were brought up yesterday - and, if they were, I am not going to ask them again; I will refer to *Hansard* - on the bullying and assaults on teachers and those sorts of things. Did that come out?

Mr BARTLETT - There was a range of issues around harassment and other things, which was zero and zero in terms of discrimination claims.

Mr DEAN - If it is in *Hansard* there is no need into it.

Mr BARTLETT - But the ones you are talking about were not outlined in great detail yesterday. Under the category of employee conduct effectively, under harassment and bullying

they are broadly in three categories - in school, in libraries and information services, another large part of the department, and in corporate. There was a total of four complaints lodged in 2007-08 to 30 April and they were all in schools, not in the corporate or the library parts. Prior comparisons, last year that number was 14, and the year before that it was 37. I think we have a very good story to tell.

One of the things I said when I became minister is that I wanted a corporate culture that was conducive to a harmonious workplace environment and so on. I think we can show that figures of 37 in 2005-06, 14 in 2006-07, and four this year is a good trend down in those complaints. In the question that you asked in terms of physical threat or otherwise to a teacher by students generally, physical harassment of a teacher, the number of students suspended is 67 in 2007, and physical abuse of a teacher or other staff member is 112 across the State.

Mr DEAN - That is for 2007-08?

Mr BARTLETT - That is 2007. We do not have the data for 2008.

Mr DEAN - Still fairly large numbers there, aren't they?

Mr BARTLETT - They are large numbers. They are basically identical numbers in total from 2006 to 2007, so it hasn't shifted. Essentially it represents 0.1 per cent of students - at 67 - engaged in that sort of behaviour.

Mr DEAN - Is it easier to table a document like that rather than have to refer to *Hansard*.

Mr BARTLETT - I will read it in total and then I will tell you, if you want me to.

Mr DEAN - No need.

Mr BARTLETT - I am happy to provide you with this information and table it - again in the caveat that, as the Auditor-General said, he wanted to take it out of KPIs. He essentially wanted to take it out of KPIs because he does not know whether it is a good KPI - are we trying to increase suspensions or reduce suspensions? There is a balance, isn't there?

Mr DEAN - It is good that you raised it again, I do not see why it should not be a KPI. I would have thought the KPI would have been zero, zero, zero right across all schools - the suspension rate - and I would have thought that would have been the target.

Mr BARTLETT - So there is no threat to kids at all in terms of final disciplinary action in terms of their behaviours - unfortunately that would be the case.

Mr DEAN - Yes, I understand. So if you are able to table it, that would be good but I accept your position on that. Alcohol, smoking and drugs in school, is that an issue and, if it is an issue, what is happening?

Mr BARTLETT - There were 319 students suspended in 2007 for substance and drug related, which would include alcohol, and a vast proportion of those would be alcohol and tobacco.

Mr DEAN - That is large.

Mr BARTLETT - It is trending down from 347 in 2005.

Mr DEAN - Unfortunately a lot of youth are smoking. Is there some strategy in place? Do the schools have any programs in place to target this?

Mr BARTLETT - Every single school that I have ever visited in Tasmania has an approach to smoking and programs to deal with smoking, yes.

CHAIR - Too much pocket money, I would suggest, Premier, if they can afford to smoke.

Mr BARTLETT - This blew up as an issue late last year politically, interestingly enough. When I dug down into the issues that were being raised about a particular child who was smoking at a particular school that I am not going to name, and I talked to the principal direct and understood what he was doing and so on. He explained to me that one of the boys at issue here was living with his father, and the only access his mother had to him was on a Wednesday afternoon when she came by the school to drove off cigarettes for him. So these are the challenges that schools deal with. It is not as simple - particularly if you are not of the mind to suspend people, and smoking is an insidious addiction - as some fluffy and woolly education programs. They are very important, but changing people's behaviour in this regard - changing adults' behaviour in this regard - is extremely difficult. Adults in theory are more rational and likely to accept the evidence around them than adolescents would.

Mr DEAN - The other one - you probably touched on it and I did not see the paper this morning - is that bullying in schools has been the subject of some length -

Mr BARTLETT - We have a comprehensive range of programs that happen in schools, whole-school approaches. For example the positive behaviour -

Mr DEAN - But, Minister, if you have spoken on this yesterday, I am happy to accept it.

Mr BARTLETT - I spoke a bit about that yesterday.

Mr DEAN - Unless you want to add to that?

Mr BARTLETT - No, not necessarily, I was going to launch into the same speech.

Mr DEAN - I accept what you have said.

Mrs JAMIESON - I have a query about the ageing of our teaching staff. What strategies do we have in place because clearly a huge number of them -

Mr BARTLETT - The average age of a Tasmanian teacher is 44.2.

CHAIR - Very young, Minister.

Mrs JAMIESON - But also there are many in their 50s.

Mr BARTLETT - But the average age of an advanced skills teacher or a principal would be 52. You hear a lot about a teacher shortage, and Western Australia is suffering this at the moment

where they cannot get teachers to staff the schools in mining towns and so on. We do not have the same problem here. Last year we had some 400 graduates in teaching degrees come out of the University of Tasmania, yet we had about 169, or about that level, retirements and resignations from the department. So we have an oversupply of teaching graduates in Tasmania. This will change over the next five or 10 years when that average age creeps up, and particularly when the advanced skills teachers and the principals start to retire.

One of the challenges we have is that 75 per cent of our teachers are female, only 25 per cent male, and that number is enhanced by the fact that the policy of previous Governments and public policy in the 1960s and 1970s was that women who left the work force to have children lost their superannuation entitlements. While many of the men can retire at 55, the women cannot, so that exacerbates the imbalance there.

The average age of teachers is 44.29. Teacher head count by age and classification: 2 280 teachers in the 45-54 age bracket; 867 in the 55-64 age bracket and 36 in the 65-74 age bracket. I cannot think of his name now, but I presented one teacher with an award for 50 years of service at Latrobe High just a few weeks ago - was it Tony Dell? Anyway, he was a terrific gentleman. Back to the stats - 1 128 teachers are aged between 35 and 44; 1 093 are aged between 25 and 34; and, interestingly enough, 165 were aged between 15 and 24. I do not think we have any 15-year-old teachers!

[7.30 p.m.]

Mrs JAMIESON - The same in health too. I noticed some 15-year-olds -

Mr BARTLETT - So it is a fairly even distribution curve of age range centred on the 45-54 group. I do not see an age crisis coming in teaching but it is always important to have the right people coming in to the teaching profession. If I see issues - I would not use the word 'crisis' - around teaching as a profession in Tasmania, it is getting the right people to go into the undergraduate degrees to enable us to employ the right people as teachers, the quality teachers. But I think, as I have said at Estimates before, and we are working on solutions with the university for it, over a decade or two across Australia the tertiary entrance requirements for teaching and education degrees have dropped over time. So they are no longer up there with engineering, medicine, pharmacy and so on. There is a much easier entry, so it becomes a choice of last resort for many people and that I do not think does anything for the status of the profession over time.

Mrs JAMIESON - Just off the top of your head, would you know if there are any more senior people going in as undergraduates coming into the teaching profession?

Mr BARTLETT - I will declare an interest here. My sister, who is 44, has just quit full-time employment to go and commence a bachelor of education.

Mrs JAMIESON - There is one at least.

Mr BARTLETT - So there are people who are having career changes. Again not wanting to get too personal about what my sister is doing, but she is a science graduate who has had a career in science and wants to go into teaching. We welcome this with open arms, of course.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

In terms of graduations, a total of 379 graduates came out of the bachelor of education and bachelor of teaching in 2007, 406 in 2006 and 387 in 2005. At 16 April 2008 we have employed 80 of those graduates into the system.

CHAIR - And the rest are waitressing or?

Mr BARTLETT - I would not necessarily say that. Many are working in the child-care sector, early years sector, many travel overseas, many work in the commercial training sector. At 4.4 per cent unemployment there are plenty of opportunities for qualified people to work but they are not being employed as teachers in our system. Many would go and work in the non-government school sector of course.

1.2 Learning Services -

CHAIR - We know what an integral part of the education Learning Services are.

Mrs JAMIESON - Clearly Learning Services are performing a significant role. Is it by any chance clusters by another name?

Mr BARTLETT - No, it is not.

Mrs JAMIESON - We just do not hear of clusters at the moment. When I looked at the map I thought that maybe they were clusters.

Mr BARTLETT - No, clusters still exist as a construct of schools getting together and working on their own professional development and so on. They just do not exist as administrative units any more. There was a significant amount of money - \$3 million to \$4 million - tied up in administrative overhead where there were cluster principals and administrative staff that went along with clusters. While they were doing very good work, that money has now been redeployed into special needs funding for students with special needs, and we believe that money can be spent better in schools than it was being on administrative overhead effectively.

Mrs JAMIESON - According to the map I found, Learning Services are split into four different regions. How do we come to fund them and what is their actual role? Obviously it is quite significant.

Mr BARTLETT - It is. This is part of bringing the services of the department closer to schools and in control of school principals. Each of the Learning Services organisations effectively regional offices, of which we have two general managers of Learning Services sitting in the gallery at the moment - Brendan Kelly in the south-east and Liz Banks whom we have already had at the table in the north. These organisations effectively report to a school improvement board. Each of the four school improvement boards are populated by principals and with two community members as chair and deputy chair - an independent chair and deputy chair, if you like. The reason for establishing these boards some 12 months ago was my view of leading cultural change in the organisation. In education departments all around the world and certainly in this one - in the first year I spent talking to as many people as I could in schools - much of the cultural issues in education are related to the fact that schools say, 'If only the department did a better job in supporting us and delivering the resources that we want, then we could do a better job,' and people in the department say, 'Well, if only those schools could implement the policies,

processes and all the good things that we are doing here, then we would be doing much better.' I am not pointing the finger at anyone. These are the cultural realities of what builds up in education systems when you have a divide between people who work in schools and people who do not work in schools.

What this is an attempt to do with Learning Services and with the important school improvement boards that they report to is to turn the tables. It is no longer the department telling the schools what they should do; it is actually schools because these are boards of principals telling the general managers what they want. It is a bit more complex than that, of course, but these boards are set up to look at the data - for example, the data that is contained in this report and the much more detailed data that underpins that - and arrive at strategies and inform strategies within the whole learning services area that can share best practice and drive improvement.

One of the things to highlight in this report is that it has north, south, north-west and south-east results for each of the key indicators, and of course we have a much richer dataset under this. But it will then cause Liz Banks' school improvement board in the north to say, 'We have an issue of concern in school student retention, why is it that the north-west does not have that same issue? What are the strategies that they are using to employ to address those issues? How can we achieve similar sorts of results?' We have genuinely set them up for improvement, for schools to drive the department into providing the sorts of resources and strategies that they know will improve their performance.

Mrs JAMIESON - The link then with the school associations, so the school associations are at the individual schools which then link back into -

Mr BARTLETT - School associations are related to their own individual school communities and certainly drive policy within their own school communities, yes.

Mrs JAMIESON - Yes, I appreciate that. And that links on then eventually to the learning services.

Mr BARTLETT - Learning Services are needed also to provide the human resources needs of the schools, administer teacher transfers and all those administration efforts that we try to take out of schools so that they do not have that administrative overhead.

Mrs JAMIESON - Which raises the issue that we had in Sprent just recently: would the learning service of the north-west have been involved in that at all?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, very much so.

Mrs JAMIESON - We are just asking how it got to the stage it got to, but anyway we will not go down that track -

Mr BARTLETT - When you get to individual cases, always in education whether you are dealing with a parent of a child on the autism spectrum or whether you are dealing with a grievance about a teacher - this particular teacher has taken this through a proper process; it will be assessed under a proper process; and that is the right and proper thing to do - it makes it very difficult for me as minister to talk about individual cases. When I know that I have a body of information about this and other cases from the department's point of view, it would be unfair of

me to dump that entire body of information in a place like this when that person or other people do not have the right of reply and so on.

Mrs JAMIESON - Yes.

Mr BARTLETT - There is a body of information around this particular case and all cases like this that are a countervailing point to the popular views that get run in the media or by particular interest groups.

Mrs JAMIESON - Thank you very much. Where does distance learning slot into all of this - with learning services, for example - and home education?

Mr BARTLETT - That is a very good question. Each of the learning services also have responsibility - and I know that when we made these changes I talked to the former President of the Legislative Council about what we were going to endeavour to do, and we have done, is move parts of the bureaucracy to the regional areas. Each of the Learning Services areas now around the State have statewide responsibility for various aspects of whole-of-State programs: In the north it is students, so programs related to student programs; in the north-west it is school communities, so engagement of school communities and so on; in the south it is personalised learning; and in the south-east it is curriculum, and included in the south-east is the statewide responsibility for distance education. Each of these regions now have statewide responsibility for various aspects of the education portfolio.

Mrs JAMIESON - Thank you.

1.3 Education performance services -

CHAIR - Premier, I am assuming that this particular glossy, the warts and all report, is part of this particular area.

Mr BARTLETT - It is indeed. In fact, education performance services have done an outstanding over the last two years, and before that. Members will recognise that I am a particularly data-driven person and I believe improvement comes through understanding the underlying data and then adjusting your policy settings to change that data over time. I am particularly keen to understand the data that is behind all schools in Tasmania right down to student level. I can tell you that behind this report, while it looks like a pretty simple aggregation of a report, you can drill down to individual students and their results and so on that make up this report. Education performance services over recent years have done a sensational job of putting this together.

This report might be a publicly consumable one but now every school gets a comprehensive report on their own data so that they understand where they sit against every other like school, other schools in the State and other schools in their region. What is really interesting to me now is when I go into schools these days, one of the first things most principals do is start explaining their data to me. They start saying, 'This is where we sit when it comes to this and this is where we sit when it comes to that. We are improving here; we are getting worse there; and so on.' So principals are starting to understand in more detail how their school is performing. That is how we want to drive improvement.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

I note Mr Dean's comment earlier of saying a few too many warts. It was interesting that downstairs they were accusing me of hiding the data and not producing enough of the warts.

CHAIR - That is the difference between the two Houses.

Mr BARTLETT - The fact is this is empirical data that has been collected directly from schools and aggregated up. It is warts and all. I want to see the things that are issues and concerns improve. That is why we have released it. I believe it will drive improvement by releasing this sort of data.

CHAIR - Will this be available to the wider public?

Mr BARTLETT - This is publicly available. It will be available on the website and all sorts of things.

CHAIR - It is ahead of the *Gazette* then.

Mrs JAMIESON - Yes, I got a copy of it yesterday.

Mr BARTLETT - There you go, it is ahead of the *Gazette*. We are innovators in education, I can tell you. And more to the point I am committed to releasing this report every year before Estimates in this style. This year I will be looking the department to look at legislative, statutory, regulatory or whatever the right approach is to force every future Minister for Education to do it as well.

CHAIR - Just one more, I have had a request from another place to inquire as to the cost of delivering this particular item around all schools. Does this come in this area?

Mr BARTLETT - I think you would have to ask the Treasurer. It would be funded out of Treasury, would it not, those things?

[7.45 p.m.]

CHAIR - No, it is signed by you, Premier. These are press releases and information packs, but it is quite glossy and we all know glossies cost dollars.

Mr BARTLETT - We will get you the dollar cost.

CHAIR - The cost of producing and distributing it.

Mr BARTLETT - I can give you one statistic around these sorts of things. The production of our annual report has been reduced from 2005-06 which was a cost of \$53 000 to the most recent cost of \$20 000, so that is a saving of \$33 000.

CHAIR - Is there a different process involved that achieved that saving?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes - more web-based availability; decreased production of full-length reports; simultaneous production of the overview brochure; in-house editing; and no consultancy service fees - and we put it on a CD and things like that.

CHAIR - Hence there is money left over to produce this report -

Mr BARTLETT - I wouldn't say that. I will defend this as well -

CHAIR - I am not saying it is not good information.

Mr BARTLETT - It is very important to tell school communities also what is in the State Budget and so on - that is part of communication. If we did not do it we might be accused of hiding something.

1.4 Early years -

Mrs JAMIESON - Premier, I am just wondering what has happened with the training needs analysis for child care that was done last year. The lady who mentioned it to me said, 'I was involved in this but I think it's sitting on a shelf'.

Mr BARTLETT - I will need to get advice on that specific report. But I can tell you that in this Budget there is \$1 million, which is the most significant investment in child-care skills ever in the State, which comes out of recommendations from my Ministerial Child Care Advisory Council which is made up of people within the child-care sector who I asked about eight months ago, 'What is your number one leading issue in terms of sustainability and growth in the child-care sector?', and they said recruitment, retention and skills. So we have \$1 million in this Budget which will be going to the raising of skills and qualifications throughout the child-care sector.

It will be augmented by significant funding coming in from the Federal Government which will essentially provide free or waived fees for anyone who wants to get a diploma or an advanced diploma in child-care services. This funding will go more to the sector itself to free up time and provide for relief so that those workers can leave the workplace to go and get those qualifications. This is policy that is directly informed by the sector.

My Ministerial Child Care Advisory Council contains workers' representatives through the union, sector representatives through long-day care, family day care and the various types of child care. I am really excited about this. It is \$1 million in the Budget that has had no press at all so far, but I will be making a song and dance about it because it will have a big impact on the sector in conjunction with the Federal Government money coming in.

Mrs JAMIESON - I understand that we are about 160 qualified child carers short.

Mr BARTLETT - That's right. Essentially there are 160 workers within the child-care sector in Tasmania - effectively they are acknowledged in the ratios of workers to children as qualified workers but they do not actually have the qualification yet. So this money will get those 160 and more towards those qualifications.

Mrs JAMIESON - Does that also include vacation care and hours outside school care as all?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, all flavours of child care in the sector would be working. In 2007 we produced a guide for schools in providing after-school care, and that has been distributed, in terms of working with child-care providers in their region to set up a flexible way of including after-school care within their schools. So we are working very closely with the sector on a range of issues.

Mrs JAMIESON - What level of qualification is the actual target for these child-care workers - certificate 3, diploma?

Mr BARTLETT - It depends. In the ratios that are counted because there are ratios in statute effectively, they range from certificate 3 through to diploma and advanced diploma level. But there are ratios set in regulation that require this number of certificate 3s and this number of children, this number of diplomas and this number of children, and so on.

Mrs JAMIESON - Have you work for the registered training organisations?

Mr BARTLETT - TAFE provide significant child-care services, but other registered training organisations would be able to provide that as well - and probably do. I am not aware of any at the minute but I am sure there would be some.

Mrs JAMIESON - Is there any concern about the east and west - maybe the Huon area for example being left out just because they are a bit more remote - or north-east?

Mr BARTLETT - I don't believe so necessarily.

CHAIR - We are not remote in the north-east; we are rural.

Mr BARTLETT - However, this leads me on to talk about another part of the Budget that I throw in here - the Huon LINC, the Learning Information Network Centre, which we will get on to in another output, is some \$11 million. That building specifically is there for a whole range of reasons, but one of the ways is that we deliver TAFE courses through that. We have money in this Budget to build four more of those around the State in regional areas.

Mrs JAMIESON - Thank you.

1.5 Grants and financial assistance -

Mr WING - This covers the accommodation allowance for tertiary students. Is that subject to a means test? Who qualifies for that?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, it is.

Mr WING - How much is paid to students?

Mr BARTLETT - I might ask Andrew Finch to give you the detail here. I know he is across these things.

Mr WING - That would be mainly TAFE but perhaps university students as well? Any information along those lines would be of interest.

Mr BARTLETT - While he is finding his brief, I can tell you that assistance to students will be upped by 30 per cent this year, which I announced along with the extra \$6 million going to building new student accommodation as well. This is not the tertiary one -

Mr WING - So that explains the increase?

Mr BARTLETT - That is right.

Mr WING - Between this financial year and next financial year?

Mr BARTLETT - That is the accommodation.

Mr WING - About \$1.6 million extra?

Mr BARTLETT - The allocated budget for 2007-08 is \$1.445 million for the accommodation allowance for tertiary students. The student accommodation allowance, the SAA, which is senior secondary students, and that is the one we upped by 33 per cent, is not means tested; whereas the accommodation allowance for tertiary students is. The student accommodation allowance is budgeted for \$321 000 this year and STAS, the student assistance scheme, is a different thing altogether but falls into this category as well. The SAA is the one that we increased by 33 per cent this year from \$1050 to \$1400.

Part of Tasmania Tomorrow is recognising that accommodation for students and transport for students are vital parts in increasing our retention and qualification rates. We are more than doubling our student accommodation facilities across the State. We are building a brand new facility at Newstead College for example. We are refurbishing in Burnie, at Alanvale and at Springvale here in Hobart. Through home stay and other approaches we will be effectively doubling the rooms available to students in Tasmania who need to travel away from home to do senior secondary study.

Mr WING - I am interested in the accommodation being provided at Newstead College. How many students could be accommodated there?

Mr BARTLETT - It is a \$4.3 million facility and 50 students will be accommodated there in state-of-the-art supervised accommodation. One of the things we found when we dug into the statistics - and I dealt a lot with Pip Allwright from the Isolated Children's Parents' Association - we found that, while we had a fair amount of accommodation, a lot of was not accommodation that parents were prepared to send their kids to at ages 16 and 17 because it was not supervised. We were also getting large drop-out rates because kids living in flats at 16 years old just ended up not going.

CHAIR - They do not eat well, do they?

Mr BARTLETT - They do not do a lot, and I am sure I would not have when I was 16 if I got to live away from home. We are investing \$6.78 million in new student accommodation facilities across the State. We will have far more capacity so there is capacity for flexibility, far more supervised and effectively will be far more available. So a student will not get to the end of the year and go 'There is no spot available for me in Launceston so I am just not going to go' to senior secondary education or post compulsory education.

Mr WING - So about \$4 million for Newstead College. Where will the other \$2 million be spent?

Mr BARTLETT - There are two significant projects: namely \$4.4 million to purpose build a 50-place facility at Newstead College replacing the city villas, anticipated to be available from 2009; \$1.3 million to provide a further 20 places at Springvale hostel here in Hobart, which was

tendered last Saturday, to be available 2009; and the remainder of the money to refurbish facilities that already exist at Burnie and at Alanvale.

Mr WING - What will the students pay in relation to the \$1400 received?

Mr BARTLETT - I do not have those figures at the moment, I am afraid.

Mr WING - Presumably it would have to be more than the \$1400?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes.

Mr WING - And the number of students overall who will benefit from the accommodation allowance, not necessarily the accommodation itself in the new buildings?

Mr BARTLETT - It was 308 in 2007 and 348 in 2006. That is the senior secondary accommodation allowance. One thousand and ninety from the tertiary students.

Mr WING - I see. How many of those would be TAFE and how many university?

Mr BARTLETT - I do not have that data in front of me. It would all be university for AATS.

CHAIR - TAFE will be in the next group.

Mr BARTLETT - No, Mr Wing is right in that it is in this group. The SAA would cover the TAFE students whereas the AATS would cover university students - no.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - No, it is the senior secondary that covers the 11 to 12s, the SAA allowance. The AATS does cover some TAFE students and the university students. We just have not got the breakdown.

Mr WING - Good schemes, thank you.

**Output group 2
Skills development**

2.1 Skills development TAFE Tasmania -

[8.00 p.m.]

CHAIR - Order! We have three new faces at the table.

Mr BARTLETT - We have Mark Sayer from Skills Tasmania, and Malcolm White and Tony Luttrell from TAFE Tasmania.

Mr KERRY FINCH - I am just having a look at the actual projected improvement in the number of 15- to 19-year-olds who are not at school or tertiary education and are not employed as shown in table 3.6 on page 3.16. There is a jump from 6.7 per cent last year to 8.2 per cent as the target this year. It is only a very small increase but I am just curious as to why there would be a little blip in the projections.

Mr BARTLETT - Is that a projected number or actual?

Mr KERRY FINCH - No, it is a target for 2007-08. The 2006-07 actual was 6.7 per cent and the target is 8.2 per cent. They are down from 9.5 per cent in 2005-06.

Mr BARTLETT - I suspect that the target was set some time ago and effectively what we have done is met the target before we arrived there. The target was set probably as a range of forward estimates over four years. Given that we are at 6.7 now, maybe we need to get a more aggressive target.

Mr KERRY FINCH - So the 9.5 might have been down to 8.6 or 8.9.

Mr BARTLETT - Those are Tasmania Together targets.

Mr KERRY FINCH - I just wanted to have some sort of understanding.

Mr BARTLETT - That is what informs those numbers, they are coming directly out of Tasmania Together benchmarks.

Mr KERRY FINCH - As far as vocational education and training is concerned - table 3.5 on page 3.14 - there is a dropout rate there. For example, we are told that some students disappear from year 11 VET courses at colleges during the year and do not come back. Is this a big problem? Do you have any idea of the numbers?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, I believe so. I will ask Malcolm White from TAFE to talk about the view of dropouts in the TAFE area, but of course VET courses also run at the moment in our senior secondary colleges up to certificate level II. And I can tell you my understanding of the numbers there. It is a significant problem. It is driven by lack of supported accommodation and lack of good transport. The numbers that I have had put in front of me are that 4 500 students statewide were enrolled in VET courses within our senior secondary colleges during 2005 and 2006 and of those 4 500 only 500 actually left with a qualification. So 4 000 either marked time, left early or did not leave with a qualification. That is a lot - too many. Hence the reforms we are doing in post-compulsory education.

Mr KERRY FINCH - And in the TAFE circumstance?

Mr WHITE - There are two aspects. One is young people in apprenticeships and traineeships. It is a tragedy that they drop out. Nevertheless, Tasmania has one of the best attrition rates in Australia for apprenticeships. More young Tasmanians stay and complete their apprenticeships than in most other States in Australia. The other aspect concerns students who are engaging with us as students, full time and part time but not in apprenticeships or traineeships, we have a high success rate of students who are at risk of dropping out of learning. We connect them to their passion which might be auto or whatever but we have a good success rate there. However, too many young people do disengage. An issue in TAFE at the moment is that we do not have the high levels of pastoral care to follow up each and every one to ensure they reach a meaningful qualification. One of the aims of Tasmania Tomorrow and particularly the polytechnic is to ensure that every young person reaches that meaningful qualification which will assure them of a robust and resilient career.

Mr WING - Because the VET courses are about training the students for apprenticeships -

Mr KERRY FINCH - For vocations, yes.

Mr WING - For vocations. From what I am hearing, we are successful in that respect but not as successful -

Mr WHITE - Certainly in apprenticeships - I think this is partly due to the nature of Tasmania that often young people know their employers and feel a great loyalty to their employers and also there is not the temptation of the resource boom sector to leave an apprenticeship and go and work as a labourer for instance. So we do have good completion rates in apprenticeships here compared with other States. That is due to some factors in Tasmania.

Mr WING - Skills development at TAFE is the primary focus for improving Tasmania's skills position, and there is evidence that TAFE is working fairly well in that respect. But just in our northern area there is a bit of confusion about the status of the federal Technical College that is there and the similarity that I can perceive in the work they are trying to achieve and the students that they are looking to cater for. I want to get the latest circumstance with that, with the development being done at Inveresk. Is a marriage likely to occur? If there is to be a melding of the two organisations, is that on the radar?

Mr BARTLETT - These are federally funded, but I know that Skills Tasmania has been working with the Australian Technical College on its future. I will ask Mark Sayer to give us an update.

Mr SAYER - You are quite right. There is a very close resemblance between what the Australian Technical College does and what the polytechnic will do. The Federal Government has committed to fund the Australian Technical College until the end of 2009 and then it is up to that college to decide its own fate. We have been speaking with Nigel Hill from the Australian Technical College and board members to talk about what their future looks like. It looks like it would be well placed in a polytechnic situation. So it will be handed back to the States unless the Australian Technical College can come up with a way of turning it into a business, and that is a decision it would have to make. But it would not be able to be reliant just on our public funds.

Mr KERRY FINCH - So they would make that decision in isolation from the State Government?

Mr BARTLETT - Not in isolation, no. I think what Mark is saying is that the board could choose to go it alone. But essentially the Australian Government has made a funding decision that is different from the previous Australian Government. We cannot necessarily control that. What we can do is work with them to ensure that they are part of our system as part of the Tasmania polytechnic - a campus thereof or what have you - or they can choose effectively to go it alone and be self-funding and compete for State funds with other registered training organisations. That is what they have to do effectively.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Is there reluctance at this stage with the organisation or are they malleable?

Mr BARTLETT - You would have to ask them that. I do not know what is in their minds as such, apart from what Mark has just told you that they are weighing up their options.

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Mr KERRY FINCH - But the State Government would want them to develop and fulfil a role perhaps in the development of our young people and developing their futures?

Mr BARTLETT - I have never been critical of the Australian Technical College because I think the model is good. But the outcomes per dollar funded under the previous Federal Government are not good enough; that is, they had an enormous amount of cash for a fairly small throughput of students. When you talk about the ATC, I think it was dealing at its peak with 300 students - or maybe 150? We are talking in our polytechnic of 35 000 students that we need to deal with and need to work with.

The ATC has created an enormous bubble of activity around it for what is really a very small RTO in the grand scheme of things but an extremely well-funded RTO by the former Federal Government. The current Federal Government has decided not to continue that level of funding, so the ATC have to make some choices. The future is in their own hands, is what I am saying. They have to make some choices about how they work. Either they work with the sort of levels of funding that we are capable of delivering and therefore within our model; or they compete, which other RTOs already do, for Tasmanian State Government funding that goes out to the market to provide certain skills. They would gain their fair share of that, no doubt, and compete for other funding sources elsewhere on the market.

Mr DEAN - Just on the building at Inveresk that we are talking about, I was wondering if it has been discussed with local government. One of the conditions of building that was on the condition that it would operate as a normal work site. In other words, it would be operating right through the year, except for a one- or two-week period at Christmas-time and so on. Polytechnics, as I understand it, will simply operate school periods, with the breaks that will occur. So I guess there has been no discussion there at all.

Mr BARTLETT - No, that is wrong. The Australian Technical College that you speak of is Australian Government money and Australian government-funded - I have no policy control over what the Australian Technical College does. But I can tell you that the Tasmanian Polytechnic - there is only one polytechnic with several campuses, not polytechnics - will be operating in a similar mode delivering far more than just the school term-type operations.

Mr DEAN - So it will not operate the school term only?

Mr BARTLETT - No.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Just with the figure of \$67.349 million for the coming financial year for TAFE, do you break that down into a student situation? Do you look at that in a ratio of the student numbers? Do you put a figure on what each student will cost to access TAFE?

Mr WHITE - There are two aspects to that. First of all, it is broken down as a spend against skill and priority areas. Skills Tasmania has a strong role in assessing industry, government and economic needs to set what we call the profile of training. It is broken down not by student but by unit cost. A unit cost is a measure that is used nationally to assess the cost of vocational education and training, and it is the cost to train one student per hour of training. In 2006, which is the last figure we have, our unit cost was \$15.85, which compares with the national average of \$14.24 and compares favourably with other small States in Australia.

Mr KERRY FINCH - That is per classroom contact hour?

Mr WHITE - Per student - well we do not use the classroom concept so much any more, but it is the measure we use for training because, as you would be aware, we also train and assess at work sites and in venues other than classrooms. But it is the measure we use.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Per hour?

Mr WHITE - Per student contact hour, and it is increasingly moving towards competencies, which has a better future.

Mr KERRY FINCH - What about the charge recovery from the students? Does it vary across the different disciplines that they study for?

[8.15 p.m.]

Mr WHITE - It does not vary across the disciplines, except to say that there are some priority disciplines which qualify for a student fee discount, such as apprentice training for 16- to 19-year-olds. But broadly speaking, TAFE Tasmania students pay a contribution towards the cost of their training, which is set at a fee cap of \$990 per annum. So no matter what course or courses they are undertaking, they shall pay no more than that as their contribution. But broadly speaking there is a cost per competency that they study: A typical apprentice might be paying in the region of \$400 to \$600 per annum; a full-time student studying a diploma or advanced diploma will pay no more than \$990; and a person coming along to get some skills in a particular area may only pay \$100. There are a range of fee concessions but the principal one is for those who qualify for concessions and health care cards, youth allowance, Abstudy, Austudy, veterans' affairs, pensioners - they will pay no more than \$250 per annum and there is a 50 per cent reduction on fees.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Do you get many students who need assistance with the fees that you might charge?

Mr WHITE - The last time we looked at this it was a shade under 50 per cent of our students who qualify for some form of concession.

Mr KERRY FINCH - So it is not exorbitant if some are only paying \$250.

Mr WHITE - It represents excellent value.

Mr KERRY FINCH - There has been a concern among some part-time or temporary TAFE teachers over their pay and job security. Can there be any assurances from the budget Estimates that there are no changes that will make them worse off?

Mr WHITE - I believe, Mr Finch, that you are referring to our sessional teachers who do hourly sessions of three hours per week. Are they the people that you are referring to?

Mr KERRY FINCH - Yes.

Mr WHITE - Sessional teachers have been a vital part of TAFE for decades. They fulfil a number of functions, including bringing very current industry knowledge to complement the permanent work force. Sessional teachers are paid a significant loading above the normal hourly rate to compensate them for the preparation, leave and all those sorts of things. In the current

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industrial relations negotiations for the next industrial agreement for TAFE teachers we are working closely with the Australian Education Union about sessional wages. I believe our 800 sessional teachers to the best of my knowledge are satisfied with the money they receive. I have certainly not received any complaints.

Mr KERRY FINCH - So would the sessional teachers fit into the category of temporary TAFE teachers or part-time TAFE teachers?

Mr WHITE - No, there are three categories of employment in TAFE Tasmania for teachers. One is permanent, and that is our preferred and normal method of employment. There is fixed term employment such as to cover the case of where a teacher may go on maternity leave for a period of time, and we cover that load. The other is sessional teacher, a distinct category of teaching which is timetabled hourly paid teachers.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Are there some industrial relations negotiations current at the moment?

Mr WHITE - The TAFE Tasmania teachers industrial agreement is currently being negotiated for three years. It expired last year. The negotiations are continuing at the moment.

Mr DEAN - I note in the annual report that there is a significant difference in females and males attending TAFE. What is the reason for that? Is it because of what you offer or is it because we have more females going to university?

Mr WHITE - Certainly female participation in vocational education and training in Tasmania in 2007 at 42.2 per cent is a bit under the national average, which I think is up in the high 40s. That has been of concern to TAFE Tasmania. In our analysis we believe that it has historically been due to the lower numbers of general education courses at TAFE Tasmania compared with technical and trades. However, we are seeing significant growth in the community and health services sector and particularly in enrolled nursing. My expectation is that figure will rise, and that is certainly our aim.

Mr DEAN - That brings me to the next question which is in relation the skill shortages that we currently have: what sort of influence are you having on students coming in to the TAFE system to put them into the areas of the greatest skill needs?

Mr BARTLETT - This question is better answered by Mark Sayer because, while TAFE is a provider, Skills Tasmania is actually the planner and purchaser of skills. Mark reports to an industry-led board, which is populated only by industry people. They are setting in place - and I will ask Mark to talk in more detail about it - a strategic skills plan for Tasmania and backing it up with the investment of some \$90 million going into that.

Mr SAYER - Thank you very much. I do not get a lot of opportunity to talk about Skills Tasmania in these forums.

Mr DEAN - There you go.

CHAIR - You have three minutes now.

Mr SAYER - As the Premier just explained, we have two primary functions in the way we run our business. Under the legislation we have responsibility for formulating a skills strategy for the State. We are doing that right at this moment. This gives me the opportunity to show you a diagram of how that is going to be formulated.

We are putting together a skills strategy with 10 key focus areas. Those key focus areas are aligned to the way in which population, participation and productivity affect skill factors in our State. We have consulted with industry over the last six months or so since Skills Tasmania has been established. We have been to see those groups twice now. We will be using that strategy to inform all future purchasing arrangements. We do a lot of research with the university and other groups to find where we should be putting our dollar. We want to use purchasing arrangements as a precision tool to make sure that we get the most for the public dollar.

Mr DEAN - Thank you.

Mr BARTLETT - Can I add to that: One of the measures of whether we are hitting the mark or not is employer views. In 2007 the proportion of employers satisfied with aspects of training in vocational qualification as a job requirement, Tasmania, 86 per cent and the Australian average, 81 per cent; and in apprenticeships and traineeships, 90 per cent in Tasmania and 83 per cent the rest of Australia. This is an area of our system that we are proud of in terms of employer satisfaction with what we are doing outstripping the rest of Australia.

Mr DEAN - Thank you for that. When I read through the industry groups at TAFE, you see a large number - and I guess you would expect it - in agriculture. If you go back through the list you have quite extraordinarily large numbers in business and financial services and large numbers in engineering, et cetera. Some other areas not so well supported but obviously the need in some of those areas is not there, and I can understand that.

2.2 Skills development contestable funding -

Mr KERRY FINCH - The note under skills development contestable funding on page 3.14 says that there is a decrease in the funding and it reflects the reclassification of expenses contained in output group 2 as part of the Student at the Centre plan. I am curious about that plan.

Mr BARTLETT - That is what I have been talking about when I talk about shifting of resources in the department closer to schools. This particular one can be outlined in more detail by Andrew Finch.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - Basically with the budget what we try to do is go through a process of continual refinement to get the budget into the right categories. That is in view of the fact that, as the minister pointed out, in the last 18 months we have been going through a significant restructure with the establishment of the learning services and we are now looking into the senior secondary area. We now have the two outputs: output 1.1 which is about schools and kinder to year 10, and then output group 2.3 which is about years 11 and 12. It is always about getting the right balance between those two outputs, because a lot of the schools go right through from kinder to grade 12. We need to get the right mix of resources across those outputs and continue to get the budget in the right places.

This year, now that we have the Learning Services established and we can establish the right profiles of budgets, we have used this budget to transfer the costs into the correct areas. So they

are costs like guidance officers, speech pathologists and social workers that can work across all those sectors. We have transferred them back into the in school output, output 1.1, and also from some of the corporate areas of the budget we have transferred those more correctly into the in school output, output 1.1, as well. About \$8.5 million has been transferred from one output to another. If that had not been transferred, the increase in this output would have been closer to about 5 per cent. It is just a refinement of getting the costs into the right area of the budget, and that will flowthrough into future years.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Which means you know where it is going.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - Yes, that is right.

Mr KERRY FINCH - I just wanted to clear that up because it was a note that was made here. Under this particular output, 2.2, it is explained that TAFE-VET provision is open to competition between providers. I would have thought that TAFE and the colleges would be the superior providers for these services, but others do compete successfully?

Mr BARTLETT - I am sure that would be Malcolm's view and it is certainly my view that TAFE is a superior provider, but there are private sector registered training organisations who also compete. In terms of public VET system students by RTO type, in 2006 TAFE had 35 200 students while other RTOs had 6 700. So TAFE is -

CHAIR - Superior.

Mr BARTLETT - dominant, no doubt about it. But contestable funding means that TAFE have to compete with other training organisations to receive that funding to deliver that training, which allows growth and competition in the market, keeps TAFE honest and all those sorts of things. There are other streams of funding that is quarantined effectively only to TAFE. This ensures that, where a significant investment in infrastructure is made around automotive, for example - where a massive investment is required in the actual facilities statewide to deliver that training - quarantined funding is not eroding the base that is required to invest in that infrastructure.

Mr KERRY FINCH - So the Technical College could in fact -

Mr BARTLETT - Could compete for that funding, absolutely.

Mr KERRY FINCH - That is all.

2.3 Post-compulsory in school education -

Mrs JAMIESON - Madam Chair, I am sorry to confuse. Maybe I need to go back to adult education.

CHAIR - I don't think so, Mrs Jamieson.

[8.30 p.m.]

2.3 Post-compulsory in school education -

Mrs JAMIESON - When I looked at this one, I found that the notes tell me that:

'The output focuses on the delivery of education to students in schools and colleges.'

What have we actually been talking about - with TAFE, Skills Tasmania and Tasmania Tomorrow? Is there anything different about post-compulsory in school education, when there is \$83 million to be spent on it?

Mr BARTLETT - Currently that is the money going to run senior secondary colleges as opposed to TAFE. I expect that in next year's Budget these outputs will look different because, commencing on 1 January 2009, senior secondary colleges and TAFE will start being reconstituted into three statewide bodies. This process will extend over two years. The essential proposition here is that if you want to go to university you will go to either Utas or the Tasmanian Academy. If you want to kick-start your career or your vocation and potentially go to university in the future as well you will go to the Tasmanian Polytechnic. If you have an apprenticeship or a traineeship, are in employment and require that to be fulfilled, you will be serviced by Training Tasmania. These outputs will look very different next year.

Mrs JAMIESON - If we needed to update adult literacy and numeracy and all the rest of it, how much is actually required in upgrading people's skills in order to cope with, say, Skills Tasmania? Do we have to provide numeracy and literacy classes within our secondary and tertiary colleges?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, and there are essentially two streams to that. The first is TAFE Tasmania - and I will ask Malcolm to talk about what they are doing in a moment - and they are essentially participation programs to get the right skills to get the first qualifications. Also there is a significant chunk of money in this budget for adult literacy services that will be run through the next output group - that is, through those links-style buildings and through a specific adult literacy effort that will be run by the Library and Information Services. I will ask Malcolm to outline some of the things TAFE are doing and then perhaps I can talk about adult literacy in the next output group.

Mr WHITE - Certainly there are four areas of focus. One is language training, particularly for newly arrived migrants with low English skills. That is a very strong area. We then have adult literacy and basic education for adults and young people who want to get to the first stage of taking on a vocational qualification. We also have what we call literacy and numeracy mentors who work in the vocations, particularly the trades. We might identify an apprentice who is struggling with maths or with reading. So we bring mentors and teachers into the trade area to work with that person in the context of their trade or vocation. That is particularly successful. Finally, we have a particularly exciting program where employers identify to us that sections of their work force have poor literacy and numeracy skills. We go in and work on a range of measures, including putting diagrams in or using computers to enable the employer and the employees to function to their full potential through highly contextualised training in literacy and numeracy associated with their jobs. That has been very successful.

Mr BARTLETT - The sorts of programs that Malcolm is talking about mean a total spend of \$5 071 000 per annum. That is a significant spend - 50 per cent is State-funded and 50 per cent Commonwealth-funded.

Mrs JAMIESON - This would also pick up young lasses who have become pregnant, for example, and want to come back and upgrade themselves, having missed out on the last year or two of their post-compulsory schooling. What is happening with services in that area?

Mr BARTLETT - There is a range of services in secondary colleges that enable entry back into learning.

Mrs JAMIESON - Are other States going down the same track with polytechnics?

Mr BARTLETT - I will bet my bottom dollar they do - after we have proved that it is the right model. One of the things about Tasmania is that we have the capacity to effect these changes. When you look, for example, at New South Wales TAFE, you will find, I believe, that they are five, six or seven years behind the gains we have made in TAFE Tasmania and therefore for them to even contemplate the next generation of change is just impossible.

Mrs JAMIESON - Will there be a mutual recognition of certification?

Mr BARTLETT - All the courses that will be run in these three institutions will either be accredited by the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority or in the national VET system. A certificate 3 in automotive gained at the Tasmanian Polytechnic is identical to a certificate 3 gained at the New South Wales TAFE, for example.

Mrs JAMIESON - Under the new scheme where would people like enrolled nurses and personal carers and teachers aides fit in? TAFE or polytechnic?

Mr WHITE - As you will appreciate, we are still working towards those sorts of decisions, but essentially a lot of enrolled nurses and aged-care workers already have a relationship with their employer. So they would essentially be in the training business. Those preparing for their careers, who are there of their own volition would be more in the polytechnic area.

2.4 Skills Tasmania -

CHAIR - We will now move on to 2.4, Skills Tasmania.

Mr WING - This deals mainly with apprentices, and there is a significant increase in funding to provide greater services, I assume. Is it difficult to find apprenticeships for most apprentices? It was in the past and I seem to remember learning through the media that there was some problem in recent times. I can't remember what it was, but I seem to remember an employer saying that if some policy were implemented, it would be difficult to employ the same number of apprentices.

Mr BARTLETT - I can give you some raw data and then maybe ask Mark to flesh that out. The numbers in traditional trades in training as at 30 September: over the last three years, we have had increases of 18 per cent, 15 per cent and 7 per cent. We are on the increase in those traditional trades. I think that industry is coming to the realisation that it is not Education's fault alone, that we have to work together to solve some of the skills issues that we face.

Mr SAYER - The reason for the increase in funding between this current financial year and the next is mainly due to the \$1.8 million each year for four years as a contribution to the Productivity Places program. That is an initiative that is a collaboration between the States and

Territories and the Federal Government. The contribution by the State is 40 per cent of the total amount over that four-year period, and industry contributes 10 per cent. In all, over that four-year period there will be \$18 million additional funds, so it is very significant. Those funds will be particularly targeted to those higher-skilled areas, the para-professional areas - diploma, advanced diploma and certificate 4. About 50 per cent of the places will go to diploma and advanced diploma, about 40 per cent to certificate 4 and about 10 per cent to certificate 3. That is where the bulk of those funds go.

Just to add to your question about the concern you read about in the paper, I think that was about payroll tax, so it is not really in our area.

Mr WING- Yes, I think it was payroll tax. I remember having a big debate in our House over payroll tax with Dr Crean when he was Treasurer, and he did not give way on any one point. But after it was over he said, 'You made some very good points during that debate.' I said, 'But you didn't acknowledge one of them!'

Laughter.

CHAIR - You have listened and learnt, Premier!

Mr KERRY FINCH - On that point you are making about the extra figures, is that an initiative of the new Federal Government?

Mr SAYER - It is a Federal government initiative, but it can only come about if a State or Territory decides to make a contribution and participate in that program. Without this State Government's \$1.8 million each year for four years, we would not have been able to leverage that up to \$18 million fund for additional places. It is a significant contribution.

2.6 Grants and financial assistance -

Mr DEAN - I am just looking at the debts that are written off in the system, and I guess in the scheme of things it is small - \$348 000-odd written off. However, I just wonder what effort is made to get that outstanding money. School debt write-offs - \$204 000 - that is a significant amount.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - That is a very small percentage of the overall budget - more than \$1 billion - and with a lot of those debts that we do write off, we go through a very rigorous process to follow them up in the first instance. Most of these debts that we write off are very small - under \$20 - in the library. The cost of following them up is just not economical. But we do wait for a period of up to two years before we actually write them off. The write-off is only done after we have been through that very rigorous process. It is a very small proportion of the overall revenue that we collect and manage.

Mr DEAN - Is the amount of outstanding debt increasing?

Mr ANDREW FINCH - No, they are not increasing. We always have a small proportion of bad debts - but I guess that in moral in a large organisation.

Output group 3 Information services and community learning

CHAIR - Thank you, members. I will go now to output group 3, but because I know that members want to get on to the capital investment program before we finish, I will ask whether there are any questions in 3.1, 3.2 or 3.3 to do with information services and community learning?

Mr KERRY FINCH - Yes, I have one. With our budget Estimates in previous years we have talked about oral history - and I did make a submission to the Library through the previous minister. I pursued with the Premier when he became the new minister about how important I thought it was that we capture the oral history of Tasmanians and our cultural heritage through collecting their voices - the voice in the first instance and perhaps videoing them might come later. But I put a submission forward about developing the oral history component of the Library Service. I remember asking the minister last year if he had listened to what I had put forward the previous year.

[8.45 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT - I will start by introducing Siobhan Gaskell, Director of the State Library, and thank the honourable member for his question. I am very pleased to be able to say that Mrs Jamieson got \$200 000 for musical instruments and that, after a really good discussion with Mr Finch last year, we went away and did some work on the idea. I am pleased to tell you that this year we will be implementing a digital storytelling program in the coming financial year through the Community Knowledge Network - starting with a pilot but moving to a full rollout after I have had a discussion with the Treasurer about it. The Community Knowledge Network is essentially made up of our online access centres, our Huon LINC-style organisations, our public libraries and our adult education facilities.

We are committed to capture and preserve Tasmania's social and cultural memory. That is part of what this is about, and it is certainly part of what your submission was about. The stories of both ordinary and extraordinary Tasmanians are a significant part of the State's cultural memory and need to be recorded and shared. It is these stories that will connect current and future generations of Tasmanians to their unique cultural identity.

The digital storytelling program will provide all Tasmanians over time with an opportunity to tell their story and have it recorded for history. The program will deliver a growing collection of digital stories that document the richness and diversity of Tasmanian life. The collection will be made available online via podcast-type technologies to local and global audiences over the web. Through a series of workshops, Tasmanians from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and across all generations will come together to learn about how to tell their own stories by creating short personal films that use their own words, photographs and memories.

We will be using the infrastructure of our online access centres. So it will also provide new members, new participants, new visitors, new volunteers within the 67 online access centres we have across the State. Tasmanians will have access to technology that will enable these stories to be recorded, effectively catalogued, preserved and also narrowcast across the Internet for people to listen to and learn from.

The program over time - again we will start with a pilot and work up to full rollout - will provide the technical infrastructure to online access centres to enable all Tasmanians to record their unique stories. We will be providing online access centre staff with the training in digital storytelling processes, where they will be able to deliver workshops across the State in their local communities. Especially with 67 - is that right?

Ms GASKELL - Sixty-six.

Mr BARTLETT - 66 online access centres across the State. In many remote locations the digital storytelling program will reconnect Tasmanians with their own living history. The digital storytelling program will connect communities and individuals to their own cultural heritage and improve new media literacy across the State. A great example of this is when my brother and I did it with my own grandmother before she passed away. We recorded her and her history for ourselves. We used a lot of that recording when it came to writing her eulogy as well. I can imagine grandparents and young people across the State going to their local online access centre to record an oral history of the older person - of local history and of personal history - that would then be recorded for all time effectively and published to the Internet.

Tasmanian stories would be available to Tasmanians across the web, catalogued in a way so that you could maybe look at them geographically. My grandmother grew up in Gladstone, for example -

CHAIR - Beautiful place

Mr BARTLETT - So someone looking at stories around Gladstone would be able to access that digitally recorded story. It would be available for all Tasmanians, for historians and for personal histories.

In addition to this, the State Library will be implementing a program to capture and record the oral histories of Tasmania's living treasures. That is, we will be implementing a program to record the untold stories of significant individuals and organisations that have played a critical role in shaping Tasmania as well. The program will ensure that current and future Tasmanians are linked with their unique cultural identity.

We will be starting with a smaller pilot but I anticipate that over the course of the year - with access to some more funding that we need to do it - we will be rolling it out right across the State. So musical instruments and digital online oral storytelling - I have delivered for two members of the committee anyway.

CHAIR - There are always members -

Mr BARTLETT - I will save for that for next year.

CHAIR - Premier, you would be interested to know there is already that project happening in Dorset. I recently launched the book *A Social and Cultural History of the North-East* compiled by the Scottsdale History Group of 28 members of the community.

Mr BARTLETT - Fantastic. It really shows that there is a pent-up demand for this sort of service and for this sort of activity.

CHAIR - It was a terrific launch getting together and talking about old times. You might have a look at my *Hansard* from last Thursday's special interest debate when I spoke about the launch.

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Mr BARTLETT - Terrific. I am not putting out a media release today about this but, when we get out to publicly launch and set it up, we will make sure you are along with us, Mr Finch.

Mr KERRY FINCH - Thank you, Premier.

Mr BARTLETT - We might go and do it at the Beaconsfield online access centre.

Mrs JAMIESON - I was just wondering with all the activities that are happening -

Mr BARTLETT - Can someone please ask Siobhan Gaskell a question. In 21 hours of questioning she hasn't had a question. I demand that someone ask her a question.

Mrs JAMIESON - I was going to ask for a bit more information about the Community Knowledge Network which I see is one of the initiatives.

Mr BARTLETT - I will ask Siobhan Gaskell to talk about that.

CHAIR - I will ask her to keep it brief.

Mr WING - Madame Defarge here!

Laughter.

Ms GASKELL - The Community Knowledge Network is bringing together the online access centres, libraries around the State, adult education and archives. It is through transforming that into a new organisation that we will be able to do a lot more in the State in a much broader sense than we have done in the past. There is a lot of skills vested in those various areas, but again they have been working largely in silos - a bit of linkage - but I think this bringing together in a statewide network will transform things significantly.

Already in the heritage and archives area we have secured some money to put into digitisation and we will start to make available the resources of the State cultural institutions in a significant way. In the access centre branch libraries in the regional communities, particularly now with the funding to put in more LINC's around the State, that will really strengthen regional communities.

Mrs JAMIESON - So will there come a time when you phase out adult education, for example?

Mr BARTLETT - No. Essentially what this is about is that we have an enormous amount of knowledge, information and cultural assets stored within places like the archives, various collections of the State Library and knowledge built in within the courses of adult education. But we also have this fantastic distribution network of online access centres, libraries, adult education, schools and so on and what we have not done before is take all that knowledge and distribute it through all those sources. In the past you could get adult education courses at an adult education place; you could get library services at a library place; and you could get online access services at an online access service place. What we are doing with the Community Knowledge Network is ensuring that more and more Tasmanians will be able to walk into an online access centre and say, 'I want to retrieve a bit of information that would be stored in archives or retrieve some information from the library or look up some genealogical history or look up digital storytelling

assets or look up 'Tasmaniana' in terms of colonial heritage and history that are digitised online and be able to access all of that from one screen in any online access centre across the State. Before all those sources of information were siloed with their own distribution networks. We are going to make sure they are distributed much more widely. We are also going to collect more assets like the digital storytelling and share them through the network as well.

CHAIR - Premier, are there enough funds in your budget to achieve all that? Feel free to tell us now while you have the Premier here!

Mr BARTLETT - Can I open the batting and say there is always more you want to do, but the Library and Information Service has received a significant increase in adult literacy money in this budget with \$11 million to build new Huon LINC-style organisations, and there will be more money coming to deliver on the digital storytelling program. I do not know, does the director of the State Library want to complain about that? She is most welcome to.

Ms GASKELL - No. One of the challenges for me is to look at those collective resources and try to maximise what we do do with them. We are expanding services as far as we can. As an example, we are doing work in the Risdon jail at the moment, which we previously did not, and part of that is simply through the efficiencies of those four organisations coming together. I guess for me the first challenge is to sort out through those resources of those four what more can we do within that. This additional funding of the LINC's, the digitisation funding and adult literacy will allow us to expand further. The other challenge I have now with those additional resources is how to deliver it all before I start to ask for more.

CHAIR - Thank you for coming to the table at this late hour of the evening. Are we going straight to grants and subsidies?

Mr DEAN - The question might come under that but it is about the adult education centre in High Street, Launceston - where are we with that?

Mr BARTLETT - I will ask the director to answer that question for you.

Ms GASKELL - The two properties in Launceston, in York Street and High Street, are continuing on. There are no plans to do anything with them in any sense. However, in the longer term there will be a need to do something with them, either improve them as they stand or look at maybe some other facility somewhere else. But that is well down the track.

Mr DEAN - I think security is all they are after, and their furnaces are fairly substandard in High Street. It needs a lot of work on it.

Capital investment program

CHAIR - We are going to move out of output group 3 into grants and subsidies and capital investment program.

Mr KERRY FINCH - There is a note here on 3.9, referring to the capital investment program, which explains that expenditure investment programs for future programs will not be determined until the Tasmania Tomorrow strategy's operational plans have been finalised. I want to have some idea of what is likely to be added? What is the program now and what is likely to be added to the amount of \$850 000 in 2009-10?

Mr BARTLETT - There is an additional \$4.4 million per annum over the forward Estimates for Tasmania Tomorrow. We are not distributing the money to the TAFE output and the senior secondary college output because effectively at 1 January 2009 they will be re-formed into three new organisations and we will distribute the money then. There is \$7 million extra in this State Budget fort capital through those new organisations. There is also \$4.4 million per annum of Commonwealth money for facilities in TAFE campuses - even though they will be different organisations then. So the quantum is \$4.4 million per annum plus \$7 million effectively.

Mrs JAMIESON - Premier, we have been waiting for a gym at Devonport High School. For whatever reason, we still haven't got it. It is a security factor as well because the kids have to run round in the dark. The other matter was the road at the side of the Spreyton Primary School. There is a problem with the safety of students arriving in buses and cars because it is a busy road -

Mr BARTLETT - The road may well be a DIER question, not an Education question.

Mrs JAMIESON - Well, the letter I have received from the council says that it is 'up to the Education Department to provide the internal infrastructure -'

Mr BARTLETT - Oh, internal infrastructure. We will be happy to follow up both of those matters for you out of session.

Mrs JAMIESON - This session?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes.

Mr DEAN - I am not quite sure where to raise this one, but I think I should raise it here. The old St Michael's School in Hobblers Bridge Road - how much longer do we have to wait for that to be finalised. It has been ongoing for four or five years

Mr ANDREW FINCH - This matter does have a detailed history. The arrangements are progressing. Back in late 2006 an agreement was reached to sell a portion of the site to Housing and a portion - that portion with the buildings - to St Michael's Association. We have had some draft contractual documentation. There have been some issues around sewerage, stormwater, communications, water and electricity because that runs right through the property to where the buildings are. We have been in discussions with the council and Sinclair Knight Merz to sort this out. Basically we have sorted the sewerage, but the stormwater is still being worked through. We are awaiting some other options on that. Then we should be able to obtain a separate title and finalise the sale of those two properties. We are getting closer, and I think that everyone wants it to happen as quickly as possible. But with that sort of separation of services it takes time to work through.

Mr DEAN - Thank you for that. My other question is about the new Rocherlea Primary School. I think the completion date is identified as 2009. Are we on target for that school to be completed in 2009?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes, I am advised.

Mr ANDREW FINCH - They are hoping to move in during the first term holidays. They will finish at the old school at the end of the first term of 2009 and move into the new one at the

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start of the second term. We have been through the parliamentary committee process on that, and we'll be tendering out very shortly and then proceeding.

Mr DEAN - Has a decision been made about the old school site?

Mr BARTLETT - I do not believe so.

CHAIR - I have a question about the capital investment program. Obviously these investment programs have been identified until 2012. How do schools receive consideration in years leading up to that, seeing it is such a forward -

Mr BARTLETT - It does not mean that nothing will be added between now and 2012. Each year there are new things added and there is a formal process involving how schools apply for funding. The next round is open at the moment, so you can get your Devonport gym in there.

CHAIR - So Burnie High School redevelopment is in with a show?

Mr BARTLETT - Yes. I know there is always more to do in schools, but it will come full circle here - back to demographic change. We have too many schools and they are costing us too much to maintain. Fewer schools would mean better schools, and on top of that, I also add that we have a \$143 million capital works program. Last year I announced a record capital works programs of \$93 million. This is now \$140 million and that again is a record - by a substantial amount. We are investing more in capital works in schools than ever before by a long shot. But I recognise there is still more to do, and one of the reasons is that we need to shut some of the schools.

CHAIR - The Education budget of \$1.1 million is substantial. We certainly thank you and everyone who has come today and we understand, appreciate and acknowledge the work that goes into providing information for this committee process. On behalf of the committee, I thank you.

Mr BARTLETT - I also say thank you to the committee members. It has been a really robust, useful discussion. I put on the Hansard my thanks to John Smith, the secretary, and all of the team here, who do an enormous amount of work. Sometimes they sit here half the night and get no questions. But they do a tremendous amount of work and a fantastic job. I am constantly impressed by their ability to deliver in very tight time frames in very trying circumstances.

CHAIR - Thank you, Premier.

The committee adjourned at 9.08 p.m.