

Monday 3 June 2013 - Estimates Committee B (McKim) - Part 2

DIVISION 2

(Department of Education) -

CHAIR - Minister, welcome back and I hope the break has been useful for you to get your head from one space to another. Education is obviously a critical part of the Tasmanian landscape in all sorts of facets so we are going to use the afternoon and perhaps go into the evening to fully explore the budget and how that might affect our people as we move forward. Have you some general comments, minister?

Mr McKIM - Madam Chair, I will just make a few brief comments. I am going to base my comments on the half-yearly highlights report to the minister that I received very recently from the department and I would be very happy to provide copies of this report to the committee. It is a report from Mr Pettit, as secretary, to me as minister, going through some of the highlights and actions that the department has taken in recent times.

CHAIR - Would not that normally be publicly available?

Mr McKIM - This is the first such report that I have received and without binding any future ministers I would be happy to make this one available to the committee. It is not in any way intended to be a confidential document.

The department, I believe, has made great strides in recent times addressing some of the core challenges and opportunities that exist in education in Tasmania. The department's core values are learning, excellence, equity, respect and relationships. We have key drivers, which are successful learners, an innovative workforce, inspired leadership, dynamic learning environments and community confidence. The priorities for the department are early years, school education and also further education of adult learning and skills.

In a range of areas we have demonstrated significant progress in the last 12 months since we were last before this committee. I will not go into everything we have done. As you have implied, Madam Chair, education is a very large and very important portfolio area so the time available to me in overview will not allow me to go to everything but I will just touch, with the indulgence of the committee, on some of the things that we have done.

We have introduced the NAPLAN Toolkit into our schools to allow classroom teachers to examine individual student performances or class performances or year level performances with a view to informing educational planning. We have supported the introduction of the NAPLAN Toolkit through professional learning for our teachers and school leaders. We have delivered 306 iPads to students with a disability in schools across the state, bringing the total to 610 currently in use to support individual education programs and, again, we have supported our staff through professional learning through information technology networks at the local level.

I am very pleased to confirm that TasTAFE will kick off as planned on 1 July and I would like to express my appreciation to the Council for passing the legislation without amendment very recently. We are in very good shape around TasTAFE and kicking off TasTAFE as planned on 1 July, and no doubt there will be some questions about that later from the committee.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

We have launched a new strategy for sexuality and relationship education in our schools, which focuses on supporting schools to deliver development-appropriate relationships and sexual education. We are making really good ground through our government education and training international area. We have onshore enrolments up 35 per cent in Tasmanian government schools from the same time last year through GETI and we also have a 92 per cent increase in Tasmanian Polytechnic English language-intensive courses for overseas students. So we are seeing increases in enrolments in those two areas.

We are doing a lot of work to support literacy and numeracy across years 5 to 8. The previous NAPLAN results have shown less than acceptable outcomes in literacy and numeracy in our high school years, - NAPLAN tests in high school year 7 and year 9 - so we have partnered with the University of Tasmania on an action research project to improve literacy and numeracy across years 5 to 8; participating schools in this project and their primary school clusters are located in different regions and the idea is that each cluster of schools involved in this project will explore a related but different challenge. I can go through the clusters if you would like and that project is being supported to the tune of \$200 000 that we have obtained from the federal literacy and numeracy reward funding.

We are working hard around professional development in the area of students with disabilities. We have had 432 school staff complete an interactive, online professional learning module on a disability-specific topic from a range that includes things like dyslexia, autism, managing behaviour difficulties, vision and hearing loss, motor coordination difficulties and speech and language communication. We have also developed, through the Professional Learning Institute, a four-day professional learning program for school leaders entitled Empowering Diversity in our Schools.

We are rolling out a performance and development framework. We have introduced the new Department of Education performance and development framework after a comprehensive consultation process and this was accompanied and complimented by employment direction 26, which is around managing performance in the state service and we anticipate that our staff will all have a performance and development plan in place by no later than 30 June this year. That is important progress on an important issue.

We are also moving forward very rapidly on our Professional Learning Institute, on which I am happy to go into detail for the committee if it wishes a little later, and we are also seeking really good outcomes from our principal network leaders, which were introduced relatively recently, and I am also happy to go into further detail about that if the committee would like.

We have had significant workforce renewal in our school system. We have employed around 70 new principals in the last 18 months and they have undergone principal induction training through the Principal Leadership Development Program, which is a really comprehensive five-day program to assist people in upskilling themselves around their responsibilities as they become principals.

We have launched the 26TEN strategy in October last year as part of the Tasmanian adult literacy action plan. It is going really well and I am happy to provide further details for the committee if it wishes, but I truly believe this is a nation-leading program and we are moving forward in a more coordinated way to tackle adult literacy than any other jurisdiction in the country and everyone is justifiably, I think, very proud of the achievements of our 26TEN strategy.

We have also delivered free public Wi-Fi to all major LINC Tasmania service locations. As the parliament has, Madam Chair, as you have just informed us, so have we in all major LINC Tasmania service locations. We have new asbestos registers updated for every site. There would be a range of other things, but in the interest of allowing the committee to scrutinise the things that it wishes to focus on rather than those that I might wish to focus on, I would be happy to take questions from the committee. I can present a copy for each member of the committee, and I will table this document to make it easier. That is the half-yearly highlights of the Department of Education's progress towards its strategic plan, couched as a report to me.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Minister, they are all fantastic achievements on the face it. For your own aspirations for what you want to achieve, what hasn't been addressed in that plan?

Mr McKIM - We are moving to address all of the major challenges that we believe are facing the portfolio and the sector from the department's point of view. I also add that one of the things that I am proudest of in this year's budget was the \$83 million commitment contained in the budget to implement any agreement that may be struck between the state government and the commonwealth government around the Gonski reforms.

CHAIR - Mr Dean is going to get right to the nub of that.

Mr McKIM - I am happy to have a conversation about that. That is a rock-solid, cast-iron guarantee from the state government and should we, for whatever reason, not come to an agreement with the commonwealth on Gonski - and negotiations are still continuing, as members would be aware - that money will go into the Tasmanian school system. It is really important that people understand that. That extra funding is not conditional on there being an agreement signed. If there is an agreement then that funding is available for us to implement. Should an agreement not be signed then that money will remain as an allocation in the budget and will be expended on the Tasmanian school system.

CHAIR - Back to my question, what is not there that is your aspiration?

Mr McKIM - I think we are addressing all of what we see as the key challenges in education. A lot of what we are doing is long-term and I will give you one example there, Chair: our nation-leading Launching into Learning program, which last year for the first time was available in every government primary school in the state, and it is a fantastic program. It is much loved not only by those who teach the program but also by those who are supported in the program. We have done some longitudinal studies on Launching into Learning and it has shown some really exciting outcomes and potentially there are some very exciting educational outcomes being delivered that we can measure as students flow through into our school system.

For the information of the committee, on average, a student who attends Launching into Learning will attend five more school days per year and this shows that Launching into Learning is engaging very strongly with parents, and it is mostly parents that make school attendance decisions rather than the students. I truly believe that over time Launching into Learning will help us increase the value that the Tasmanian community places on a good education and therefore help us in some of our longer-term efforts to improve our school results, and also to have people attend school more regularly. If you are not at school then you are not learning from your teachers.

CHAIR - I would not say you can't learn.

Mr McKIM - You can learn from your parents, of course, but you are not learning in a structured environment if you are taking days off school. Launching into Learning is something that I think is paying off in spades for Tasmania and I have no doubt that as more and more students who have been through Launching into Learning flow into our school system, we will see those improvements reflected in things like NAPLAN.

I should mention that our NAPLAN results last year were encouraging. We improved in 15 out of the 20 NAPLAN measures and closed the gap to the rest of Australia in 17 out of the 20 NAPLAN measures. Our system is improving and on those data, it is improving more rapidly than the rest of the country. We still have a long way to go before -

Mrs TAYLOR - There was a variation at different years, wasn't there, minister? Years 3, 5 and 7 are not all equal.

Mr McKIM - No, in general terms our year 3 and 5 results were strong and our year 7 and 9 results showed some scope for improvement. I have plenty of details here if you would like to go to those.

Another key challenge for us is retention. We will discuss that in some detail probably a little bit later on. The figure that most quote, and particularly the Liberal Party quotes, is our apparent retention rate and this is not considered to be a robust number, in order to understand how we are travelling, and I would welcome the opportunity, should the committee wish, to place the numbers on the record that are a more accurate reflection of our retention rate, particularly in the government system.

I have also announced my action plan around the provision of year 11 and 12 into regional Tasmania which is where our biggest challenges lie. We will not be killing off the college system as the Liberal Party shadow minister is proposing to do. We will invest in a hub and spoke model to put more resources into colleges to better support the provision of year 11 and 12 in the regions in very close partnership with the relevant schools in our regions.

We have also been supported by the Skills Tasmania Board to deliver \$3.1 million into developing an e-learning strategy which will include provision, using the NBN and other online opportunities of year 11 and 12 into the region. We have relaxed some of the frameworks around our school transition fund which was created in response to the Fairbrother report into school viability and we have had some successes in that area but we will now allow applications into that fund for regional schools that believe they need some infrastructure support in order to better deliver year 11 and 12 programs into regional Tasmania. We have heard the challenges that are being faced, particularly in regional Tasmania, which I know is a very legitimate interest of yours, Madam Chair. We believe we are on the right track to make some of the improvements that we need to make in that area.

Dr GOODWIN - Madam Chair, I ask that you request the minister to refrain from verballing my colleague in the other place, the shadow minister for education. He will have the opportunity to make those comments when he has Mr Ferguson in the other place. I have a college in my electorate, Rosny College, and I take exception to you suggesting that we are proposing shutting down the colleges so please refrain from making those comments.

Mr McKIM - I am being honest about your policy, Dr Goodwin. If you are uncomfortable with that I am sorry.

Dr GOODWIN - Your perception of our policy. My understanding is that we are not closing down colleges and I would not support that because I am a strong supporter of Rosny College so please refrain from making those comments here.

Mr McKIM - Madam Chair, I do not need to take direction from one of your members. I will take it from you.

CHAIR - Thank you. I hear what the member says in relation to that. Dr Goodwin is a member of this committee so we will use the respect that is -

Mr McKIM - I accept that entirely, Madam Chair, and I make the point that anyone who is proposing every high school in Tasmania goes to year 11 and 12, cannot possibly keep the college system running at the same time.

CHAIR - We will get into more detail about that. I will invite Mr Dean to begin 1.1.

1.1 In School Education -

Mr DEAN - One of the issues we have is the Gonski matter and we need to find out exactly where we are with that. I note that the Premier seems to be backing off or is slow in moving forward, so what is the current position? I would like to know how the funding fits in and about the funding structure.

Mr McKIM - In terms of that \$83 million?

Mr DEAN - Will the \$400 million that is going to come from the commonwealth government as a part of the Gonski strategy be additional to the current monies that are provided?

Mr McKIM - The commonwealth has made it clear that a number of the national partnerships that currently exist and provide commonwealth funding through to state departments, will lapse. They had a finite end date but the intent from the current commonwealth government - and we all acknowledge there is an election coming up soon - is that the national partnerships will in the main lapse so you could not accurately say that the commonwealth commitment was all new money although it will be re-badged, if you like, as Gonski money.

In relation to the negotiations, I should be clear that both the Premier and I have said that we don't intend to conduct the negotiations through the media or publicly. We will negotiate in good faith with the commonwealth and that's what we are doing. As both the Premier and I have said, we want to make sure that, in the Tasmanian context, the Gonski principles are actually delivered through any agreement, and fundamentally they are, that schools be funded with an extra loading for disadvantage. There is a range of disadvantage factors contained within Gonski but we want to make sure that Tasmania's disadvantaged students and disadvantaged schools are getting the results that we believe the principles of Gonski say it should be delivered to a schools' students.

Mr DEAN - So that's the hold-up point at this present time, [TBC 2:50:58 inaudible] is not an issue.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - We're still working hard with the commonwealth and negotiating in good faith with them. As I said, our focus is making sure that the most disadvantaged students and most disadvantaged schools in Tasmania do receive the extra levels of support that they deserve.

Mr DEAN - Will the Gonski reform plan, as you currently understand and know it, when applied to Tasmania, give government schools the full resources needed to meet the full educational needs of all children who are attending government schools? There clearly are disability -

Mr McKIM - So, you're asking about government schools, Mr Dean?

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr McKIM - We haven't actually signed Gonski, so I can't give any commitments about what Gonski might do because we haven't landed on an agreement with the commonwealth.

Mr DEAN - Sorry to cut you off - that's my question. Surely, you would know now what the Gonski strategy is going to return to Tasmania and for its education. You must be across that now, minister. It's been around for a while and other states have signed up to it.

Mr McKIM - No, one other state has signed up to it; New South Wales and the ACT – one territory - has signed up to it. Yes, in broad terms, we understand the Gonski principles but - I'm not trying to be evasive here, Mr Dean - I'm just saying that we haven't signed so we actually don't know what any final agreement might look like. Something I can say is that, if we can land an agreement, resources in some of those areas would be increased. Even if we don't sign an agreement, there is a commitment from government for an extra \$83 million over the budget out years to be put into the Tasmanian school system.

Ultimately, in the government system, the decisions around how to expend some of that money would be left in the hands of the schools because I truly believe, as minister, that it is not for me to micro-manage how a school decides to expend its allocation. It is far better decided by a school through consultation with its school association so that local factors and local circumstances can be taken into account when making spending decisions.

Mr DEAN - I had a number of other questions on this and I guess your answer is going to be somewhat similar. The next question was going to be what is the likely financial impact on the rural schools, the country schools and the smaller schools? Where are they going to fit in?

Mr McKIM - The Prime Minister has given a commitment that no school would be worse off under Gonski. That was a commitment she gave last year. It is a question of the relativities of any increase rather than whether any school would be worse off because the promised we have that no school would be worse off.

Mr DEAN - My question follows into that. Jumping off Gonski, the designing - how will that impact on this where you've currently got zones set for students to attend a particular school -

Mr McKIM - Are you talking about home areas?

Mr DEAN - Yes and attending the out-of-area schools. How does that fit into this whole thing, if it occurs?

Mr McKIM - It's not really interconnected with Gonski. Gonski is a funding model.

Mr DEAN - But it's funding to particular schools; the schools will be funded from this Gonski strategy.

Mr McKIM - Gonski is effectively a base loading per student with extra loadings for disadvantage. Gonski is a per student funding model, not a per school funding model.

Mr DEAN - That's the reason I ask the question. If a student attends a school out of area, that funding goes with that student to that school. Is that the way it occurs there?

Mr McKIM - On enrolment.

Mr DEAN - What is the cost of educating a child in Tasmania? I could not find that in the budget papers. Other states can tell you I think roughly what it costs to educate a child in primary school, high school and college.

Mr McKIM - If you are asking on a per student basis, the cost would vary depending on a number of factors such as whether the students are being educated in a large school or a small school. I would cost more per student in a smaller school than a larger school. If you are asking on an average basis -

Mr DEAN - I think on an average basis, but then I would like to know the average difference between a country school and another school.

Mr McKIM - I do not have the regional urban breakdown but I can give some information around what it costs. This is a per capita expenditure rate for Tasmanian government schools. The latest figures I have here are 2010-11 and we have some preliminary unpublished figures for 2011-12. In 2010-11 in primary school it is \$13 441, in secondary school -

Mr DEAN - That's per student in a primary school?

Mr McKIM - Yes. In secondary school it is \$15 983 and out of school, \$564. I was just informed by the secretary that individual rates are published on the MySchool website.

Mr GAFFNEY - I have a question on Gonski. You mentioned the money going in, the \$83 million over four years; would that go straight into the school resource package?

Mr McKIM - Not necessarily. I have said 'school system'. There may be a need to fund non-government schools through that and also any school needs an administrative system to support it so it may be that some of that money would actually go into the administrative supports we provide to schools, not 100 per cent into schools.

Mr GAFFNEY - As an organisation, how do you determine what percentage would stay with the body elect for administration and what percentage would go into the schools in various ways?

Mr McKIM - The answer to that may be different depending on whether or not we sign an agreement with the commonwealth. If we do sign an agreement, there will be a number of details

on that agreement that at least have the potential at this stage to go to a part of the question that you have asked. If we do not determine that, ultimately the act provides for the minister of the day to make funding decisions, so ultimately they would be my decision but I would certainly be very careful to give due consideration to the advice of the department before I made that decision.

Mr GAFFNEY - The essence of the Gonski report is that the funding goes to the student and I would think it would be fairly tight to make sure that that funding gets there.

Mr McKIM - We always try to maximise the money that we spend on the ground in our schools. Mr Gaffney, it is probably timely for me to advise the committee that on an expenditure-per-capita basis, Tasmania runs the second leanest administrative support in the country behind New South Wales. New South Wales obviously has economies of scale that we can only dream of down here.

CHAIR - A leader again - New South Wales.

Mr DEAN - That is what I put up. I put up for prisons as well.

Mr McKIM - The 2010-11 out of school costs for Tasmania are now only higher than New South Wales and are 22 per cent lower than the Australian average, which is a really impressive achievement by the department in terms of running a very lean administration in light of the number of students we educate in our schools. I would like to congratulate the department because what it actually means is that the departments have to work harder and smarter in order to continue to deliver the services. I am really confident on those figures that there is no untrimmed fat, if you like, or no major untrimmed fat, in the department in terms of administration. We indeed are amongst the Australian leaders in ensuring that the money goes where it is most needed, which is out on the ground into our schools.

[3.00 p.m.]

CHAIR - Does the Gonski initiative address the teacher aide, the teacher assistant aspect of learning? We know it is key to special needs -

Mr McKIM - Yes, it is.

CHAIR - the ones that often need that little bit of extra help. Does Gonski address that area?

Mr McKIM - It will enable that area to be addressed by schools, yes. Inevitably a part, and potentially a large part of the Gonski funding would go directly through the school gate and schools then would have the capacity with increased resources to make decisions about how they spend those increased resources. I do not have advice on this, but my personal view is there would be no doubt that some schools would use at least some of that money to increase, for example, teacher aide hours or teacher assistants, as we call them now, into providing support for their students, including students with disabilities.

CHAIR - So the additional \$83 million that has been allocated for Gonski or otherwise, regardless of whether the Gonski component gets a gig or not, will that address the teacher assistants' inequities around their salaries?

Mr McKIM - Are you talking about the stand-down issue here?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

CHAIR - Yes. Will it address that?

Mr McKIM - No, I do not believe that it would because I believe schools would -

CHAIR - When are we going to address it then?

Mr McKIM - I would have liked to have addressed that during my time as minister and it is a matter of some regret for me that I have not been able to. As you would know, Madam Chair, all government departments have been required to make significant savings as a result of the state budget two years ago.

CHAIR - Including the parliament.

Mr McKIM - Yes, including the parliament.

CHAIR - All of us.

Mr McKIM - Quite rightly the parliament has been included in that.

I want to run through some of the improvements that teacher assistants have received recently. We negotiated the first formalised industrial agreements specifically for teacher assistants and there was an indication by that process of the government's recognition and support for teacher assistants and the role that they play in our schools.

As part of moving teacher assistants over to the Tasmanian State Service Award as from 1 October 2011, there will be annual pay increases for teacher assistants for the next three years in addition to the general state service salary increases and just in terms of the quantum. I think this is a very good outcome for teacher assistants. For a full-time employee they will receive an extra \$2 110 in the first year and once the staged implementation is completed a full-time employee will receive a pay increase of \$6 250 per year as a result of the work we have done.

Whilst, as I said, it is a matter of some regret for me that I have not had the finances available to address the standdown issue - and I do understand and accept why teacher assistants are concerned about that issue - I would argue very strongly that by the time we have finished the phased implementation of the state service award, full-time teacher assistants will be in a position of receiving \$6 250 extra per year compared to their pay prior to that move. That has increased our total cost by approximately \$6.8 million per year once that implementation has come in. That is a good result for teacher assistants. It is something they were campaigning for and asking for for some time.

CHAIR - In my nine years here, minister.

Mr McKIM - And in my 11 years, Chair.

CHAIR - Both of us have failed them then because that was in my inaugural speech.

Mr McKIM - I understand very clearly and strongly the desire to minimise or end the unpaid stand-downs but again I make the point that a full-time teacher assistant, because of what we have done recently, will be paid over \$6 000 per year more than what they were being paid prior to this

move. That is a good outcome in anyone's terms although I am certainly not suggesting that there will not be some more work to be done in the future around unpaid stand-downs.

Mr DEAN - Where is the Gonski decision at right now and when is it likely to be finalised? You have told me the areas that you are trying to get a position on.

Mr McKIM - The Prime Minister has asked for it to be finalised by the end of this month. I do not have a crystal ball so I cannot indicate whether or not it will be finalised in that time, only to indicate that the Tasmanian government and I, as minister, have probably been amongst the strongest supporters of the Gonski recommendations from all of the state and territory governments around Australia. We have consistently said we would like to sign for Gonski and we are just working on making sure that any final deal actually delivers on the Gonski principles for disadvantaged students and disadvantaged schools.

CHAIR - In your capacity as minister, would you pick up the phone and talk to your counterpart in New South Wales, for instance, who has signed on the dotted line and obviously has been able to see the benefit for their state and their students and say: this is what we are still hanging out for, didn't you go for that or what? Do you have those conversations?

Mr McKIM - I know Adrian Piccoli, who is the New South Wales minister and I spoke to him at a ministerial council two or three weeks ago when we met in Sydney. I have noticed that subsequent to the New South Wales decision to sign Gonski there has been a little bit of public noise out of New South Wales about needing to know further information that some might suggest they should have informed themselves about before they signed, and not ask for it afterwards.

We have done a lot of work. The department has run a lot of models on Gonski or proposed models that have been provided by the commonwealth. It has been a lot of work by the department but I should also indicate that central agencies including the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Treasury are involved, as I think is appropriate under these circumstances, and that the Premier's office and the Prime Minister's office, and the Premier and the Prime Minister, are also involved in these negotiations. They are not simply negotiations between Education ministers around the country and I think it is probably fair to say at a commonwealth level it has been driven by the Prime Minister, as you would have noticed by her regular media appearances on this issue.

Mr DEAN - There is a lot of room to negotiate for each state, as illustrated in the Gonski report.

Mr McKIM - The commonwealth is negotiating with each state bilaterally, and that is around the government school systems in each state. In terms of how much room there is to negotiate, time will tell.

CHAIR - Minister, there has been \$900 000 allocated over four years for year 11 and 12 regional education and obviously I have an interest in all aspects of education but the regional aspect gets my interest. Which schools will be targeted to receive that support in 2013-14 in the budget.

Mr McKIM - We have not made that decision yet.

CHAIR - How will you make that decision?

Mr McKIM - By having a look at what their areas of highest need are and the areas where we can make the most difference in terms of provision of year 11 and 12 into regional Tasmania. What this will allow is for regional schools to partner with a college to further extend year 11 and 12 curriculum to regional schools. It is a hub and spoke model that we are going to be developing because there is significant expertise embedded in our college system and what we need to do is make sure that the colleges are working closely with regional high schools to make sure that the kind of programs the colleges are delivering which already happens -

CHAIR - In my understanding, that sort of already happens.

Mr McKIM - Yes, to a degree, it does. We want to formalise that more and use the extra funding to increase the range of curriculum offerings that exist in regional schools in Tasmania. I went through the school transition fund and the e-learning strategy with you earlier and I would be happy to go into more detail. They will both provide significant opportunities, the school transition fund in terms of infrastructure facilities, so we have opened that up for application for regional schools around infrastructure to assist their delivery of years 11 and 12 in their local area. I am really excited about the \$3.1 million over three years endorsed by the Skills Tasmania Board. Vocational education and training, e-learning strategy, is something that we need in Tasmania. It particularly addresses that tyranny of distance that many regional schools face.

Madam Chair, because I know of your interest in this area, it might be worth briefly recalling an event I went to. The shadow minister was at the event too. There was a film shown, that had been pulled together, with some support, by some students, where I watched someone who lives in the far south of Tasmania, who attends Hobart College. She had to get out of bed at 4 o'clock in the morning to get to college and did not get home until after 9 o'clock at night. That is a very difficult circumstance for that student. She was showing amazing self-discipline to continue with that commitment to her education. That sort of transport disadvantage and tyranny of distance needs to be addressed. There is no doubt in my mind.

CHAIR - It is a 5.30 a.m. start from Bridport and that is if you live in Bridport. If you live outside of those key townships there is more travel involved so that story is not unique -

Mr McKIM - No, it is not. I left that event thinking there has to be more we can do. We will also be investigating, by forming a working group, which includes key stakeholders, better transport and accommodation alternatives that better match student need. It is an area where I have accepted we need to do more. I have published my action plan that has some positive movement in this area. We are also going to develop an explicit vision for the future and a statewide plan to improve the retention of year 11 and 12 students across Tasmania because I accept there is more we need to do in that area.

CHAIR - Effectively, there will be more students attending their current high school than will be going to the college system with that model?

Mr McKIM - I cannot pre-empt decisions that individual students might make but our intention is to further extend year 11 and 12 curriculum into regional high schools. That will provide more opportunities for learning across a broader range of learning areas than is currently the case and people will make their individual choices and decisions in accordance with their circumstances.

CHAIR - Will schools or areas be able to put their hand up and say I want to be a pilot for this? Although \$900 000 seems like a lot of money, I expect it will not go far when you are implementing that type of program.

Mr McKIM - My advice from Mr Pettit is that we have begun work with principals - college and high school principals - so that we can start moving forward in this area. We expect principals to be in very close communication with their school associations and their school communities so that they can feed in their views.

I have some updated information about what is already happening in this space around delivering senior secondary enrolments through district and regional high schools. We currently have 18 schools - and I can provide the list if the committee is interested - where we have senior secondary students at district and regional high schools.

Mrs TAYLOR - Are you including Bridgewater in that, minister?

Mr McKIM - I am including the Jordan River Learning Federation in that, yes. We have Deloraine High School, Dover District High, Huonville High, Jordan River Learning Federation senior school campus, King Island District High, Kingsmeadows High, Lilydale District, Mountain Heights, Port Dalrymple, Rosebery District, Scottsdale High, Sheffield, Smithton High, Sorell, St Helens District High, St Marys District School, Tasman District School and Winnaleah District High School from up your way, Madam Chair.

CHAIR - Absolutely. I went to Winnaleah School.

Mr McKIM - Did you now?

CHAIR - I did, until grade 6, and then I became the high school student at Scottsdale. They do a good job up there.

Mr McKIM - I have no doubt about that at all. I believe the Attorney-General is a previous principal at Winnaleah District High.

CHAIR - At Winnaleah District High School. He got the big transition fund money.

Mr GAFFNEY - Can we move on a bit? This is the \$1.1 billion portfolio we are looking at.

CHAIR - Thank you. I am just moving to Mr Finch; thank you, Mr Gaffney.

Mr FINCH - You mentioned in your overview about the special learning institute.

Mr McKIM - The Professional Learning Institute.

Mr FINCH - Right, that is what I wanted to clarify with you. That is what I found here. How does that work and what sort of allocation is there to that program?

Mr McKIM - This is an online learning institute. We obviously need a fit for purpose professional learning institute in Tasmania and rather than bricks and mortar, we have gone for an online Professional Learning Institute - a virtual Professional Learning Institute.

Mr FINCH - Is that for those teachers who are already involved with students with disabilities issues?

Mr McKIM - Yes. It is not just around students with disabilities. There are a range of topics and learnings covered by the Professional Learning Institute; basically, it delivers and brokers high quality professional learning for all Department of Education staff, so it is not even just teachers and school leaders. We have people in our LINC system, for example, whom we also want to support to be the best that they can be and to support them in achieving some of their goals around their professional development.

It is for all Department of Education staff. In 2012, the Professional Learning Institute offered programs primarily aimed at school-based leadership roles. That was an area that the department believed that we really needed to focus on in the early days of the Professional Learning Institute and it is still working on expanding the professional learning that it offers.

In 2012, we had 362 principals who were aspiring principals participating in the school leadership programs offered by the Professional Learning Institute and this year, as I said, the institute has expanded its focus to encompass all areas of the agency. 2012 was the first year that this Professional Learning Institute had been up and running on a virtual basis and by 2015 it is our intention that the Professional Learning Institute will be in a position to meet all employees' professional learning needs as determined by the individual performance development plans which I mentioned earlier. I am really proud of the work that the Professional Learning Institute does.

I can provide the committee with some of the funding details in terms of salary and non-salary costs but just very briefly the total 2012-13 budget for the PLI was just shy of \$6.5 million, made up of approximately \$1.28 million in salaries and approximately \$5.31 million in non-salary costs.

Mrs TAYLOR - Are they Department of Education qualifications or what?

Mr McKIM - My advice is that they are linked to UTAS programs.

Mrs TAYLOR - They go on to UTAS after professional learning, or do you get UTAS qualifications from them?

Mr McKIM - Mrs Taylor, if it is all right with the committee, I will ask Mr Pettit to respond to that for you because he knows more detail about this.

Mr PETTIT - Thanks, minister. The Professional Learning Institute - PLI - was set up last year. It was established, firstly, on leadership and then, as the minister said, to extend it more broadly to cover everyone in the agency, including corporate. Corporate have done a lot of work this year to start developing particularly around the PDP - professional development program. You can see where it actually lights up with their work. A number of their programs are linked or are in consultation with UTAS now so that when our people do the courses they can be attributed to higher degrees or elements of higher degrees. Some of that is still being finalised but a lot of it is in place and the aim is that we have real-time learning that goes on to higher education but no obligation.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs TAYLOR - If they do not use it for a UTAS degree their qualifications will be Tas Ed department qualifications?

Mr PETTIT - That is correct. All of the courses are designed around their work, regardless of where they come from in their work. It is about work-based learning. We are also in partnership with Queensland at a place called QUELI - Queensland Education Leadership Institute - which is an equivalent learning institute. We have purchased and also are in the process of looking at selling our product back to them so that that money will be reinvested.

Mrs TAYLOR - It is important that the qualifications be transferable and recognised.

Mr McKIM - Professional development is such an important part of what we are about in the department and it is part of the significant increase in support that we have put in place certainly in my time as minister, particularly in the area of schools but not limited to the area of schools.

Mr FINCH - School leavers, I imagine, too, would appreciate the opportunity to develop skills in this area.

Mr McKIM - Absolutely, and the feedback is really good. As you would expect, Mr Finch, as minister I get out into schools on a regular basis. There are a few questions I always ask principals when I am talking to them at their schools. Feedback on the school leadership program that is offered through the Professional Learning Institute has been consistently supportive and thankful for the support provided and for professional development opportunities they are provided with.

Mr FINCH - Minister, in your paper are mentioned some issues including dyslexia, autism and managing behaviour difficulties. Is epilepsy in that program as well? Do these school leaders get across that issue?

Mr McKIM - Not at the moment but it is our intention to include that in the future.

Mr FINCH - I would highlight that to you, minister.

Dr GOODWIN - Minister, I wanted to get some figures, if possible, on the number of teachers and support staff and how that might have changed over the year.

Mr McKIM - Is this is across all sectors of the department?

Dr GOODWIN - If you have that information it might be useful.

Mr McKIM - Did you want to fire away, Dr Goodwin, with the specific questions?

Dr GOODWIN - Let's start with teacher numbers.

Mr McKIM - I will give you the departmental figures first and then I will go to the teaching staff. These are comparisons from March 2013 this year compared to March 2012 last year, a reduction in staff in the department of 56 on a headcount basis, which is 89.2 reduction on full-time equivalents. So the headcount has come down from 10 478 in March 2012 to 10 422 in March 2013. Teacher staffing has reduced by 22 on a head count basis from March 2012 to March 2013. The advice I have is that total separation rates are at similar levels to previous years,

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

that is around 3 per cent. I know we are not politicising it up here but the constant banter that I have sacked hundreds of teachers - and I won't attribute it because I won't politicise it - is false. There is not a single sacking of a single teacher in Tasmania that I am aware of that has come about because of any policy decision I have made as minister. I place that on the record.

In terms of professional support staff recruitment, they have increased by three on a head count basis, which is 4.94 on an FTE basis, from 2012 to 2013.

Mrs TAYLOR - Minister, aren't those numbers back to front? How can you have three head count and 4 point something FTEs?

Mr McKIM - A very good question, Mrs Taylor. I will -

Mrs TAYLOR - The previous figure was the same; you had 52 less and 80-something FTEs, which doesn't make sense. Your head counts and your FTEs are probably back to front.

Mr McKIM - They may be back to front. I'll seek some clarification on that. That is a very good pick-up by you, Mrs Taylor.

Dr Goodwin, I have reams of staff information here.

Dr GOODWIN - Excellent.

Mr McKIM - If you would like to interrogate any further, I think we are in a position to assist you.

Dr GOODWIN - I want to get a breakdown of school psychologists, social workers and speech therapists. There are different categories of support staff. I am just trying to get an idea of how those numbers might have changed.

Mr McKIM - Before we go there, Dr Goodwin, I will respond to Mrs Taylor. My advice is that it is actually correct and I will explain why. The main reasons why the FTE is greater than the head count is due to a combination of the following: workload variation, that is the change of workload for a full-time employee to part-time or an existing part-time employee applying for a further reduction to hours - head count will remain the same but the FTE will decrease; separations and commencements where a full-time employee is replaced by a part-time employee - head count will remain the same but the FTE will decrease; employees proceeding on unpaid leave such as maternity leave, leave without pay, sick leave without pay, as at the reporting pay period ending 27 March 2013 will result in a reduced FTE but retains the current head count.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay, so FTEs is really the important figure, isn't it, because that is the contact hours.

Mr McKIM - Thank you for that.

Mrs TAYLOR - I just found it a bit odd.

Mr McKIM - Yes, I thought it was a bit odd too so I am pleased to be able to clarify that.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Dr Goodwin, you asked about school psychologists. We made an allocation in the 2010-11 budget to employ additional school psychologists. That was a \$500 000 commitment. We have employed one FTE in the Jordan River Learning Federation - these are specifically school psychologists - one FTE to the Tasmanian eSchool and we have also employed one FTE for Learning Services North-West and one FTE for Learning Services South. So, we have increased the number of school psychologists by four in that period of time and we currently have 55.55 FTE school psychologists employed in the government school system. I think that answers your question.

Dr GOODWIN - I was also interested in social workers.

Mr McKIM - I can go through those. We have other professional support staff categorised as speech language pathologists and social workers, so they are the two categories.

Dr GOODWIN - They are in one group?

Mr McKIM - No, they are separated. I can give you the two and this is a full-time equivalent for the speech and language pathologists and we are up two between March 2012 and March 2013 - up from 39.4 to 41.4; and for social workers we are up 2.48 FTE - from 50.6 in March 2012 to 53.1 in March 2013. There is an increase in FTE across speech and language pathologists, social workers and school psychologists from the equivalent time last year.

Dr GOODWIN - Teacher assistants?

Mr McKIM - Wonders will never cease. I have managed to beat Mr Finch to the draw there and I think that is the first time in my Estimates career that that has happened. Maybe he will buy me a beer later. Teacher assistants, we have gone from 1 540 in March 2012 to 1 519 in March 2013.

Dr GOODWIN - Is there any particular reason for the reduction?

Mr McKIM - There are a number of national partnerships coming to an end. They would have been teacher assistants who were previously funded with commonwealth funds and those partnerships have now ended.

Dr GOODWIN - Do you have figures on other school staff? There would be groundspeople and front office?

Mr McKIM - Would you like me to run through them? I have nine categories here.

Dr GOODWIN - Yes.

Mr McKIM - This is across the department. Allied health professionals from 129 in March 2012 to 124 in March 2013. Education facility attendants, who are the people who maintain our facilities, have gone up from 910 in March 2012 to 912 in March 2013. We have LINC attendants or cleaners and they are up from nine in March 2012 to 17 in March 2013.

Dr GOODWIN - Minister, that seems like a large increase.

Mr McKIM - It is a large increase. That is the new LINC's that have come online.

Nurses one and one and, no, I cannot answer where that nurse is stationed, I am sorry, but we could make some inquiries if you are interested. SES officers, which includes the head of agency, are up two from 25 to 27. Teacher assistants we have covered. The teaching service has gone from 5 770 to 5 748 so the Tasmanian State Service Award general has gone from 2 021 to 2 009 and the Tasmanian State Service Award professional has gone from 73 to 65. They are all comparisons from March 2012 to March 2013.

Dr GOODWIN - Could I ask a question about relief teachers and how much has been spent on relief teachers?

Mr McKIM - We do not have that with us, but if you put that on notice we will provide that for you. It was easier for us to source that in dollar terms so we will provide facts for the committee for that.

Mr DEAN - While we are on numbers?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Do we have the enrolments this year across primary, high and colleges and comparisons of each year?

Mr McKIM - I have those. Government students, as a proportion of total Tasmanian students were at 70.9, which is significantly higher than the Australian average of 65.1 so that is the proportion of students enrolled in the government sector as a proportion of the total Tasmanian students.

We are continuing to experience falling enrolments across primary and secondary sectors and that has been a long-term trend, not only in Tasmania but around the country although we have achieved continued growth in kindergarten enrolments since 2010 which is encouraging. Total enrolments in the senior secondary sector, these figures are at February this year.

Mr DEAN - Senior secondary is high and colleges?

Mr McKIM - Senior secondary is year 11 and 12.

Mr DEAN - Year 11 and 12, right.

Mr McKIM - It is 11 542.9 FTE, a decline of just over 1 per cent.

Mr DEAN - That is the enrolments this year - 11 542.9?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Last year's enrolment?

Mr McKIM - The figure last year was 11 684. I have the figures from 2010. They bounce around a bit but there is not a noticeable trend there - 11 701 down to 11 583, up to 11 684, down to 11 542 so they are bouncing around in the order of a 1 per cent range.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr DEAN - High and primary if you have them?

Mr McKIM - I can give you a run down there. What would be the easiest comparison for you compared to 2012?

Mr DEAN - Just 2012 and 2011. I wanted to see whether it is going up or down, just an idea, which comes to my next question after this one about the schools.

Mr McKIM - I will start in 2011. For kindergarten in 2011 - 2 613.9; 2012 - 2 927.2; 2013 - 2 998.8 and that is the continual improvement in kindergarten enrolments that I was speaking about. Primary - 2011 - 32 550.6; 2012 - 32 195.4; and 2013 - 31 988.8. Secondary - 2011 - 17 704.4 - these are FTEs or point 4 of an extra student - 2012 - 17 373.7; and 2013 - 17 100.5.

The only other category we have is early special - 2011 - 148.2; 2012 - 134; 2013 - 46.7 and when you add them up, to save your calculator finger, Mr Dean, the subtotal which does not count senior secondary, our subtotal for early special, kindergarten, primary and secondary was 53 017.1 in 2011; 52 630.3 in 2012; and 52 234.8 in 2013. You can see that there is a decline and a trend down and I as I have said, that reflects the experience of the government sector around the country and is part of what is driving viability challenges in some of our schools.

Mr GAFFNEY - Madam Chair, can I suggest through you, on that line, perhaps next year, it might be good if some statistics regarding numbers of kids in schools, social workers, psychologists, teachers and staff be tabled and then we can have a look at it. If people have any queries they can follow it through. I am sure a lot of this information is available through websites.

Mr McKIM - I am not sure that of all of this information would be available in an easily digestible form through websites.

CHAIR - Obviously there will be some discussion for the committee at a later stage. Thank you, Mr Gaffney.

Mr DEAN - My next question follows from that: where are we currently with schools coming together, schools amalgamating, school closures -

CHAIR - Transitions.

Mr DEAN - transitions, whatever you like to call them, where are we with that?

Mr McKIM - There have been four announcements that I have made to date.

The first one was Maydena and Westerway, that was an announced savings over three years of \$500 000, the financial commitments from the school transition fund were \$185 150 for that action and to date we have expended \$124 904, so there is still a bit of money to go out of the door on that one.

Geeveston Primary, which is in the early stages - the announced saving is \$400 000 over three years and the commitment was \$265 750; we have only expended \$5 500 of that and we are in the early days and still going through a process to talk to the local community down there about some of the details of the process.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

At Wesley Vale-Moriarty Primary the announced saving over three years was \$560 000; the commitment from the school transition fund was \$266 000 and we have to date expended \$61 458.

The final one was the Penguin Primary-Penguin High announcement, which is a saving of \$398 000 over three years with the commitment of \$89 346 and nothing rolled out of the gate on that one as yet, Mr Dean.

The work we are doing in this space will enable the department to make some savings and the total of the amounts of savings to date is \$1.85 million over three years. Obviously, there has been an up-front commitment required to assist school communities in making the decision and getting over the line. There are a number of other discussions occurring but it is really my preference not to offer a running commentary on those discussions because I truly think they need to be bottom up and driven by the community without that commentary from me as minister.

Mr DEAN - The one I was going to mention is not in there because I understand it has been signed off and that is Rocherlea-Mayfield, so the position there is what the actual change is and it comes up either now or in capital investments. What will happen with Rocherlea Primary School?

[3.45 p.m.]

Mr McKIM - That one is certainly one that has been -

Mr DEAN - The Rocherlea school brand is good.

Mr McKIM - That one has not been announced as yet.

Mr DEAN - It has been in the press.

Mr McKIM - I am aware that the media sometimes report things and it is absolutely their right to, but what I generally try to do is make sure the school communities are aware before I announce any decisions that may be made through this process because ultimately these have been driven by schools wanting to improve the education provided for their students and for the children of parents involved in the school communities.

Mr DEAN - Minister, I am sorry to interfere there but it has been said that the change will occur in 2014 and I just wonder, if it has been in the papers, where that announcement is. The communities are saying they have been advised - the Mayfield community and the Rocherlea community and -

Mr McKIM - Ultimately, only the minister can make these decisions and I have been really clear with everyone involved that this is a bottom-up process that has been driven by school communities. Yes, we have put some money on the table to assist them if they want to take advantage of the opportunities but, Mr Dean, my view in relation to official announcements about these things is that we do need to respect the school communities here and I would prefer not to make an announcement today on the fly and surprise the school community with the announcement.

Mr DEAN - It won't be a surprise.

Mr McKIM - No, but to surprise them with the fact that the announcement has been made. Of course these things are not surprises because, as I have said, it is a bottom-up process and many people are aware that there has been a discussion underway there.

Dr GOODWIN - Minister, on this school transition fund issue and the school viability, in regard to a school in my electorate and your electorate, Geilston Bay High School, which is really struggling at the moment and it is causing a great deal of angst in the community, particularly the Risdon Vale community, which has a feeder school for Geilston Bay High School, are you able to provide an update on what is happening there?

Mr McKIM - As you may be aware, there are discussions and conversations within the Geilston Bay school community underway about the viability of their school and they currently have, on my advice, under consideration a range of options for the future and this is again a community-led process. The department is providing support and assistance to the school community through this process, but the discussions and the directions that those discussions take are the directions that are chosen by the school community. Again, it has been my practice not to offer a running commentary on these matters and to respect the right of school communities to have a conversation without the minister offering a running commentary on what I think should happen or what is happening in that community.

These are sensitive issues for school communities and there is often a divergence of views in a school community about the best way forward - and I think that is natural in the circumstances. There is no necessarily right or wrong answer to a lot of these questions, and people within one community, even a very tightly knit school community, can have divergent views about the best way forward. I do not intend to offer a running commentary on any of the conversations that are occurring around Tasmania at the moment about access to the school transitional fund.

Dr GOODWIN - Can you tell me what the process is, though? There are the school viability criteria that have been set -

Mr McKIM - There are no criteria being applied by me or by the department to this in terms of school viability. There are criteria that have to be met, but it is not about assessing whether or not a school is viable. These communities self-select as to whether they want to be involved in discussions or not. If the school community does not want to think about the opportunities available in the school transition fund then that is fine.

Dr GOODWIN - You are not going to force any schools to close now?

Mr McKIM - No.

Dr GOODWIN - That is not the perception of some of the schools, as they tell us. They are still worried that they will face closure.

Mr McKIM - School viability - I think you are confusing two issues. I am not being critical because they are inter-related in a way. It is not my intention to force any school to close. The school transition fund is an entirely voluntary process. School communities self-select if they want to be part of it, then they can work through the process. We will support them to do that from the department and particularly through the principal of the school in terms of offering that support and facilitating the discussions, providing them with advice about what sort of things we

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

might be prepared to consider funding as a consequence of their involvement in the process. Ultimately, if a school community, at any stage in the discussion, decides it wants to walk away and not avail itself of the opportunities, then that is fine too. The School Transition Fund is an entirely voluntary process.

The other process we are working towards is around the recommendations from what has become known as the Fairbrother report. You may have seen a bit of media interest a week or two ago on our draft home areas and involvements policy. They will be put out this month by principals to school communities for discussion and consultation. That was recommendation one and two from the School Viability Working Group headed by Mr Fairbrother and I thank him for the work that he did on that. Once we have gone through and formalised our home areas, including boundaries, and our policy for accepting out-of-home area enrolments, we will then move on as recommended by Mr Fairbrother, to look at our student transport policy frameworks in Tasmania. It is only once all of those things have been completed, that there would be any consideration given to any future process around school viability.

Dr GOODWIN - So, it is not completely off the table then - it is being deferred while you look at these other issues.

Mr McKIM - This is all ancient history, if you do not mind me saying.

Dr GOODWIN - You may think it is ancient history, minister, but it is still causing a lot of angst in the community because there was a risk, and there is always going to be a risk, that it was going to become a self-fulfilling prophecy because once you say these are the schools that are on a hit list, they continue to be concerned. Parents are concerned about schools that were on the hit list - whether they are still on the hit list, what the future is for those schools.

Mr McKIM - There is no hit list.

Dr GOODWIN - There was.

Mr McKIM - No, there was not.

Dr GOODWIN - There was the school closure hit list.

Mr McKIM - I have never accepted that terminology because it is unnecessarily divisive. We know what your political party did - ran around raising as much fear as you could in local school communities.

Dr GOODWIN - We did not have to raise any fear; there was plenty out there already.

Mr McKIM - I heard you doing it - your party, not you personally.

CHAIR - Thank you, we are going to move on now.

Mr GAFFNEY - Do not ask about the Liberal plan, no way.

First, the school amalgamation process has been very well handled with the transition. I think that has been a much more effective way of dealing with it. One of the questions arising out of that scenario is once a school amalgamates and leaves, what is the policy regarding ownership

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

of land, buildings, looking after depletion of those, getting rid of it. Some schools in cities would be attractive as a land package. Other schools in rural areas would not be. Is there a policy or are you developing one and can you give us a snapshot of what that might look like?

Mr McKIM - Specifically in relation to the schools that we have announced through the school transition fund, the disbursements are different because it is all done on a case-by-case basis. We will work through those depending on individual circumstances of the schools. In general terms around disbursement of Department of Education property is not handled by the Department of Education. Disposal of government property is now handled centrally through the Department of Treasury and Finance but it requires me, or the minister of the day, to declare a property surplus to educational requirements. My position on this has always been that there should be a consultative process with the relevant school association or library association or what have you. Once I declare those properties or parts of a property as surplus to educational requirements they are handed over to the Department of Treasury and Finance.

My understanding is that the disposal process results in properties being offered in the first instance to other government agencies to purchase at market value as determined by the Valuer General. In practice the government agency that is often most interested is the Housing Innovations Unit in Housing Tasmania. There is a really good example of that, being the Church Street proposal, which is now being moved forward by the Minister for Human Services, Ms O'Connor. That is an old adult education facility which was substantially not being used by us; we have been able to find homes for all the programs that were being run out of there. I have no doubt that will in the future be an incredibly vibrant community, including for students who may be attending Elizabeth College. It is very handy geographically to Elizabeth College.

If there is no interest from other government agencies the properties are placed on the open public market either for sale at auction or through a public tender process, but that is managed by Treasury and Finance.

Mr GAFFNEY - When it is passed over to Treasury, is the maintenance and upkeep taken off the Education department's responsibility? Who pays for that?

Mr McKIM - We are responsible for the maintenance and security of those properties until they are sold.

Mr GAFFNEY - When you have a property on your books like south Queenstown primary school that has been there for 40 years, and central Queenstown primary school that has been there for 30 years and are still standing, what happens with that?

Mr McKIM - First, they are not on our books; they are on Treasury and Finance's books. As I said, the property is transferred to Treasury and Finance. Yes, as I have indicated to the committee that we are responsible for things like maintenance and security. I think everyone in government would try to move on properties and dispose of them as soon as possible but I guess that has been pointless, Mr Gaffney. You have to find someone who is prepared to buy something before you can sell it.

Mr GAFFNEY - I notice with the process you had with investment in new schools, new areas or new buildings, that recently in the budget there were some schools that received quite significant funding.

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - In your release on 23 May you said that 'These capital projects have developed in close consultation with school communities will ensure that they can continue to meet the evolving needs of students with modern and inviting facilities'. Mr O'Halloran said 'Schools are invited to submit for funding as part of the capital investment program'

It is my understanding those schools were invited four years ago to put in for those works and since then we have had significant BER. Did you go back and reassess? In that time the demographics in areas have changed. I imagine Brighton would be a growth area, there are other places that are growth areas, and it concerns me that a reassessment of those funding allocations should have taken place.

Mr McKIM - My advice is there was a reassessment done subsequent to the Building the Education Revolution construction phase and that after that reassessment these schools were identified as the highest priority.

Mrs TAYLOR - Minister, I will go over a little bit of the same ground but from a slightly different angle. First of all, child and family centres: you are funding those through Education?

Mr McKIM - They are funded through Education but the delivery of those is in the portfolio area of the Minister for Children.

Mrs TAYLOR - As is early learning. You do not pay for early learning; that comes out of the minister -

[4.00 p.m.]

Mr McKIM - The Launching into Learning program is mine. We regard it as an educational program. It is often delivered through children and family centres but it is often delivered through schools as well.

Mrs TAYLOR - Launching into Learning is not counted as in-school education, though, or is it?

Mr McKIM - It is in 1.1; in School Education. The Launching into Learning Program is delivered through that line item in the budget.

Mrs TAYLOR - And child and family centres you fund but you do not deliver?

Mr McKIM - The department delivers them but the department, as is not unusual, reports to more than one minister. The department reports to two ministers, Ms O'Byrne and me, and if that is hard work for Mr Pettit, spare a thought for Mr Overland who reports to four.

Mrs TAYLOR - Absolutely, but it is funded through your department?

Mr McKIM - It is funded through the Department of Education.

Mrs TAYLOR - Is that through in-school education as well, item 1.1?

Mr McKIM - The children and family centres are funded through 1.4, on my advice.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

CHAIR - Which belongs to the Minister for Children.

Mr McKIM - Yes, that is correct. It is a bit confusing.

Mrs TAYLOR - I was trying to clarify that because it, as you say, is a bit confusing, as they are often delivered either in school or next-door to the school.

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mrs TAYLOR - Mr Gaffney has raised those questions of the sites where school amalgamations have occurred and if I could take you back a couple of years and we go back to where we were -

Mr McKIM - We are heading out to the northern suburbs here, Mrs Taylor.

Mrs TAYLOR - We are heading out to the northern suburbs. Claremont Primary School, as far as I am aware, it is not yet sold, however, can you confirm that the old Roseneath has been sold?

CHAIR - We might have an announcement.

Mr McKIM - It is not technically in my portfolio but my advice is that a contract has been signed on the Claremont Primary School.

CHAIR - Subject to?

Mr McKIM - I cannot provide you any further advice on that, Mrs Taylor, but I am sure the Treasurer will be up to visit you. When is the Treasurer due?

Mrs TAYLOR - We don't get the Treasurer.

CHAIR - We get the Minister for Finance.

Mrs TAYLOR - I was not aware of that. Can I ask you about the old Roseneath Primary School site because it should be handed on, one presumes as well, but I am told that either all or part of it is being retained by the department and is now going to form part of the land allocation for the Austins Ferry Primary School. Is that correct?

Mr McKIM - Yes, it is. For the Roseneath Primary School, disposal of the balance of the site, we believe, is not feasible at this time. We have completed the demolition of the old infrastructure on the site and the land will be retained for use by the Austins Ferry Primary School - which I think is a good outcome.

Mrs TAYLOR - It is a good outcome. Will the Claremont High School site, which is adjacent to the new Windermere Primary School, also be retained by the department and included in the new Windermere Primary School? I ask this in particular because I am told that the school is already at capacity. Currently, it has no room to expand and they expect enrolments to increase if it continues.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - Yes, and going beautifully I might add, Windermere -

Mrs TAYLOR - It is lovely and it is doing very well.

Mr McKIM - Yes, it is a great story. My advice is that the final decision has not been made but we believe that is the most likely outcome for that land. We intend to demolish the remaining buildings on the Claremont High School site as they are of little or no value, prior to determining the future use of the land but we are aware of the needs that Windermere has and my advice is that that is the most likely conclusion to this process, but the final decision has not yet been made.

Mrs TAYLOR - Lovely. I think there might also have been that initial amalgamation agreement that both Austins Ferry and Windere primary schools would end up with equal infrastructure and equal land allocation, so they might keep you to that agreement.

Mr McKIM - We will keep that in mind if that is the case.

Dr GOODWIN - Are there any school census statistics available?

Mr McKIM - Yes. Were you after student numbers?

Dr GOODWIN - Yes.

Mr McKIM - I have given those already; is there anything in particular?

Dr GOODWIN - So they are the most up-to-date ones that you gave us, are they?

Mr McKIM - Yes, they are the most up-to-date ones I have available.

Mr DEAN - I wanted to raise the issue of bullying in schools and cyberbullying in particular, which seems to have had a bit of publicity in relation to it. How many recorded accounts do we have of this and of bullying on both sides? How is the department is looking at it and what are they doing?

Mr McKIM - Bullying broadly, as well as cyberbullying?

Mr DEAN - Cyberbullying, I think, is slightly different area but it is really apparently having an impact.

Mr McKIM - We have a basically zero tolerance approach to bullying, including cyberbullying, in our schools and unfortunately bullying occurs in our community and equally unfortunately it does occur in our school grounds; I am not going to sit here and pretend that it doesn't.

Mr DEAN - It even happens in kindergarten, minister, I can assure you.

Mr McKIM - As we have seen in a number of high profile cases recently, including what Adam Goodes has had to go through with a 13-year-old girl, sometimes the fact that young children are behaving in an inappropriate way can be a good wake-up call for the rest of us in terms of the need to be really strong around the examples that we set. We treat bullying and cyberbullying very seriously; all schools are required to have policies that address bullying and

inappropriate use of things like social media sites, the internet and mobile phones. I was lucky enough to go to one of the activities on the National Day of Action Against Bullying; I went out to Ogilvie where there was a fantastic event on the oval and we were able to stand up and look down and they spelled out a whole lot of anti-bullying slogans and lots of positive reinforcement by that school and a range of other schools; that was one of a number of activities on the day.

As I said, schools are required to have policies in place to address bullying behaviour on things like the internet and mobile phones. These policies have been and will continue to be updated, including our learner wellbeing and behaviour policy, and in 2013 one of the key initiatives we have in our government school sector is building respectful schools that will be supporting schools and school leaders to develop and refine whole-school approaches to behaviour. There are things like the National Day of Action Against Bullying that I referred to, there are things like the 'Bullying. No Way!' website which is also a really important way of promoting the need to behave respectfully to people. We have a cybersafety page on our department's website.

I often go into schools and sit down with a group of students, generally without the media present, so I can interact with students in small groups and listen directly to their aspirations from the education system and I have participated in one of those workshops on the issue of bullying and cyberbullying in particular. I know that there is a high level of concern right through schools, but I have to say I think it is ultimately the student leaders who are best placed to deal with this - some of the student leaders in our government school system are just awesome and when I speak to them about bullying, they say the way to address it is for them to be strong leaders within their peer group and make it clear to everyone in the student body that the school has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying.

We treat this issue very seriously; we are part of the National Safe Schools Framework, which is a collaborative effort by commonwealth, state and territory government and non-government school authorities and other key stakeholders. That is, in overview, a range of things we are doing in this space and I am happy to answer more detailed questions.

Mr DEAN - Have you got the numbers of reported incidents of cyberbullying for this current year?

Mr McKIM - My advice is we do not collect those data centrally.

Mr DEAN - What does the Education department think of Parents and Friends and their funding of Parents and Friends? Does the Department of Education agree with DEEWR - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations - that the next key way to improve student learning outcomes is to focus on building quality parent engagement in each school? If so, where are the policies, goals and output results reflected in the budget?

Mr McKIM - Yes, I am aware of that. What do we, and what does the department, think of Parents and Friends? Absolutely key stakeholders in delivering education.

Mr DEAN - That report says that, doesn't it, as I understand it.

Mr McKIM - Yes and I would not argue against categorising. I absolutely believe that Parents and Friends or schools associations, as many of them are now known, are key stakeholders in many of the activities that we conduct in the education sector.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

A school, and particularly a principal, that has close links to the school association or the relevant Parents and Friends group is a school that is far better empowered as a result of those links. We absolutely encourage and support our principals to work really closely with their school association and their Parents and Friends group.

There are various stages in the move towards what is known as school autonomy around Australia. We have a reasonably autonomous system in Tasmania. It is not fully autonomous in some of the areas that one or two other jurisdictions may be more autonomous in, but I would argue we have a reasonably autonomous school system and we try to devolve as much as is reasonable decision-making down to the local level and encourage and support our principals to get out and have regular engagement with their school community.

Mr DEAN - What funding do they get and is the funding for 2013-14 known to the Parents and Friends or their school associations as we know them. I was not able to pick it up in the budget - is it in the budget? I suppose it is.

Mr McKIM - I am not sure it will be in the budget but I can provide you with some -

Mr DEAN - No, I could not find it there so if you could, I would appreciate that.

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr DEAN - There are two other matters that go together. Truancy in the schools - what levels do we have there? I know it was a concern last year. Is it dropping off? Have we got control of truancy? The other one was the dropout rates from colleges raised last year, as well, as an issue.

Mr McKIM - Around Parents and Friends there is the sort of umbrella group, the Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends Incorporated - that is the Tasmanian group that Jenny Eddington is currently the president of. Our funding for them has gone up from \$146 949 in 2011-12 to \$152 092. We fund the Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends annually at approximately \$150 000 per annum. We also provide funding to the Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Association. That's gone up from \$16 638 in 2011-12 to \$17 221 in 2012-13. We also fund the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council, which is in a slightly different space.

[4.15 p.m.]

That's funding for the umbrella groups or the peak groups. Generally, what you'll find is that school associations are active in fundraising at the local level and often they'll raise funds in excess of what they need to run themselves. I've lost count of the numbers of swings, seats, playgrounds or shade tarpaulins that have been delivered to the school by the fantastic fundraising events.

CHAIR - Or music teachers! Some of them fund music teachers.

Mr McKIM - Yes, and good on the school associations for doing that. It shows a real commitment to their local school and to the education of their children.

Mr DEAN - Those other figures on truancy and drop-out rates?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - Truancy; I will go back a few years for a trend. It was 0.05 per cent in 2009. This is the average daily absence rate for the reason of truancy. In 2010 it was 0.07 per cent; in 2011 it was 0.07 per cent; in 2012, gratifyingly, it was 0.04 per cent so that's nearly a halving of truancy between 2011 and 2012.

Mr DEAN - Nothing on this year so far?

Mr McKIM - We don't have this year's statistics; it's too early in the year.

Mrs TAYLOR - Is that across the entire school population?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mrs TAYLOR - So you don't have a breakdown for, say, year 10 students?

Mr McKIM - No, we don't have a breakdown on what year. We have a breakdown of other reasons for absence.

Mr DEAN - Students expelled for periods or set aside; is that there?

Mr McKIM - Expulsions; I think it's on a different brief. Drop-out rates; are you talking -

Mr DEAN - Those that have enrolled, minister, and have commenced their college studying and have then dropped out of the system.

Mrs TAYLOR - Chair, post-compulsory will actually come into the whole next section if we could just stay where we are.

Mr McKIM - Yes, probably colleges will be in another output.

Mr DEAN - Sorry, okay, leave that there.

Mr McKIM - Mr Dean, was your question about suspensions?

Mr DEAN - Yes, suspensions.

Mr McKIM - In 2009 the suspensions were 7 631; in 2010, 7 200; in 2011, 7 063 and in 2012, 6 480. So, again, a constant decline in suspension across those four years and too early for this year again.

Mr DEAN - It's very good to see.

Mr McKIM - There are times when a suspension is appropriate, particularly around the disruption that a student can cause to other students' learning outcomes. There is certainly a trend down.

Mr GAFFNEY - Minister, principals and senior staff are talking about how, within a school, they feel they are being asked to do more with less finance. We understand that. For some of the valuable programs to stop bullying, the transition program from grade 6 to grade 7 and the mentoring program, the funding is now not as available. I find that local councils, service groups

or school associations are now providing funds to help out with bussing or holiday programs - things that traditionally had been part of the education for schools package.

Do funds that are raised by a school community stay with the school, even though they may be saving it and putting it away for a nest egg for something they believe is important, such as a program or a piece of infrastructure? The second question is to do with power within schools.

Mr McKIM - Electricity?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, electricity. Some schools have accessed funding for solar, but what cost savings have there been because some schools are finding that electricity is coming out of their overall budget? The last one is the NBN rollout - how many schools are connected with NBN, what are the costs associated with those connecting fibre to the school network and what implications are an ongoing funding commitment? I suppose I am saying, here is a school package, we are being asked to do more with less and we want to raise as much money as we can and then there is solar and there is all these increased costs from electricity, and schools are supposed to be self-managing. There are some that are on solar, some have connected to the NBN with all these associated costs and at the end of the day it seems as though some learning programs may be impacted because of the costs of running the infrastructure within the school. It is a large question but it is all closely involved.

Mr McKIM - I might have a preliminary crack at answering those questions. If I leave anything out it will only be inadvertent so feel free to draw my attention to it. First, in relation to the overview comment you have made about schools being asked to do more with less, the budget this year does not include any saving strategies that impact directly on schools and on this basis, general support funding rates in the school resource packages have been increased by 1.4 per cent over the 2012 rates and funding within the school resource packages that support salaries has been indexed by 2 per cent, which is the state wages policy.

In terms of energy or electricity costs, these allocations have been adjusted to reflect average 2011-12 and 2012-13 Aurora Energy tariffs and new 2013 energy tariffs for those schools sourcing energy through ERM power. School resource packages, in general terms, will increase this year compared to last year.

In relation to NBN, we are now connected at schools and Polytechnic campuses in Scottsdale, Smithton, Triabunna, Sorell, St Helens, George Town and Deloraine and other schools will be connected as the NBN is rolled out across Tasmania in the next three years. We are connecting schools as is appropriate once the rollout allows us to do that.

Mr GAFFNEY - Is there a funding implication on that connection and, if so, who measures that or does that come out of the schools resource package?

Mr McKIM - No, it does not come out of SRPs, it is funded separately.

Mr GAFFNEY - Funds that are raised in the school and held in school - they have not been asked to give any funds back in schools in Tasmania that they have saved up for a rainy day and that sort of thing?

Mr McKIM - Are you asking me to confirm that?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes.

Mr McKIM - We do not ask them to give it back. Funds that schools raise they keep.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Mrs TAYLOR - I have one more question on 1.1 and it is about the young people of school age in the detention centre?

Mr McKIM - I am really proud of the work the department has done here. When we first became aware, a fair period of time ago, that Pontville would house detainees who were unaccompanied minors, I made it clear to the department that my preference as minister was that these children should be educated in our government system in Tasmania and, thanks to a lot of work that has been done by the department in liaising with the commonwealth agency - DIAC - which is responsible for these children, we have been able to see some significant enrolments into our government system. The first one was into the Polytechnic and they have been there for some weeks now doing courses at the Polytechnic and the Polytechnic was very well set up anyway to deal with English as a second language, for example, and foundation English skills because we are already supporting people who are migrants to Australia and to Tasmania from other cultures so the Polytechnic already had good upskilled teachers and support structures in place.

Mrs TAYLOR - Is the Polytechnic going to them or are they going out?

Mr McKIM - No, they are coming to the Polytechnic. We also, as you might know, have 44 unaccompanied minors from Pontville attending school at Cosgrove High School. I think that school from the bottom of my heart because they have embraced these students there at Cosgrove and really, you might think we are offering these students something, and we are, but they are offering us just as much in return. They add value to the school experience for all of the other students and the broader school community.

Mrs TAYLOR - At that particular school there are already a number of new arrivals so they fit in quite well I think.

Mr McKIM - Yes, there are and I think Cosgrove is a really good choice for those students for a number of reasons.

Mrs TAYLOR - They are being integrated into the classes at Cosgrove, as I understand; they are not being taught separately, are they?

Mr McKIM - It is both, according to individual needs. We want to make sure we don't rush things and push full integration onto students. If they are more comfortable and the advice is that they would be better off supported in a separate environment for a period of time then that is what we will do. If we believe it is in the interests of the student to move past that into full integration then that is what we do. We are careful not to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

Mrs TAYLOR - The commonwealth is paying for the education of those students?

Mr McKIM - Yes, that is correct. Planning is well advanced to support a further 80 at Claremont College and we believe that that will start next week. At this stage that is the intention.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs TAYLOR - Yes, I was going to ask you about that. The next section is about post-compulsory education but because it is this particular topic I might ask you that now. I understand that they won't be integrated into normal classes in Claremont but that a whole wing has been set aside for them specifically.

Mr McKIM - It is too early for me to advise you about exactly what the case will be at Claremont but we are proceeding with an abundance of caution in all that we do. We would obviously like to get these kids outside the wire into our school system as soon as possible, but we also have to consider the needs of the staff, the needs of the broader school community and whatever the infrastructure solutions might be on site. I won't pre-empt what will occur but those discussions will be ongoing this week at Claremont and we are making sure that we do everything we can.

Mrs TAYLOR - Will it be the Claremont teachers who are teaching those classes or will you bring in extras or do they bring their own teachers? What is the story?

Mr McKIM - We will be bringing in extra staff, as we have at Cosgrove, by the way. At Cosgrove there are five extra staff on site to support 44 students -

Mrs TAYLOR - The commonwealth must be paying lots. That is good.

Mr McKIM - We are just focusing on trying to provide as much support as we can. There will be extra staff out at Claremont but, again, in terms of integrating or not, those are the things that we are working through at the moment and ultimately we will always, as we are in everything we do in the department, place the needs of the learners front and centre.

Mrs TAYLOR - The needs of the other learners are important as well, obviously.

Mr McKIM - There is no doubt about that and that is why I made the point about how successfully to date things have gone at Cosgrove and the value that having these kids brings to the school and to the students at the school. I truly believe it enriches their learning experience significantly to actually have that personal interaction with kids who have a very different life story to most of the kids who would be at Cosgrove; they come from a different culture, have different world views and I think that can only be of benefit to our students.

Dr GOODWIN - I want to go back to the question I had around the school census information. Last year, as I understand it, what was available was a school-by-school breakdown of first-term FTE enrolments and then estimated capacity and percentage occupancy figures. I am just wondering whether you have that available to table this year.

Mr McKIM - I am advised that we do. Given Mr Gaffney's comments earlier and given that it is quite dense, I will table that to keep Mr Gaffney happy. I will not read them all out.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, I am going to say that we have completed 1.1 on the strength of that. That is the bulk of the questioning and the information that the committee is looking at but there are some other significant output group line items there that we need to address. I will suspend now and I would like to see everyone back by 4.45 p.m.

The committee suspended from 4.31 p.m. to 4.48 p.m.

1.2 Learning services -

CHAIR - If we were in our racing cars we would be on the home straight. We have covered one line item so 1.2 is Learning Services. Thank you, Mrs Taylor.

Mrs TAYLOR - The questions that I was going to ask have mostly been done. I notice the drop in the budget and the reason given for that is the student support allocations have been put in a different bucket and some of those support teachers have gone back into schools and I say 'back' because once upon a time we had them schools and then we put them altogether in a separate location and now they are back in schools.

Mr McKIM - That is correct.

Mrs TAYLOR - I understand that. I hear from your previous contribution that there are not fewer it is that they have moved and that is the only reason for the drop in budget here.

Mr McKIM - Yes, that is correct.

Mrs TAYLOR - I do not have any other questions.

CHAIR - Are there any others in Learning Services that members have?

Mr DEAN - No, I am happy.

CHAIR - I have a question around NAPLAN. There has been a toolkit.

Mr McKIM - Yes, there has.

CHAIR - I am interested in what sort of feedback that toolkit has received from particularly the teachers across the state. NAPLAN has been a fairly topical area of education.

Mr McKIM - It has. If I could start by saying that NAPLAN does not measure anything like all of the things that we try to achieve in our education system. It is quite narrowly focused but having said, that the narrow focus is on important areas like literacy and numeracy standards. Whilst I accept that NAPLAN can be stressful for some students and for that matter some staff, I think it is useful for us in a couple of ways.

First, it provides us with the capacity to compare statistics with our fellow jurisdictions around the country. It also provides us with an incentive to continue to improve our outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The NAPLAN toolkit is a fantastic resource and the anecdotal feedback I get from teachers is positive.

I will tell you briefly what it does. It allows the teacher to drill down into, on a student basis, previous NAPLAN results from that student so you can identify areas where the student is strong, areas where the student is not so strong and then it delivers learning plans to address areas of weakness. If you go to little Bobby Jones, and to all the Robert Joneses out there I have made that name up, I am not relating to any particular student, and you see that a particular student is weak in, for example, geometry.

You can click on that student's results and it will generate a learning plan for you for that student to improve his or her performance in that area. It is also a great tool for school leaders because you can assess it on a class basis as well - it will allow a school leader to see within his or her school where any systemic strengths and weaknesses might be with particular teachers or particular streams and again take action to address any weaknesses that might be able to be addressed.

My anecdotal feedback has been very positive both from teachers in the classroom and also from school leaders. We have finished a chat to some of our principals. I might see if the secretary has got any further information about the reception.

Mr PETTIT - It varies but most schools are very receptive to it. It is a tool to support schools. We have added this year a range of programs through the Professional Learning Institute around interpreting data and we have had some 204 in the very early stages of term one attend that and 32 leaders. We are trying to encourage the use of the NAPLAN toolkit, not in terms of doing the test but developing literacy and numeracy programs and seeing where the kids' needs are and then addressing them.

Mr McKIM - In a related subject we have rolled out our school improvement framework across every government school in Tasmania. This was developed by Professor Geoff Masters who is a Queensland expert in school improvement and the feedback from principals has been very supportive.

It is a self-assessment tool that allows schools to self assess in six major areas. Assess where their strengths are, where their weaknesses are, and then develop strategies to address any weaknesses and build on any strengths. One principal said to me it is sort of the road map I have always been looking for, in how to improve my school. He said we always know we have to make continual improvement in our school but this is a framework that provides a very robust set-up that allows for rigorous self assessment by schools and encourages regular self-assessment by schools and then aids in the development of strategies to address the areas of weakness and build on strengths. Again, that's part of a suite of measures that have been put in place for the last two years that I believe over time will see a continued improvement in things like that.

CHAIR - So \$4 million will be spent on providing information and technology devices for teachers. Are they iPads or what? Does anyone miss out?

Mr McKIM - At the moment, all teachers get a laptop and we replace them on a rolling basis. These computers for teachers were purchased in 2010 with a four-year onsite warranty so they're due for replacement at the start of the upcoming school year, 2014. We'll be surveying teachers during term 2 regarding how and where they use their computers for teaching and this information will assist us in developing a replacement strategy around those computers. As of 31 March this year, there were 4 881 computers for teachers allocated to teachers in the K to 12 sector.

CHAIR - So nobody misses out.

Mr McKIM - No teacher.

CHAIR - No teacher misses out.

Mr McKIM - Yes. Madam Chair, with your indulgence, we have some information on an earlier question asked on relief teaching expenditure. I can't remember who asked it; was it Dr Goodwin?

Dr GOODWIN - Yes.

Mr McKIM - The total relief teacher expenditure for the 2012 school year was \$12.66 million. There is a breakdown of expenditure for absence due to professional development. That was \$2.51 million because, as you've heard from both me and the secretary, we really are increasing the professional development that we're providing to staff. Expenditure for absence for reasons other than professional development is \$10.14 million, which could include things like sickness, bereavement, needing to care for someone or long service leave.

CHAIR - Does it break down stress leave? Is that available?

Mr McKIM - We may have some data on that.

CHAIR - I'm interested to see if it's less stressful or more stressful being a teacher in the education system these days.

Mr McKIM - We are just getting that now, Madam Chair. Thanks to the incredibly efficient Department of Education, and I am being entirely serious when I say that, I have the figures for year ending 31 March. These figures are based on workers compensation claims received by type of injury. Stress was 60 in the year ending 31 March 2011; 48 for the year ending 31 March 2012; and 62 for 31 March 2013.

CHAIR - It's sneaking up again a little bit.

Mr McKIM - Up a little bit on last year; approximately equivalent to the year before. I can go to other compensation claims reasons if you are interested.

CHAIR - Around consultancies to the department, can we have a figure on that? It is always illuminating.

[5.00 p.m.]

Mr McKIM - I believe we can, Chair.

CHAIR - Obviously with the Fairbrother report finishing, I am just wondering what other initiatives are being researched.

Mr McKIM - Progressed through consultancies?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr McKIM - If I can offer a general comment about consultancies, there are some things where it is appropriate to be done by a person or group of people independent of the department. One I would offer as an example was getting Virginia Simmons in to review our public provision of vocational educational training in Tasmania. I thought it was important we get someone in from outside the state with a fresh set of eyes to have a look through the way that we had

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

structured the major public provision of VET through the Tasmania Tomorrow program. In my view the work that Ms Simmons did was exemplary and clearly the Council agreed because, Chair, because you were good enough to pass the legislation without any amendment at all.

Mrs TAYLOR - We welcomed it.

Mr McKIM - Yes, I noted that, Mrs Taylor, and I thank those members who made their supportive views clear during the debate. But the point I am making there, Chair, is that from time to time it is reasonable for an organisation, particularly one as large as the Department of Education, to expend a reasonable amount of money.

CHAIR - I am happy to have that question taken on notice, minister, it is not earth-shattering. It looks like the annual report - that is why I thought you might not bring it over.

Mr McKIM - This is for the 2011-12 financial year, Ms Rattray, and the total on consultancies was \$321 511 and the details are available on the public record.

CHAIR - That includes Ms Simmons?

Mr McKIM - I imagine it would. Sorry, Ms Simmons is there. She is there on that page. For some reason she is separate from the total that I gave you. I am sorry, the total I gave you I think was for building and construction. Could I place the actual facts on the record for you? The total I gave you, the \$321 511, was for building and construction consultancies and there was one consultancy in the 'Other' section of this annual report and they reported \$52 500, which was for Virsis Consulting, which is Virginia Simmons. All of the information around consultancies is available in the 2011-12 annual report.

CHAIR - Thank you, I appreciate that.

1.3 Education performance services -

Mr GAFFNEY - There is a 54 per cent increase; I imagine it is for education performance services and the little note says that it 'primarily reflects provisions made to meet developmental and operational costs associated with ...'. What happened in the last 12 months of your \$600 000 below what you needed to run this? It looks as though you have stayed up there for the next four years' Estimates as well, so it must have come from somewhere.

Mr McKIM - Yes, we are developing a data warehouse and the majority of that difference is attributable to the costs of the data warehouse.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay, and just a second question on that: next year you have \$1 938 000, then the year after you have taken off another \$70 000 and then the year after that you whack it back up another \$30 000 - do you just guess that? Otherwise, how do you work that out?

Mr McKIM - It is another data warehouse issue, Mr Gaffney. The data warehouse has been developed over a period of time and there has been a contract signed for that so the variations relate to the particular work that will be done in the relevant financial year.

Mr GAFFNEY - Into the future, will this line item balance out or should it decrease?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - My advice is that it will decrease over time.

Mr GAFFNEY - We are then crystal-balling here, is that a market decrease or is it going to go back down to -

Mr McKIM - On my advice from Mr Pettit, it was a start-up cost so we would expect it to be a relatively marked decrease over time.

Mrs TAYLOR - Can I ask a supplementary to that then: what for?

Mr McKIM - What is a data warehouse for?

Mrs TAYLOR - The student management system that sets up the data warehouse - what do you want to do with it?

Mr McKIM - It is to enable us to more efficiently manage the data that we collect relating to a whole range of outputs in our education system.

Mrs TAYLOR - So that you can answer questions really quickly at Estimates?

Mr McKIM - Mr Pettit, would that be one of those things?

Mr PETTIT - That would be of great use.

Mrs TAYLOR - You have data collection systems now.

Mr McKIM - I might ask Mr Pettit to respond to you, Mrs Taylor.

Mr PETTIT - Thanks, minister. The purpose of the data warehouse is to, in time, allow every teacher to have lifetime data delivered to them anywhere they are, and so they can interpret their data not only from the information they put in but information such as NAPLAN as soon as it is completed. At the moment they will wait anything up to six months to get interrogative data and this allows them to get it almost within the minute it has been marked.

Mrs TAYLOR - On any student at any time?

Mr PETTIT - That is where we are heading.

Mrs TAYLOR - Privacy?

Mr PETTIT - It will be restricted and that is why the start-up cost is restricted to those who need to have access to it. A classroom teacher will have access to their students but, more broadly, it will be the principal who will delegate the school responsibility. It is not just in schools; it is across our organisation so it will pick up a number of other agencies including statutory authorities and support TasTAFE. It will support the LINC. It will support all corporate services so it will be a one stop whereas currently we have anything up to 10 platforms that we need to go through. That is the purpose of it.

Mrs TAYLOR - Fantastic - then you expect to see redundancies, do you?

Mr PETTIT - No, not at all - efficiencies.

CHAIR - It could lead to redundancies perhaps. Any other questioning in 1.3 and, if not, we will move on to 1.5 Grants and financial assistance.

1.5 Grants and financial assistance -

CHAIR - Minister, there is a reduction of \$189 000 in this line item. Does this reflect the reduction in student enrolments to some extent?

Mr McKIM - My advice is this relates to a reduction in the accommodation allowance for tertiary students, of which there is a \$189 000 variance.

CHAIR - Does that mean that we have fewer people applying or we are not giving as much assistance as what we have been in the past or has been available?

Mr McKIM - No, this was a saving strategy in the 2011-12 state budget so this was an announced budget saving strategy with a change in our parameters around that allowance.

CHAIR - Then the forward Estimates project the same and the same and then in 2016-17 there is a slight increase - is that just a bit of a guess?

Mr McKIM - My advice is that is because we will have by then achieved our savings target in relation to this policy change and then we will maintain it.

Mr DEAN - Would not payroll tax benefit fit in there somewhere as well?

Mr McKIM - No.

CHAIR - Where does the payroll come into 1.1, does it?

Mr McKIM - My advice is that it doesn't come into grants.

CHAIR - But it would come into 1.1?

Mr McKIM - Yes, it would.

CHAIR - Okay, that's an explanation of sorts. If there is nothing else we'll move on to output group 2.

Output group 2

Post-compulsory education and skills development

2.1 Skills development contestable funding -

Dr GOODWIN - Minister, are you able to provide me with an overview as to how contestable funding works?

Mr McKIM - I am not an economist.

Dr GOODWIN - Well, just how this output works.

CHAIR - As a matter of fact, we are not that au fait with it, so we would like some more information.

Mr McKIM - Contestable funding is basically funding that is made available to the skills sector broadly. The skills sector is made up basically of public providers of VET and very shortly that will be TasTAFE but at the moment it's not quite confirmed until 1 July yet. We also have some RTOs in our colleges but we also have a large number of private RTOs who all, depending on the category of funding, bid in to be given the opportunity to deliver training outcomes in the area.

Dr GOODWIN - And it comes out of this pool of funding in this output?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Dr GOODWIN - Is this part commonwealth funding?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Dr GOODWIN - What's the split between the commonwealth and the state?

Mr McKIM - It's approximately 70 per cent state, 30 per cent commonwealth.

Dr GOODWIN - In terms of the bidding that goes on, has there been much leakage from the public providers to the private providers?

Mr McKIM - Over time?

Dr GOODWIN - Yes, over time.

Mr McKIM - I don't have those figures, Dr Goodwin. I'll obviously do what I can to provide a response to you but whether or not we would have the data sets that would show that, I'm not sure. If you'd like to place the question on record, we'll get you what we can.

Dr GOODWIN - That's okay. In terms of the amount of funding provided, how is that worked out? Is there some sort of formula?

Mr McKIM - We have general purpose funding sources for vocational education and training in Tasmania. These are 2010-11 figures. The state provided, in that year, \$74.9 million and the Commonwealth provided \$31.2 million and that breaks down at 70.6 and 29.4 per cent respectively, which is the approximate 70:30 figure I gave earlier.

There is also what we call tied funding, which is basically Commonwealth specific-purpose payments including for infrastructure and national partnerships. In that year, that was \$23.4 million for a total VET spend of \$129.5 million.

Dr Goodwin, I received a brief on how the funding arrangements were going to work around TasTAFE and the contestable funding. I facetiously said that I am not an economist. I won't

attempt to describe it to you without a brief in front of me because I think I'd get myself into trouble. I'm very happy to organise a briefing for you from Dr Berryman and Mark Bowles, who is the economist of Skills Tasmania, if you'd like a fuller understanding than I'm able to provide you with today. Just quickly -

Mr DEAN – We're just about to get a briefing.

Laughter.

Mr McKIM - You're certainly not going to get the economist's plan for contestable funding in Tasmania. These are slightly more up-to-date figures; the Tasmanian government expects to spend in the 2013-14 financial year over \$110 million directly on training and associated programs and that is in addition to programs administered in partnership with the commonwealth government.

[5.15 p.m.]

It is statutory requirement that Skills Tasmania maintain a state purchasing plan on a rolling three-year basis that provides high-level guidance for the purchase of vocational education and training and workforce development projects. The plan is continuously monitored and formally reviewed on a quarterly basis to reflect the skills development needs for Tasmania. Those needs are informed by the Tasmanian Skills Strategy and the economic development plan as well as with industry consultation.

The purchasing plan can reflect different figures from the budget due to the carry forward and cash flow strategies of commonwealth funds for skills development. The program covers school leavers, apprentices, trainees, job seekers, employed people, people seeking new jobs and people with barriers to employment. My offer of a briefing is sincere, Dr Goodwin. This is quite a complicated area.

Dr GOODWIN - Hence my question.

Mr McKIM - It is an entirely reasonable question. It was so complicated when I received my brief I asked that Dr Berryman and Mr Bowles come in to translate it for me.

Dr GOODWIN - Okay.

Mr McKIM - I would be very happy to offer you a simple briefing.

Dr GOODWIN - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - A briefing to all of us.

CHAIR - Some of us have been ahead of the game and have had a part briefing.

Mr DEAN - I have some questions on the demonstrated employer demand here for skills training and so on. Where does that come from? Is that from the bigger industries, the bigger employers in the state?

Mr McKIM - We develop a skills strategy for Tasmania and it is consulted across a range of stakeholders during its development. Skills are, in a way, one of the real lifebloods of an

economy so what is important is not only that we have skilled people in place to meet demand now but also that we try to anticipate where the skills gaps will be in the future and create training programs that anticipate those gaps and pre-empt them so that they are not as big.

Mr DEAN - You might be able to cover them as well. I was going to ask you where the shortages were at this stage and where they would be in the near future.

Mr McKIM - The Tasmanian Skills Strategy, the Economic Development Plan, the fiscal strategy and the infrastructure strategy are the four key strategies that support Tasmania's social and economic prosperity. As members would be aware, with the move to TasTAFE and the change to the structures in the public provision of VET we have also changed our industry advice model. Whereas previously that came in through the Skills Tasmania board, that board will not exist after 1 July and we will be utilising existing structures within the Department of Economic Development and existing relationships within the Department of Economic Development to seek that industry advice.

Would you believe, Mr Dean, I do not have advice for you today on where the skills gaps might be in the Tasmanian economy now or in the future, but the Tasmanian Skills Strategy would cover that ground. I just do not have a copy of it with me today.

Mr DEAN - Can that be tabled at some future time? With the changing industry in this state, with the changes we have seen in forestry and all the rest of that, I would like to know where it is believed the skills shortages are going to be into the future.

Mr McKIM - I am happy to provide that. It would be available on the DOE website I presume. While it is being looked for I can make a couple of points. Firstly, yes, it is true there have been job losses in the forestry sector and this would not be the place for a debate about why that is. We are already providing significant assistance to people who may find themselves displaced out of the timber industry. Indeed, I have run into one or two around the traps in very different industries than the forest industry. We provide direct assistance in relation to skills development for people who may have been displaced out of the forestry sector.

Mr DEAN - I recall last year there were shortages in bricklaying and shortages in some other areas, concreting, and some of the trades' areas.

Mr McKIM - I would say that the skills mix in the Tasmanian economy is in a period of transition and part of that is the restructure forced on the timber industry by factors, some of which were external to the industry and some of which, in my view, are not, so there is a transition in skills and there is no doubt that the skills mix that will suit Tasmania in 10 years' time will be very different to the skills mix which Tasmania had five years ago. I am happy to table the Tasmanian Skills Strategy Plans and Actions.

Mr DEAN - When was that done?

Mr McKIM - The skills strategy itself covers 2008 to 2015. This is the themes and actions 2009 to 2012 but there is a regular process which updates the skills strategy and I can indicate that the strategy is currently being reviewed to further strengthen its alignment with Tasmania's long-term social, economic and environmental goals and to ensure that Tasmania benefits from the opportunities arising from COAG's decision to reform the national training system and there are significant reforms underway about the way that skills are delivered into the Australian economy.

Mr DEAN - Minister, I have seen that document and probably others have as well so I do not think it is going to help because of how it has changed and is changing right at this moment and you have indicated that.

2.2 TasTAFE -

Mr McKIM - Mr Finch, would you mind if I clarified a previous answer. It is on the computers and teachers. I indicated that every teacher gets a computer and the accurate information is that every teacher who is employed 0.04 FTE or more gets a computer.

Mr FINCH - I want to guide the good minister to the budget appropriation for TasTAFE and there is diminution of that because money has gone to post-secondary education for the Guaranteeing Futures Program. Could you tell me about that program and how that works in post-secondary education? Has that gone to years 11 and 12 from TAFE?

Mr McKIM - No, this is money for guaranteeing futures and for GETTI, Government Education and Training International, which has been moved to a different output group. That is a difference in the way the budget is presented rather than a change in the way the money is allocated into either GETTI or Guaranteeing Futures. It is moved in the output group but not moved away from Guaranteeing Futures or GETTI.

Mr FINCH - Thank you very much. The aims of the new TasTAFE structure is to establish centres of excellence which would be aligned with local industry demands and we see a list of those locations. How is industry viewing the way the education system has been handled over recent years going to the Academy, Skills Institute, and now back to the future and back to TasTAFE, what sort of feedback are you getting from industry?

Mr McKIM - It is a good question, Mr Finch. Perhaps if I could start with Tasmania Tomorrow and that move had its controversies, no doubt about that. But it also, on my feedback from industry, delivered some significant improvements and one of the particular improvements of the move to Tasmania Tomorrow, that is disaggregating TAFE Tasmania into the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute, was a view from industry that the skills institute was more reflexive and responsible to the industry needs than was TAFE Tasmania and that has been consistent feedback to me when I was considering whether we should reunify the major public provision of TAFE in Tasmania

Because I had had that feedback, I was clear with Virginia Simmons and with the department, that this was not a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. We had to keep the positives that we had achieved through Tasmania Tomorrow, but there was a very strong view across a large range of stakeholders, including significant industry players, that we should reunify the major public provision of VET in Tasmania.

I wanted to make sure that in whatever model we landed at, and we have landed where TasTAFE is, that we did not lose that industry responsiveness. It was front and centre in my mind, and in Virginia Simmon's mind, and in the departments mind, as we have moved through drafting the legislation and I have spoken to Mr Conway who is the chief executive of TasTAFE, and been very clear with him that we need to maintain close relationships with industry and be flexible and responsive to industry needs because that is one of the keys to skills development, to understand what industry wants, and thinks it probably will need in five years time and adjust

your skills mix and your training to deliver on those skills requirements. It was important that we did not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The decision was made ultimately by government and now endorsed by the parliament, to reunify the major public provision of vocational education and training in Tasmania and the centre of excellence model was one recommended by Ms Simmons and I thought it was an outstanding response to some unique Tasmanian circumstances because Tasmania is often held back by trying to be all things to all people in all regions in what is a very small jurisdiction in Australia. Ms Simmons recommended, and I was pleased to recommend to cabinet, that we accept this concept around centres of excellence. The centres of excellence are conceptual in that where we have good industry support in a particular place and a genuinely best practice training facility with best practice staff, then there may be a decision made to call that a centre of excellence.

A couple of clarifying matters, Mr Finch, because it is a really important point around TasTAFE: I have decided that those decisions should be made by the CEO, not the minister, about what becomes a centre of excellence. I do not want any minister of the future stepping in for reasons of politics saying, we are going to make this a centre of excellence. It is important that when we have a centre of excellence that it is genuinely a centre of excellence and I have had some representations, I will not say which industry sectors, saying this particular training facility should be a centre of excellence. What I say is, have a chat to Stephen Conway and he will work up some criteria around which he will make the decisions about what will be badged as a centre of excellence but I have made it clear to him that it has to genuinely be a centre of excellence and not just stick a sign on a wall on an existing facility and call it a centre of excellence because I think that devalues the concept.

Mr FINCH - Do those centres of excellence require new infrastructure?

Mr McKIM - They would not necessarily require new infrastructure but they would need to be a genuine and best practice training facility.

Mr FINCH - TasTAFE is about the skill shortages, poor retention rates, do you have some targets set around those issues?

[5.30 p.m.]

Mr McKIM - Once TasTAFE is up and running there is a requirement for me to give a ministerial statement of expectations to the board and that will be one of the things that I will be considering, the preparation of my statement of expectations.

Mr FINCH - You talked about Stephen Conway, the new CEO of TasTAFE, who was lured here from South Australia. Can you give us some idea what was actually offered to him to bring him here? What were the inducements, apart from our great quality of life?

Mr McKIM - I am reluctant to comment in relation to the word 'inducements', because it has been used in another context recently by some other people. His salary package is not a secret. It was advertised Australia-wide and he won the position through a competitive process. I am advised his package is about standard for the head of a TAFE in Australia and it is approximately \$270 000 per annum.

Mr FINCH - There would be all those relocation costs?

Mr McKIM - As is standard practice we covered his relocation costs.

Mr FINCH - Thanks very much. In respect of TasTAFE, administrative jobs were mooted as part of the merger. Can you give us some sort of figure on job losses at this stage?

Mr McKIM - It might be a little bit early to tell. Firstly, obviously, TasTAFE does not actually exist at the moment and it will not exist until 1 July but we are right on track.

Mr Conway has been working really hard and I think really successfully through a range of issues that he has needed to address as preliminaries to establishing the new organisation. I can confirm that the draft structure that has been developed by Mr Conway after a wide consultation with future TasTAFE staff through campus forums around the state is in line with the recommendations made by Virginia Simmons. I can quickly outline the structure.

Following 1 July, TasTAFE will establish an internal governance framework to guide ongoing decisions about staffing. The structure of this framework will include a senior management group, a workforce planning committee, a TasTAFE consultative committee and campus operations groups. The senior management group will be the executive of TasTAFE and will include the chief executive officer, five general managers and a CFO - a chief financial officer. The workforce planning committee will analyse and identify internal capability of the TasTAFE workforce and advise the senior management group. The TasTAFE consultative committee will have specific terms of reference and comprise equal members of management and staff. The campus operations groups will focus on local and regional issues and provide advice to the workforce planning committee and the senior management group.

I think the benefit of a structure like that is that it does provide the capacity for people out on the ground in TasTAFE who are actually delivering the training to feed up in a consultative way to the decision-making groups including to the CEO. That was one fairly consistent criticism of Tasmania Tomorrow structures and management arrangements of Tasmania Tomorrow, that staff on the ground felt isolated and unheard.

Mr Finch, you specifically ask about job losses but it is too early to tell at the moment. This merger is not about reducing; it was never intended to drive a reduction in teacher numbers or a reduction in the numbers of people on the ground. When I announced it, I said it is possible there may be a small number of positions lost through the amalgamating of administrative positions between the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute, but it is too early to tell how that will pan out once TasTAFE is up and running.

Mr FINCH - I want to ask about the TAFE lecturers with that wide experience in the real world but without the specific teaching qualifications. Are they being edged out of the TAFE system -

Mr McKIM - Not at all.

Mr FINCH - because you have a situation where they are going to need to be registered with the Teachers Registration Board?

Mr McKIM - That is right.

Mr FINCH - How will they be massaged into the new TasTAFE?

Mr McKIM - We are creating a separate registration category for people in those circumstances. It is certainly not our intention that everyone troop off to uni and do a two-year diploma or a three- or four-year Bachelor or Education or whatever it happens to be. We are creating a specific new category in teacher registration to deal with people in that position. There was consistent feedback that there was a desire for everyone who taught in TasTAFE to be registered as a teacher but we were very conscious of the fact that many of those people would have come straight in from professions like being a mechanic or a plumber or a chippie or a brickie or whatever it happens to be, and found themselves lecturing in TAFE Tasmania or in the Skills Institute. We did not want to disadvantage them through the process and they will be supported through any actions they need to take in relation to becoming a registered teacher. We are very conscious of the delicacy that we need to approach that with.

Mrs TAYLOR - I ask a supplementary question to that. With those tradies who have not been able to be registered - and I am well aware that that was the system in TAFE before Tasmania Tomorrow - in there now, will they also have an individual plan as we are going to have in schools - every teacher is going to have an appraisal and then a personal, professional development plan?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mrs TAYLOR - That will go to post-compulsory as well?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mrs TAYLOR - And it will go to TasTAFE as well?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mrs TAYLOR - Would you be aiming, eventually, to have teachers who are either currently tradies or people you take on in future to be getting teacher training as well? That was the difficulty - people were saying they are very good tradesmen but they do not have necessarily teaching skills because they have not done a teacher training program.

Mr McKIM - It certainly would not be the intention to force them back to uni for three years or anything like that.

Mrs TAYLOR - I understand that. No, no.

Mr McKIM - I have not, to be honest, considered whether they ought to be required to engage in teacher training, in whatever form it might be. However, if there were any who wanted to go down that path I am sure we would support them to do that because that is part of our commitment to professional development. I might see if Mr Wells has any further information.

Mr WELLS - I wanted to add that the VET system is a national system and anyone who teaches in it must have a minimum set of qualifications to teach in the VET system, full stop. That minimum set of qualifications will enable them to access registration so they have to have these qualifications to be able to teach currently and they will be registered with those qualifications. We will just create a category for those practitioners who are in the VET sector

and they will be registered. The only reason they would not be registered is if they did not actually have current vocational competence and the qualifications required to teach the particular certificates or courses that they are teaching.

Mrs TAYLOR - Minister, will you have different levels of salary then for registration of one kind or another?

Mr McKIM - No.

Mrs TAYLOR - Just thinking back, that certainly was an issue, that teachers who had spent time in teacher training as well as in learning their particular skills did not think it was a fair system, that if you hadn't had that training as well as your skills training that you should be on the same basis, which is why registration was probably not given to those people in the past.

Mr McKIM - My advice is that at the moment they're a one-to-one enterprise bargaining agreement that's agreed to by the union.

Mr FINCH - Minister, I'm curious about the new people you will recruit into that teaching situation in TAFE. Will you be looking to those people who have had experience in the real world of bricklaying and carpentry, et cetera, and will they be supported? How will they be supported to get the qualifications that allow them to be registered as teachers? How does that process work?

Mr McKIM - Mr Conway will develop a set of selection criteria for new positions or positions that need filling, as we already do for all of our staff. If people need support through any of our processes then we do provide that support to them.

Mr FINCH - Madam Chair, can I ask about international students?

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr FINCH - In Victoria it has just been revealed that international student fee revenue has declined by 6.3 per cent in 2012 to the lowest level in the past five years, certainly in Victorian TAFEs. I'm wondering what sort of revenue has contributed to our TAFE set-up in Tasmania. How are we tracking with international students? And is our new TasTAFE likely to increase interest from international students to come here?

Mr McKIM - Before I go into the details, TAFE is an incredibly strong brand name internationally and most states, and very soon including Tasmania, will have an institution or institutions that include the TAFE brand name. One piece of feedback I got very early after I became minister was from Government Education and Training International to say that when they talked about the Skills Institute and the Polytechnic, people would say, 'What's happened to TAFE Tasmania?' and 'Where has TAFE Tasmania gone?' These were agents who currently assist us in attracting students into the Polytechnic, the Skills Institute and also our schools and university, for that matter.

The loss of the name TAFE; I don't have advice or data but, anecdotally, I would think that it wouldn't be unreasonable to say that that was certainly a branding issue with a potential flow-on in terms of declining registration. I hasten to add that I don't have any official advice to back that up; that's my view, having discussed the matter with a range of people who operate in the

international student area. On that basis, I think returning to an institution with TAFE in the name could only be helpful to us as it is a very well recognised brand name, both nationally and internationally.

I can outline some of the things we are doing in the international area. In terms of revenue, which I think you asked, we currently have a total of 280 international student enrolments. The estimated revenue to Tasmania is \$8.456 million, plus there are 32 study tour students in Tasmania at the moment and the revenue from those is just over \$1 million. That does not include international students at the university. That is in our school system and our vocational education and training system.

Mrs TAYLOR - And private schools with public schools?

Mr McKIM - Yes, it does include private schools, according to my advice. We have a range of initiatives that we put in place. Late last year we launched a fantastic online website, to attract more countries. I have met, once or twice, with a group of agents who come to Tasmania and learn about what we can offer here then they have the opportunity to go back and promote Tasmania as the destination for students who they are facilitating. We put a lot of work into looking after agents and showing them around our facilities.

In our school sector, we have source countries like Brazil, China, Korea, Malaysia, Japan, and I went to the Hobart airport and met a group of students from Brazil. In the vocational education and training area, the top source countries are China, Korea, Philippines, India and Vietnam. In our schools we have 14 countries represented; in our vocational education and training sector we have 29. We have foreign students enrolled in six colleges, 9 high schools, three primary schools, and in over 40 VET courses around Hobart, Launceston and Devonport in the Polytechnic campuses.

We also run a Tasmanian Education round table; we have the website, Study Tasmania, which was launched in February last year in English. We are about to translate that into 12 languages, including Chinese, South Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese, Indian, Hindi and Indonesian. We host Tasmanian familiarisation tours for agents, and I have met groups of agents; that is across all sectors. We cooperate with the non-government sector and the university in facilitating those tours. We use the Study Tasmania brand at roadshow events in various places. We provide student scholarships associated with familiarisation tours. We have welcome events that I regularly attend, as minister, that are held in Launceston and Hobart. They are great because they are designed to connect international students to community groups and support organisations in our community, and the feedback we receive from those events is excellent. We also have our annual international education industry awards to recognise excellence in international education.

I finish my comments by thanking sincerely the homestay hosts who open their homes to people from around the world. They do the most amazing job. One of my favourite events, as minister, is to go along and give out a few prizes and awards to our homestay hosts because they do an amazing job.

I would like to quickly tell the committee about a couple of significant opportunities that we have in international education that we are working on really hard. We have developed sister school relationships - Nanping No. 1 school in China has a sister school relationship with Newstead College and Fuzhou No. 3 school has a sister school relationship with

Elizabeth College. In Africa, we are negotiating with the More than Me Foundation to deliver online primary education in Liberia. In Brazil, we are hosting 49 scholarship students from Pernambuco state who are the students I met at the airport to welcome to Tasmania.

The Australian government is negotiating to overcome some visa cost issues and if we can do that we will bid again for groups of students in 2014. In relation to Chile we are bidding to host up to 40 scholarship students in terms 3 and 4 in this year and for next year as well, and we are renegotiating sister school status with a school in Malaysia. Really excitingly through the polytechnic, which will soon become TAFE Tasmania, we have been delivering qualifications in Shanghai at Bangde College for 10 years. Over 200 students have undertaken two years of study in China and progressed to higher levels at TAFE and UTAS. In Tasmania we have an MOU signed, or nearly done, for the provision of butchery meat processing training in Uganda. We have a wool presence in Kuwait. We have been delivering qualifications to the Australian College of Kuwait since 2003, we have business development opportunities that we are exploring in the Philippines and we also have parks use in relation to Indonesia.

We are working really hard. GETI does the most amazing job for us on the sniff of an oily rag because they are not well funded. They really go above and beyond the call of duty in order to maximise the opportunities that international education provides for Tasmania.

CHAIR - If they were better funded could they do more?

Mr McKIM - It would depend how well they used it, Madam Chair. There is only so much funding to go around and we allocate it as we think appropriate.

Mr FINCH - It has been reported that the financial condition of Victoria's TAFE sector is deteriorating. An auditor-general's report found that 10 of Victoria's 14 TAFEs were at medium financial risk in 2012 compared with seven the previous year.

With this change back to TasTAFE, are you feeling confident and positive about the future, minister?

Mr McKIM - Yes I am.

Mr FINCH - With this sort of marketing that you are talking about internationally, particularly, do you feel that people are going to be attracted to come to embrace TasTAFE from overseas?

Mr McKIM - I do think so, Mr Finch.

Mr FINCH - And locals will be encouraged to embrace TasTAFE?

Mr McKIM - Absolutely. It is fair to say there has been a period of upheaval in our structures in this space. My gut feeling is that no-one will touch the structures now for some time. I am comfortable with that because I truly believe that the TasTAFE structure is the appropriate structure for Tasmania and it has the broad support of the overwhelming majority of stakeholders in that space. I believe that under Mr Conway's leadership, which I am certainly confident in, we can deliver an institution that Tasmanians will be proud of and deliver training outcomes that meet the Tasmanian people's expectations. So I am confident in the future.

The initial financial plans of TasTAFE were presented in chapter 28 of budget paper 2, volume 2, page 2.1. As I have previously intimated, not in this forum but in other fora, that these plans have been constructed. These are TasTAFE's initial financial plans being constructed, based initially on the amalgamation of the two existing operating plans of the Polytechnic and the Skills institutes.

I think that we can quite rightly have confidence in TasTAFE going forward. Of course it is a big job, the setting up of one organisation by effectively merging two organisations. There is a lot of management of staff, management of finances and transitional arrangements that need to be made, but I am very confident that TasTAFE has a strong future. They will have over \$200 million, for example, in property assets on their books, so they will need to reflect a significant depreciation cost annually. So, I have no reason to think TasTAFE will be anything other than successful. I have quite a bit of detail about the TasTAFE budget, if you would like that.

Mr FINCH - No, I think we have covered as much as we need to know about it at this time.

CHAIR - Thank you. If there are no other questions in relation to TasTAFE we will move on to 2.3, which is the Tasmanian academy.

2.3 Tasmanian academy -

Mr DEAN - Going straight to page 3.9, I am looking at the decrease in funding in this area and the decrease is due in effect to a decrease in expenditure resulting from a blow-out of an estimated special deposit and trust fund revenue expectations. Because you did not get the funding that you thought you were going to get from those areas, that is, special deposit and trust fund revenue expectations, what were the reasons for that and what expenditure has been cut from these areas to now satisfy the decrease in the budget?

Mr McKIM - The overarching response, Mr Dean, is that if you exclude the effect of the payroll tax reduction, the movement in this output is actually an increase of 0.48 per cent or \$386 000. The payroll tax reduction does have an impact on this output.

Mr DEAN - I am looking at the reasons for it, though. It is not identified in the notes.

Mr McKIM - No. Perhaps I could assist you a little bit further, Mr Dean, by informing you that I am advised that the trust account movement decrease is due to the expenses inadvertently being re-coded to output 1.1 during the process of revising the Estimates for school special deposit and trust fund revenue and expenses. There was an inadvertent mistake.

Mr DEAN - That rectifies that.

Mr McKIM - It will be reinstated in next year's budget.

Mr DEAN - But then the decrease in the Tasmanian Academy output primarily is a decrease in expenditure, so there is a decrease as a result of all of that in the expenditure of the colleges?

CHAIR - It will be good when we get a consistent system so we can keep up with it as well.

Mr DEAN - Is there a decrease in expenditure?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - I will ask Mr Pettit to come to our assistance here.

Mr PETTIT - Thank you, minister. Your question was, is there a decrease?

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr PETTIT - To the colleges there is no decrease in the funding; in fact, their funding models will continue as is into next year.

Mr DEAN - I am having difficulty understanding this then because the note says 'a decrease in the Tasmanian Academy output primarily reflects a decrease in expenditure', so there is a decrease in expenditure. What is that decrease going to mean, minister, and that is the question I am asking.

Mr PETTIT - Predominantly it is payroll tax.

Mr DEAN - That is the decrease.

Mr PETTIT - Yes, but the colleges themselves will not have any decrease in the funding.

Mr DEAN - Thank you for that information.

CHAIR - The notes probably do not really reflect that.

Mr McKIM - We will take that on board, Madam Chair. The difference in the treatment of payroll tax in this budget has called a whole range of perceived anomalies in funding.

Mr DEAN - This is where I can ask my question that I think I jumped the gun on before. This is dropout rates throughout colleges and the question is going to be, this is compulsory education now unless, as I understand it, it is for employment or a couple of other conditions apply. How can we be satisfied that all of our year 10 students are actually going on to and enrolling in college unless they have work?

Mr McKIM - The law is that you need to stay enrolled in education until you turn 17 unless you are doing some other thing - for example, full-time employment. This turns into a discussion on retention rates. I flagged this issue during my introductory comments at the start of this afternoon's proceedings. A figure often bandied around is apparent retention. There is a really good reason why the word 'apparent' is put before 'retention' - it is a very blunt tool and it is basically a measure of the number of students in the system in August of year 10 and then a comparison of that number to the number of students in the system in the August of year 12, two years later.

[6.00 p.m.]

Therefore, if you move into a different education sector you come up as lost or as not retained in this figure whereas actually you may still be getting education, just not in the same sector. Your family might move to another state and you are down as not retained, even though you could still be doing education in another state.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

We prefer to focus on direct retention. This is a measure that tracks an individual student's progression from year 10 to year 12. We think it is a much more robust way of calculating retention and one that better reflects what is going on in our education system. On direct retention, we are on a five-year improvement in our retention rates and that applies right through until the 2012 year, so from 2008 these are government school figures. From 2008, 45.7 per cent direct retention; 2009, 48 per cent; 2010, 50.8 per cent; 2011, 55.9 per cent and 2012, 58 per cent. You are seeing there a 13-odd per cent increase in direct retention over five years in our government system.

Mr DEAN - That is good, minister. You have given us reasons why some of these students are not there - the fact that they have moved and all the rest of it - and 58 per cent of the enrolled year 10 students have gone on to and are completing college at this present time.

CHAIR - Or are still engaged.

Mr DEAN - Are still engaged.

Mr McKIM - There is some other data that I think would be of interest to the committee. The percentage of students that completed some learning in year 12 is up from 67.2 per cent to 68.1 per cent from 2011 to 2012 and students who completed a full-time program in year 12 is up from 37.4 per cent to 39.7 per cent.

CHAIR - So they have completed a certificate or something when you talk about completed some learning.

Mr McKIM - No. We do have figures for that as well. Of those students that undertook a full-time program and achieved a TCE, we are up from 31.9 per cent last to 34.4 per cent this year.

Mr DEAN - Those figures suggest we have about 40 per cent of these year 10s that should be in year 11 or 12 out there somewhere. Do you have any idea how many of those are simply roaming around, are not engaged, have not moved addresses and are simply absent from compulsory education?

Mr McKIM - We have tracked all the students that are no longer coming to the colleges. They were enrolled at the college and then no longer attended.

Mr DEAN - Was that enrolments of all year 10s into college?

Mr McKIM - We have tracked them all individually. This is how much work we are doing in the retention space at the moment. We have tracked them all individually and we have probably over 30 reasons. We have interro -

Mr DEAN - Right, interrogated.

Mr McKIM - Asked for reasons. I think we will be a bit more gentle than an interrogation, Mr Dean.

Mr DEAN - Police officer career.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - Your previous employment -

Mr DEAN - You are right, it was interrogation.

Mr McKIM - might lead you to do interrogations in a particular way but I think we would be a bit more gentle than that.

It relates from someone who is deceased, for example, through to someone who has continued on an alternative education pathway. That is the point I was making earlier. They were an exchange student and they have presumably gone back home - although that one has zero on it for now, achieved employment, personal financial reasons, family reasons, got pregnant, medical reasons - there is a whole range of reasons why people would make the decision.

We have the information and it is actually tagged on a school-by-school or a college-by-college basis - just allow us to remove the college names from that because I don't want to cause any problems there. There is no problem with providing this information. There is a range of reasons.

Mr DEAN - I take it, though, that there are some there who are simply truant from college. It would be surprising if there were not.

Mr McKIM - People who left and who are currently unemployed might qualify but there are only 10 out of 805 students in that category.

Dr GOODWIN - Minister, is there an obvious, most common reason?

Mr McKIM - There are a few there. The ones that have over 100, and there are only three of them - continuing on an alternative education pathway, continuing on an alternative training pathway and gained employment. They are the three. Alternative education pathway, 156 - this is out of a total of 805; continuing on an alternative training pathway, 141; employment, 148 and there is no other category over 30.

Mr DEAN - Minister, you will table that document and remove the names?

Mr McKIM - We will remove the college names off the top and then I will be happy to table that because it is quite interesting information. It is a lot of work to track individual students like that and I thank everyone in the department who is involved.

Mr DEAN - There is one other area that has come up previously and I want to find out whether it created any problems. There was concern with the mix of adult students going into the colleges and the mix with the ages of 16- and 17-year-olds and so on, and it was felt that that could create some issues and so on for the colleges. Has it worked well?

Mr McKIM - No issue to date, I am advised.

Mr DEAN - For those doing distance education from the colleges, where are those numbers?

Mr McKIM - We can obtain those numbers. We do not have them here.

Mr DEAN - I am interested to know if the numbers are increasing or decreasing in that area.

Mr McKIM - In distance education?

CHAIR - Flexible learning - new terminology.

Mrs TAYLOR - I am not on 2.3 because I think that has been covered. I was going to do 2.4, which is post-compulsory education in schools and I wanted to follow up the same track about retention figures.

CHAIR - Let us move there.

2.4 Post-compulsory education in schools -

Mrs TAYLOR - Thank you for those figures. It has long been a concern of mine that we do not categorise students correctly in that, as you have just said, if you are talking about post-compulsory education in schools I can see that those figures apply, but if we are talking about retention in education then surely we should be counting in those students who are doing other training in other training institutions or apprenticeships and therefore, it seems to me, still continuing on in education. It is not just education in school and I think that gives a very slanted figure.

When you say what was your figure, 58 per cent or thereabouts retained in schools, in fact if you add on those students who are in apprenticeships or who are doing other training, then that changes that figure significantly. The percentage of people who disengage with education after year 10 in one form or another either get jobs or the percentage is not that high. That is what I would like to see us attack in terms of retention. It is that student cohort that does not engage in anything after year 10 - either go to school or apprenticeship or get a job or a traineeship or something. I wonder whether you would look at addressing that, minister, because those figures to me are misleading.

Mr McKIM - I will take that on board. By the way, I do not disagree with anything you have just said. What I have learned in my time as minister is that there are only certain data sets and if you keep changing data sets you lose that capacity to make comparisons with previous years and so forth because those years' data sets might not be able to be interrogated for the same things. Once we get our data warehouse up and running, Mr Pettit's bargain data warehouse -

Mrs TAYLOR - Absolutely, that is what I am thinking - a data warehouse, a bargain data warehouse will -

Mr McKIM - I am sure we will be able to interrogate that database.

Mrs TAYLOR - That would be much more useful because what we are trying to do is retention, not necessarily retention in school but retention in education or then going to work.

Mr McKIM - In education or training or work.

Mrs TAYLOR - Education or training or work, yes, and that is the figure I would really like to know year in, year out, so we can see how that is improving, because when you talk about changing from 45 to 58, minister, part of that is when we changed from TAFE to Polytechnic and Skills Institute and although the retention figures went up dramatically as a result, in fact some of

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

it was this kind of misleading figure - that kids who had been going to TAFE were not counted in education, retained in education, and as soon as they became Polytechnic they were then in education and so the numbers went up but it was actually a juggling of the figures, I think. Am I correct in that?

Mr McKIM - I am not sure about a juggling of the figures.

Mrs TAYLOR - Not that it was being deliberately juggled; I am just saying it moved into a different category but it was the same students as far as I could tell.

Mr McKIM - That was before my time as minister, I think it was 2010 from memory, so I do not know the answer to your question.

Mrs TAYLOR - Not to worry. My point is really to try to address that thing about getting to that figure of students who do not engage in education or training or jobs because that is the figure that is not being retained, or at least that is the figure we ought to work on.

Mr McKIM - We will take on board what you have said and have a look at the way that we calculate and present this data. I would point out that some of the data that we use for this is ABS data which, of course, we do not have the capacity to control, so some of the inputs into our data sets are ABS data that we import. We do not have the capacity to direct ABS. We could potentially talk to them about some of their data sets. One thing I know about data is it does get very complicated and there are often very good reasons why something that you or I might think is quite simple and ought to be presented quite simply in figures actually is impossible due to some little technicality or other. It is a strange thing, data, and it can be very frustrating at times.

Mrs TAYLOR - If we can get close to that number that are actually disengaged then that is the figure I would like us to be working on.

Mr McKIM - Maybe we need a disengagement rate number rather than a retention.

Mrs TAYLOR - Yes, a percentage and that percentage is the young people that -

Mr McKIM - If I did not make it clear when I was talking about international student numbers, they were government school and VET figures.

Mrs TAYLOR - Not private?

Mr McKIM - Not private.

Mrs TAYLOR - Good.

Mr McKIM - Those figures I was just giving were just government schools and I know there are significant numbers educated in the private sector. I have just been advised that the non-government sector is 91 so that is on top of the 280 that I indicated before.

Mrs TAYLOR - That is really what I wanted to explore.

Dr GOODWIN - Minister, I did not quite get the TCE completion figures. Do you mind repeating them?

Mr McKIM - The measure is of those students that undertook full-time programs and achieved a TCE in year 12, up from 2 097 in 2010, to 2 212 in 2011, and 2 422 in 2012.

Dr GOODWIN - Is there a percentage?

Mr McKIM - Yes; 30.3 per cent in 2010, 31.9 per cent in 2011 and 34.4 per cent in 2012.

Mrs TAYLOR - Is that students who completed year 12?

Mr McKIM - That is of those students that undertook a full time program and achieved a TCE in year 12.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay, because TQA comes in there, does it not? Even if you have been there for the whole of year 11 and year 12, if you have not scored sufficient to pass, then you may have been there for two years but you do not get a completion certificate because you have not achieved it.

Mr McKIM - That is right. TCE is a TQA qualification.

Mrs TAYLOR - Therefore, those numbers are not indicative of the whole picture.

Mr McKIM - Yes, I think that is a fair comment.

2.5 Skills Tasmania -

CHAIR - We have already touched on the changes with Skills Tasmania becoming the business unit within the Education Department. The savings around that - are they just related to the payroll tax or have we some savings as well?

Mr McKIM - There will be savings with the board. We will not have a Skills Tasmania board in the future.

CHAIR - \$87 000.

Mr McKIM - If you exclude the effect of the payroll tax reduction, the movement in this output is an increase of 6.46 per cent or \$489 000. You were asking about Skills -

CHAIR - The savings through the changes in the structure.

Mr McKIM - The saving will be predominantly in the forward expense. I have released that information publicly in the past. I will see if I can find it now.

CHAIR - While you are looking for that, minister, some members of the Legislative Council took the opportunity to have a briefing by Chrissie Berryman, Mark Sayer and Malcolm Wells last week. We received a fairly comprehensive overview of how the new structure will change but for this exercise it would be useful to find out what those savings are likely to be.

Mr McKIM - The annual savings from the dissolution of the Skills Tasmania board on 1 July 2013 will be in the region of \$120 000 per annum.

CHAIR - It is purely a business unit now within the Education Department from 1 July?

Mr McKIM - Yes, it will be.

CHAIR - We had a comprehensive briefing last week for which members who attended were very appreciative. Thank you for organising that, Mr Wells. The leader facilitated that.

Mr McKIM - We appreciate your interest.

CHAIR - Are there any other areas we want to flesh out with Skills before we move out of that?

2.6 Tasmanian Qualifications Authority -

Mr GAFFNEY - It is \$265 000 less, but I am reading the Auditor-General's report and he put that down to an average drop in employment of FTEs commensurate with the work. I do not see that it is a real issue. I would imagine the work has not been impacted because of that decrease and so now you are just going to build it back up over time.

Mr McKIM - We believe that in the immediate future it will be more likely to be a maintenance of where it is and if I could also indicate that again, the payroll tax treatment has an impact here and if you exclude the effect of the payroll tax reduction the movement in the output is a decrease of \$105 000. The different payroll tax treatment across the budget has an impact here. That is \$161 000 of the \$266 000 is actually the payroll tax.

Mr GAFFNEY - The improved network computer IT will make it more efficient and not make it harder, I would hope.

Mr McKIM - That is the intention.

Mrs TAYLOR - Is this TQA? Why would TQA be paying payroll tax? There are only 17 of them.

Mr McKIM - It is part of the department.

Mrs TAYLOR - So you share it across the department even if that department does not qualify for payroll tax, they get to pay their share anyway? Well, there is equity for you.

Mr McKIM - They were previously given money to pay it.

2.7 Grants and financial assistance -

CHAIR - If there is no more we will move on to grants and financial assistance. My question there is what is the source of this funding and how is it deployed? I notice that that has no changes like the one in the previous grants and financial assistance back in 1.5.

Mr McKIM - The source of this is entirely the state funds.

CHAIR - How is it allocated?

Mr McKIM - We have apprentices and trainee grants, so this is for people who are travelling.

Mr DEAN - What are the criteria there, minister, for those grants?

CHAIR - So if you live in the north and your course is in the south of the state and vice versa -

Mr McKIM - It is for people who have to travel because their course is not available and, as Mr Pettit rightly points out, that also includes some assistance for people who have to travel outside Tasmania to train or do their apprenticeship or part of their apprenticeship, perhaps.

CHAIR - As we learnt last week at the briefing. Some members did not understand that you could be paid to have training outside of the state.

Mr DEAN - In Hawaii or somewhere like that?

Mr McKIM - Hawaii? Not that I have heard, Mr Dean, and there is also the Industry Training Advisory Board at a cost of \$30 000 and that gives the \$1 780 that was the 2013-14 allocation.

Mrs TAYLOR - A supplementary, what will happen? The fact that you have learned that the figure remains the same but costs do not remain the same? In all the years, in all the forward Estimates -

CHAIR - Except for 2016-17 they are going to have a smaller increase.

Mr McKIM - We assess that each year as part of the budget development process. I think I offered that in response to Mr Gaffney, who had postulated that it might go back up to where it was and I said something like it would more likely to remain at about the level it is. But, as I said, we would assess any increase in costs as part of the budget development process and if there is significant cost increases then we would consider addressing that through an increased allocation.

Mrs TAYLOR - You would hope that there will be increased costs because we want to increase the retention rate, so if you increase the retention rate, as we would like to do, then surely the costs are going to rise as well, but I am happy to say that this is a figure you will look at again next year, and I will look at with interest next year, to see if you have increased retention and therefore higher costs.

Mr McKIM - I am sure someone has just made a note, Mrs Taylor, so I am sure we are going to have the same discussion next year and you can hold me to what I have said.

CHAIR - Moving onto output group 3, which is LINC Tasmania.

Mr GAFFNEY - Sorry, it does not come into the LINC one. About the situation with the principals - I am aware, and most people are, that we have an ageing cohort in the principals and they are funded in a certain way. How is that going? Will that funding be continued in the model that is being used, or what is the long-term plan for principal turnover and numbers?

Mr McKIM - You are right about that being one of the challenges we face. There are a couple of things the department is doing. We are running an accelerated development program for young leaders in our school system and that is really important. They are not necessarily principals, by the way; in fact I reckon the majority would not be principals. That is to upskill people before they get into the job and to try to fast-track some of our most highly regarded young leaders in the department. That is one thing we are doing to prepare.

We have lost some very senior principals. I was at Rob Banfield's drinks a few weeks ago; David Hamlett has just retired. I probably should not be mentioning principals' names around here but anyway, we are in the process of losing some of our really experienced principals and it is something the department is aware of and is managing through processes such as the accelerated leadership program, and the increased professional support and professional development we are giving to principals as well as, might I add, utilising the wisdom of the elders through our principal network leaders positions.

These are 11 positions we have created around Tasmania and each principal network leader oversees a group of schools in a discrete geographic area and they are there to offer the advice of the elders to our principals in schools. Our principal network leaders that we have promoted into those positions are exclusively ex-principals, so that they can share their great experience with some of our younger principals.

I know from speaking to a number of our younger principals that they really find it so great to be able to just pick a phone if they have a problem and talk to someone who may well have faced this problem a number of times during their career and who can offer them some guidance.

Mr GAFFNEY - Where does that funding come from for the principal network leaders?

Mr McKIM - That was a three-year funding as part of the teacher quality national partnership program.

Mr GAFFNEY - Now that that federally funded money has finished -

Mr McKIM - That finishes at the end of next year.

Mr GAFFNEY - What is the department's long-term plan for that?

Mr McKIM - The department will no doubt have a look at that as things shake out. There is the possibility of a Gonski agreement being signed; even if Gonski is not signed, there is the certainty of \$83 million going into the Tasmanian school system. We obviously have an election coming up early next year but if I am lucky enough to still be Education minister, I would do everything I could to retain those positions because I really think they are incredibly useful for our principals and provide great support.

Mr GAFFNEY - What is that funding package? How much is it worth?

Mr McKIM - The national partnership?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes.

Mr McKIM - It is \$1.3 million per annum for three years.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr GAFFNEY - That is quite a sizable fund to come up with to continue the program.

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - If it has to come from the internal budget.

Mr McKIM - Yes, it has.

Mr GAFFNEY - All of that money has been used in that program, the \$1.3 million?

Mr McKIM - It is not coming from the upfront partnership; it is coming from the reward payments that are associated with the partnership and that is when we allocate it to the principal, to those positions, to those functions.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. The \$1.3 million per year comes from the federal government into the Department of Education, then you allocate that fund to cover that program so all of those funds are expended on those 11 positions and the program that they run?

Mr PETTIT - There are various reward payments that are paid over the last three or four years. Some of them are sizeable, up to \$4 million to \$5 million, so we have used elements of those to fund the Principal Network Leaders with a guarantee of three years. The purpose of three years was that we knew we had a large number of inexperienced principals coming, so we had to make sure we were preparing and supporting them. We said that after three years we would review that and see whether they were worth maintaining and, if they were, we would have to look at funding from a different source.

Mrs TAYLOR - Not the principals, the program?

Mr PETTIT - The program itself.

Mr GAFFNEY - The bonus money achieved from those national partnerships - how much money has flowed into the Department of Education from that?

Mr PETTIT - I would not have that figure exactly -

Mr GAFFNEY - Can I put that on notice?

Mr PETTIT - Ms Banks would probably have the exact figure for you.

The reward money in improving teacher quality, there is \$4.15 million which came to this state. That is not all for government schools; a percentage of that goes to independent and Catholic. There is also reward funding under other programs. Literacy and numeracy; \$3.53 [million] has gone directly into schools. We are trying to make sure that the funding is attached to what it should be. There are others that we are awaiting, to see whether we get rewards from them.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Output group 3

LINC Tasmania

3.1 Information services and community learning -

Mr McKIM - We have Jenny Rayner here who would be ready to come to the table if we need assistance but maybe members of the committee would like to commence their questions and we will see if we need to ask for assistance.

Mr DEAN - The first thing I want to look at is the significant decrease in probably every aspect of accessing information through the LINC. If you look at the table 315, the number of visits to LINC online is decreasing and the target this year was 2.6 million; that is 2012-13. Where is it at this time? I would like to know how it is tracking. The target for 2013-14 has dropped back to 2.5 million accesses online. Then if we look at the in-person visits, that has also decreased reasonably significantly in 2011-12 from the previous year. Will this year's 2012-13 target be met? That is the in-person visits and online visits?

The same thing applies with borrowed items from the LINC. Those numbers have also decreased. What is happening in this area and where is it likely to go into the future if that is known? I guess there has to be some study or review being done of these matters.

Mr McKIM - The first thing to point out is there is a general transmission over to digital services from what used to be traditionally a library in terms of books and paper and there is a general transition over to demand for digital services.

I will see if we can get some assistance in terms of interpretation. You have asked about online?

Mr DEAN - Online access is decreasing, the in-person access is decreasing and also the foreign items is decreasing and I want to know the impact on the LINC centres.

Mr McKIM - I might pass this to Ms Jenny Rayner who is the director of LINC for her to assist us with an interpretation of these cases.

Ms RAYNER - In relation to the reduction in online business to the virtual LINC, that is generally accounted for by the fact that, firstly, we rely on Google Analytics to provide us with that data and they have changed the way in which they collect the statistics and, secondly, in relation to online information, a great deal of our own resources which were once available only through our own website are now available through other online services. The number of people who have to rely directly on the virtual LINC has decreased because the information is more widely available.

Mr DEAN - The in-person visits, that covered both the online and in-person – is that what you are saying?

Ms RAYNER - No, that was specifically related to the way online information is distributed and the way the reports are collected. In terms of in-person visits, yes, there has been a reduction but I think you can see from the table that is provided that it is not a huge reduction. There are still expected to be more than about 3 million people visiting our service points in the course of a year. The trends are changing as more people are relying on electronic delivery and we expect

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

that that will continue but, at the same time, there are still a large number of people who come into our building every day.

CHAIR - Minister, do you believe that that reduction might have something to do with reduced hours for LINC centres?

Mr McKIM - We have not reduced hours in any of our LINC's in the current financial year.

CHAIR - About 12 months ago they were reduced. I know for a fact that Scottsdale is not open until 10 o'clock in the morning.

Mr McKIM - We have actually recently extended the hours of the LINC in Scottsdale, Madam Chair, I know you will be pleased to hear.

CHAIR - From 10.30 to 10.

Mr McKIM - I would have to take advice on the specific increase.

Mr GAFFNEY - The same thing happened in Latrobe; the hours remained the same and they had a survey to find out when they were best used, so they might have changed the opening and closing hours, but they only had so many hours so they just manipulated when they were best used. It was the coordination of it, was it not?

Mr McKIM - I should clarify. I think we may have reduced the hours in Rosebery.

CHAIR - So that is the only LINC centre that has had hours reduced in the past 12 months?

Mr McKIM - On my advice, that is correct. If that is not correct we will let you know shortly. My advice is that we have recently increased the hours at Scottsdale.

CHAIR - Borrowed items.

Mr DEAN - Borrowed items. That is decreasing; I want to know why and I guess it is accessing electronically, but I suspect that is the reason for it.

Mr McKIM - My advice is that item, Mr Dean, includes some electronic borrowings and we put that increase down to, as Ms Rayner said earlier, the increased range of sources from which people can obtain information.

Mr DEAN - Minister, what are the expectations of LINC's into the future with what seems to be occurring with a drop-off in almost every area - that is, online, in person, buyings and so on. There is less contact so what does that mean for the LINC's moving forward?

Mr McKIM - We are certainly not considering winding up our library network or anything like that.

Mr DEAN - I am thinking of the changes that might need to occur.

Mr McKIM - As with any service provision, it is relevance to demand that is really important. It is also important to understand that our LINC system has a really important equity

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

role in our community around things like social inclusion and people who, for example, may not be able to afford a private computer to go online so they can come in and access the internet. There are also people who, for whatever reason, do not feel comfortable on a computer and they just want a book to read and we can provide them with books through our LINC's.

The point you make is valid - that is, what are the long-term challenges for organisations that work in this space. It is important to understand that there is an equity role and a social inclusion role that is played here in terms of supporting people who, if they were not supported in this way, would not have access to the books or the information they need.

Mr DEAN - I am not suggesting they ever close.

Mr McKIM - I appreciate that.

Ms Rayner is reminding me, and she is right, that an acknowledged issue in the library community around the world is how to keep libraries relevant and provide an important service as we move into the 21 st century where delivery methodologies are changing so rapidly.

Mr DEAN - Last year I think you were developing strategies about inappropriate access to technology and through the computers and so on to inappropriate sites. Has that all been absolutely satisfied now with no ability to be able to do that?

Mr McKIM - We are continually working on our filtering system and upgrading it as best we can, but these things are very technical and my advice is, and very good advice, that I should not guarantee that there will not be accessing of any inappropriate material. What I can guarantee is that we will do our best to achieve that.

Mr DEAN - Has there been an issue that you are aware of inappropriate accessing of material?

Mr McKIM - Not that we are aware of. If you want to put it on notice we can make some inquiries but we are not aware of any.

Mr DEAN - My last question is in relation to the proposed LINC at George Town. I noticed in the budget that the areas now are separately funded. The child family centre is now funded I think at \$3.3 million, the LINC I think is at \$3.6 million so they are now separately funded. Is it now the position that they are going to be put into separate buildings? Originally they were under the one roof, as I understand it, part of the one building, but that funding would suggest that perhaps you have gone back to the original concept of splitting the two buildings.

Mr McKIM - The children and family centres are delivered through the portfolio of Ms O'Byrne, as I said earlier.

Mr DEAN - Yes they are.

Mr McKIM - The situation as I understand it is that there has been a planning application including a DA that was lodged with the George Town Council in October 2012 that also sought to amend the current planning scheme at George Town to accommodate the facility on the Regent Square site. I am aware of the level of community concern about this, in fact I have been up there and visited and consulted with some concerned members of the community earlier last year. The

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

DA was approved by council but the decision has been appealed and is currently before the TPC and my advice is that the TPC is due to reconvene on 28 June 2013 to examine further evidence.

In terms of the intent, my understanding - and I would encourage you to raise this with the minister for Children when she is before you -

Mr DEAN - We do not have the minister for Children.

Mr McKIM - Okay, you cannot get an answer at this stage.

CHAIR - We cannot have all the ministers.

Mr McKIM - They are in the other Upper House then.

Mr DEAN - Yes, the other committee.

Mr McKIM - Perhaps you could ask one of your colleagues to ask her.

Mr DEAN - Yes, I can.

CHAIR - It might be a bit late.

Mr McKIM - She is in today, is she?

Mr DEAN - Yes, she is.

CHAIR - Anyway, we have processes in the parliament.

Mr McKIM - What I was going to say, as this is my understanding from a discussion with Ms O'Byrne, is that she would like to understand what the decision is out of that appeal before considering how to proceed.

Mr DEAN - It is not intended that the centre that you are responsible for, the LINC centre, will be separate from the other one. The funding you identified for that - two separate areas of funding - \$3.3 million and -

Mr McKIM - The LINC is an existing facility at Georgetown and what has been placed is a new facility.

Mr DEAN - That is right, the child family centre.

CHAIR - Mr Finch.

Mr FINCH - I would say we have one of the best public libraries services in the world in Tasmania and it is delivered at a very low cost per head. Do we put a figure on that cost per head?

Mr McKIM - Cost per visitor?

Mr FINCH - Yes, is there any figure done that collects that information?

Mr McKIM - No, there is not, but it probably would not be all that difficult a calculation because we would know what we expend on the LINC as a whole, although there are other aspects to the LINC, apart from being a library, and we would know how many visitors we get.

Mr FINCH - A figure that could be made with a comparison to what happens in other parts of the world.

Mr McKIM - The LINC budget goes across all of the LINC services and my advice from Ms Rayner is it would be quite challenging to isolate the amount of money that is spent supporting libraries.

Most other Australian jurisdictions' libraries are not run by state governments, they are run by local governments, and the model that we have here is a good model for running libraries. It presents extra funding challenges for the state government but it relieves local government of the funding burden. I am aware of a number of other jurisdictions where libraries are run by local governments in Australia rather than state governments. I think it is appropriate that state governments run libraries.

CHAIR - Minister, where do you see the leisure and lifestyle, former adult education programs, going, given the downward trend?

Mr McKIM - Yes, we have a few challenges.

CHAIR - Is it too expensive? Are people too busy? What do you think is the problem?

Mr McKIM - It is a combination of a few things. I have asked the department to have another look at this program and I am expecting some advice in the not too distant future.

CHAIR - Even the name change has not helped, has it?

Mr McKIM - There is no doubt that enrolments are trending down. You cannot put any other interpretation on it. One thing that I want to make clear is that we are investing significant funding into the 26/10 program which is targetted around adult literacy. It is a challenging circumstance for us in relation to leisure and lifestyle.

Members would be aware that we moved to a full cost-recovery basis for the leisure and lifestyle stream as of August 2011 and, as a result, there were cost increases from this date.

We continue to run courses where demand exists and where there is sufficient enrolments to cover the fixed and variable costs. We have worked really hard through LINC Tasmania and everyone in LINC Tasmania has worked hard to improve the viability of the Leisure and Lifestyle Program and we have achieved significant efficiencies in the operating costs of the program but there is no other interpretation other than to accept that enrolments in the program continue to decline and that presents a very real challenge for us.

Mr GAFFNEY - Minister, you did mention a few minutes ago that LINC is the best place for state government to be involved with because it is a good model. Do you think that Adult Education is a good place for local government to be involved with, to offer those courses and

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

funding opportunities because of their connection to the communities to find out what their community wanted? I think that is something that might be worth exploration.

Mr McKIM - I would not reflexively rule that out, Mr Gaffney. I would be interested in having a think about that and taking some advice on that which I do not think you would expect me to do on the run here. That is an interesting suggestion -

Mr GAFFNEY - A lot of councils are doing similar things at the moment, filling that space and void cost effectively.

Mr McKIM - Ms Rayner was making that point to me that you just made, Mr Gaffney, which is that some local government councils are in fact running very similar programs to those that we offer through the Leisure and Lifestyle Program.

Mrs TAYLOR - The other thing is you can get so much information online now. There are probably some of those programs that people would have gone to once upon a time who now just Google.

CHAIR - How to make home beer or something like that.

Mrs TAYLOR - I was thinking of flower arranging, really.

Laughter.

Dr GOODWIN - I was interested to know whether you are able to - and this can be on notice - provide us with some details of the courses that are being offered and the number of enrolments in each course to give us an idea of what is happening?

Mr McKIM - This is the program for spring 2011 to autumn 2013.

We have in the art and craft section, drawing, general jewellery, lead-light glass, needle threads and textiles, painting, photography, pottery, ceramics and woodwork.

In the business section, we have a small business course in computing and technology. We have accounting and bookkeeping, digital imaging and multimedia, general, home and personal technology and Internet and e-mail.

In fitness and wellbeing, we have general, massage, meditation and relaxation, parenting, personal and family health, personal development, Pilates, Tai Chi, therapies and yoga.

Home, lifestyle and DIY, we have animals and pets, food and wine, Madam Chair, which might fit into the home brewing suggestion category. We have gardening and landscaping, general, house and DIY, managing your money and investments.

Mechanical and technical, sustainable living.

In communities, arts and sciences, we have general, we have government, the law and you; history and genealogy, society and culture, university tasters and writing.

In languages, we have Asian and European languages.

In performing arts, we have dance, general, instrumentation and singing.

In sports and outdoor recreation, we have adventure, boats and marine, indoor games, outdoor recreation and sports.

Dr GOODWIN - Would you have figures of how many are enrolled in each?

CHAIR - Can we table that, minister? I am mindful that we do have some time left but I know we still have some areas to cover.

Mr McKIM - Yes.

CHAIR – A question on literacy.

Mr DEAN - Adult education and the School for Seniors. The School for Seniors -

Mr McKIM - Are you talking about in Launceston?

Mr DEAN - Yes, Launceston. Well, I'm talking about adult education - where are the numbers going with that?

Mr McKIM - Yes, the Leisure and Lifestyle program is what we now call adult education.

Mr DEAN - Yes, the School for Seniors numbers are increasing and I think have increased again this year in Launceston. There is great support for that area.

Mr McKIM - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Is the department looking at giving more support for the School for Seniors? I don't know what you're going to do about adult education; should we look at disbanding that and moving into another area? The School for Seniors, I think, is very attractive because of the low costs associated with it. It is simply non-profit; it's simply recovering fees. I'm wondering where you are going to go with all of this. I appreciate your support for the School for Seniors at Launceston; I think they are now fairly secure in their premises.

Mr McKIM - Yes. I'd like to congratulate everyone involved in the campaign to retain the School for Seniors in High Street. It was the politest campaign I've ever been subjected to, Mr Dean. They were absolutely impeccable in the way that they interacted with me. I went up to visit Mr Lumley -

Mr DEAN - Yes, he's a gentleman.

Mr McKIM - and some of his colleagues up there. I had outstanding quality cups of tea and was welcomed all through that campaign. There were a number of letters I received and, as we all have, I am sure, as public figures. I've been on the end of a few campaigns over the journey and that was undoubtedly the politest one I've ever been subjected to.

Mr DEAN - A well-orchestrated plan works well.

Mr McKIM - A very wisely and ultimately successfully-run campaign, Mr Dean.

Mr DEAN - It was never going to be any other way.

CHAIR - Moving along, thanks.

Mr McKIM - Well, I haven't started to answer the question yet, which is my fault entirely, Madam Chair.

Mr Dean; as you are aware, we've announced a plan to refurbish the site at High Street, largely to accommodate the needs of the Launceston School for Seniors. There are some other groups requiring community learning space as well so the space won't be exclusively for the School for Seniors but, let's face it, it is their home base.

Mr DEAN - You've no intention to move your Adult Education centre in York Street?

Mr McKIM - We do intend to eventually decommission the York Street site. I have spoken to Mr Lumley about this. LINC Tasmania has three properties in Launceston; we have High Street, the Civic Square LINC and York Street and we simply don't have the demand, ultimately, for all three sites so we're rationalising into Civic Square and High Street. The intent is that York Street will eventually be decommissioned, but we'll work through the processes leading up to that with the users of that facility.

Mr DEAN - Good position.

3.2 Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office -

Mr FINCH - I'm wondering about the diminution in the funds for next year of \$110 000 and then it's up \$60 000 the next year and then it's up \$57 000 the next year and it's up \$54 000 the next year. I'm wondering about that variation in what's allocated to the Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office and if there's anything that can be pinpointed in respect of it.

Mr McKIM - On my advice, the increases in the out years is simply indexation. That's the indexation calculations that we do across all of the output groups where indexation applies. The decrease in the output of \$110 000 includes \$860 000 decrease because of the differing treatment of payroll tax and that's offset partially by indexation, and thus a very small reallocation of overheads.

Mr FINCH - Thanks. It's not a big issue but there are suggestions from time to time that this office is actually underfunded. Sometimes opportunities to preserve Tasmanian heritage can be missed, or people fear that they might be missed. I do want to make a case in point - the valuable records of the Van Diemen's Land Company, which are stored in the Tasmanian Library here in Hobart, but which some say are in need of digitalising. Given that the documents are on loan by the VDL Company and are an important part of our history, is the government able to make sure that they are documented appropriately and they are made available to the public and researchers who find this material just invaluable?

[7.00 p.m.]

Mr McKIM - As a general response, we are moving through and digitising assets that are held by the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office and you can see that the size of the TAHO's

digital collections increased from 12 terabytes, I would imagine that is in 2009-10, to 12.28 terabytes in 2010-11, and to 13.86 terabytes in 2011-12. I do not currently have advice on those specific records but I am happy to seek that for you and let you know. I am not sure if you want to write to me or put it on notice, or we can just make a note and I am happy to come back to you on that.

Mr FINCH - I have done that so maybe that answer can come back to me.

Mr McKIM - I am happy to get back to you.

Digitising any record would require the permission of the owner of the record. If we were not the owner, for example, if it were owned by a company, they would need to give us permission to do that. I will seek some advice on those particular records, the records of the Van Diemen's Land Company that you mentioned, and I will come back to you with that advice about whether they have been digitised and, if not, whether there is any intention to do so and what any barriers to that occurring might be.

Grants and subsidies

Mrs TAYLOR - There are some interesting movements in grants and subsidies. This is obviously commonwealth money. First of all, looking at table 3.11, there is obviously a movement from commonwealth grants to non-government schools from government schools a little. Is this just because of numbers? Is this because of continued drift from government schools to non-government schools?

Mr McKIM - There is a decrease there between 2012-13 and 2013-14 of \$3 893 000 but that decrease is entirely attributable to the Australian Government; the state government funding for non-government schools has gone up by over a million dollars between 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Mrs TAYLOR - This whole section of whole grants and subsidies is Australian Government funding though, isn't it?

Mr McKIM - No. There is a state government component and an Australian Government component. The state government component has gone up from \$56 290 000 in 2012-13 to \$57 408 000 in 2013-14 so that is an increase from 2012-13 to 2013-14 of \$1.12 million approximately. The Australian Government contribution in 2013 was \$180 404 000 and that has gone down to \$175 393 000 in 2013-14, so there is a total decrease of \$3.8 million, which is made up of a decrease in commonwealth funding of just over \$5 million that is offset by an increase in state government funding of \$1.2 million.

Mrs TAYLOR - Correct. I just looked at the note and obviously that says: 'The movement in Commonwealth grants to non-government schools primarily reflects indexation increases in Australian Government funding to non-government schools.' What does this mean? Are they giving increased funding to non-government schools at the expense of government schools?

Mr McKIM - The commonwealth?

Mrs TAYLOR - Yes.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr McKIM - Mrs Taylor, my advice is that the decrease in Australian government funding is a combination of the end of the Digital Education Revolution National Partnership as well as a change in the way that indexation is calculated in the non-government school national schools SPP. The other point that I think I need to make to you is that should Gonski be agreed then this will all change again.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay. The note doesn't say that about the other bit, but in this bit I am just saying if it reflects indexation increases to non-government schools, that actually drops hours. Does that mean a drop from commonwealth to government schools, that is all? But is it just a drop to non-government schools? I can live with that. It is all right, you have answered my question.

Mr McKIM – Basically, the commonwealth have dropped their indexation rate and is your question: does that impact on our funding?

Mrs TAYLOR - From the commonwealth?

Mr McKIM - Yes, it does.

Mrs TAYLOR - To government schools?

Mr McKIM - No, it does not affect the funding to government schools.

Mrs TAYLOR - Good, thank you. My second question is: has Raising the Bar, Closing the Gap finished funding. It says, 'The decrease in transfers to the consolidated fund reflects the cessation of Australian government funding for the indigenous education targeted assistance Literacy and Numeracy Project Agreement 2010 Raising the Bar, Closing the Gap?'

Mr McKIM - Yes, Raising the Bar is still funded at \$11 million per annum right through the forward Estimates of the budget. That relates to the commonwealth funded indigenous component.

Mrs TAYLOR - What does that note mean, then?

Mr McKIM - Exactly that, I believe. What is the note number, Mrs Taylor?

Mrs TAYLOR - Two. We are still on Grants and Subsidies, table 3.11, transfer to the consolidated fund; it drops from \$912 000 to \$350 000. I am not arguing – I am just asking to understand.

Mr McKIM - The confusion here is that there are two different programs with the same name, effectively. We have our Raising the Bar program at the state level, which is funded at \$11 million per annum right through the outer years. This is a completely different program, commonwealth funded.

Mrs TAYLOR - Ours is not an indigenous program, is it?

Mr McKIM - No.

Mrs TAYLOR - It is just about education, but I am talking about this one.

Mr McKIM - That is right. Sorry, have I not answered your question?

Mrs TAYLOR - No, because my question is, is that program finishing?

Mr McKIM - Yes, it is.

Mrs TAYLOR - That is very sad for our indigenous community, I would think. Subject to Gonski.

Mr McKIM - As I said, the whole funding landscape of schools will change if we decide on Gonski.

Mr GAFFNEY - I saw in 2013-14 \$500 000 for carbon tax and they are not covered.

Mr McKIM - Is that sustainability in schools?

CHAIR - No, it is reducing the carbon footprint of schools.

Mr McKIM - Yes, that is it.

Mr GAFFNEY - It is interesting that one year has not been -

Mr McKIM - It was a two-year program so we are in the second year of that.

Mr GAFFNEY - How do you evaluate that in its first year and where it should then be?

Mr McKIM - This was originally created for two years so we have not done a holistic review of the program that I am aware of but I can provide you with some advice about some of the things that we have done.

There was a high degree of interest in it from schools, as I suspected there would be when I established it. It will fund about \$1 million with \$500 000 over two years and the co-contributions from the schools, we think, are about \$725 000, so the schools will co-contribute from their own funding sources. The objectives were to improve the learning environment for children and the work environment for employees. Better controlled buildings obviously lead to an improvement in general learning and working conditions and also make a contribution to meeting the government's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Tasmania.

We funded things like heating efficiency, lighting efficiency, rainwater storage, water efficiency, general energy reduction including the installation of double glazing, sun shading control, solar technology including panels for hot water, pool heating and the establishment of vegetable gardens. We have, for example, at Kingston Primary established an outdoor classroom with benches, a teaching platform, a powered site, adjacent raised garden beds. The Timsbury Road School has completed replacement of an irrigation system, a drip irrigation, and extended the system across the kitchen garden and greatly reduced their water usage and therefore their bills. The Campbell District High School, for example, has energy efficient heating and cooling in all remaining classrooms to replace extremely old and non-energy efficient heating systems. There is a range of projects funded through this and it has been quite successful.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr GAFFNEY - Minister, with that and the question is when you assess the benefits of a program and you bring it then back to cabinet or back to your management, is it worthwhile putting this money back into it again because it has been successful? There has been \$720 000 contributed from the schools because they see the value of this. That would be the question, when would you think of doing a report on that and then coming back and saying, 'We think you should put this \$1 million for another two years'?

Mr McKIM - This was not a cabinet decision. This was simply my decision as minister after working the issue through with the department. What we will do once we have a completed - and we are in the second year now so there are a number of programs that have been funded but not yet completed in the schools - but once we are a bit further down the track this year we will have a look at how we have gone. There are various ways we can measure the success of a program like this. There were probably some ways that are more difficult to measure in terms of potentially improved learning opportunities for students, but there will also be some ways we can quantify the advantages in terms of reduced power water bills at schools and so forth. We will have a look at those things and make a decision then.

Capital investment program

Mr DEAN - The funding that has been made available to the Brooks High School was \$1.2 billion this year and only \$8.1 million the following year. This was a submission, as I understand it, that was put in some four years ago in relation to Brooks so my question is: what might have changed in that intervening period? The position I raised earlier that you have not made a statement on, is an issue that concerns me somewhat. What is the position with the Rocherlea Primary School if the move to Mayfield occurs? Where is this at? What is happening? I understand the funding is for a classroom or classrooms, so is it premature to jump at this stage?

[7.15 p.m.]

Mr McKIM - Brooks's needs still exist and I am advised that primarily that is around inadequate learning spaces - classrooms. On the basis that the merger you have flagged does proceed, we will assess this funding across both of those sites.

Mr DEAN - Thanks for that, minister.

Mr McKIM - So it is the best use of the money in the current and future circumstances.

Mr DEAN - I am not stopping anything from happening at Brooks because Brooks is a very deserving school and it is doing extremely well under the current principal.

Mr McKIM - I am pleased to hear that.

Mr DEAN - What is the position, minister, with the old Rocherlea School site land; has that been sold, is it still for sale, what is happening?

CHAIR - Still for sale looking for a buyer.

Mr McKIM - We have demolished the buildings up there and I believe that it is still for sale and I will let you know, Mr Dean. I can give you a bit more of an update than that on Rocherlea Primary.

Mr DEAN - The old Rocherlea Primary School site.

Mr McKIM - A rear block of land has been sold to an adjoining owner. The peace garden and adjoining land has been transferred to DHHS for use by Northern Suburbs Community Centre.

Mr DEAN - Excellent.

Mr McKIM - The remaining school buildings have been demolished and the balance of the school site is currently for sale on the open market.

Mr DEAN - It has been for sale for some time I think.

CHAIR - The price is coming down as we speak.

Mr McKIM - Again, that is being handled by Treasury.

Mr DEAN - Thanks, minister.

CHAIR - Do any other members have anything in relation to capital works? Minister, I have 23 schools and there is not one of them on your capital works list, so I feel like I have been a bit of a failure here - why aren't any of mine on there?

Mr McKIM - These are carefully calculated.

Mrs TAYLOR - It is related to my question, which is going to be: how do you prioritise them?

Mr McKIM - It is a very difficult thing to do to prioritise budgets such as this. I know some of the school communities that are on that list - presumably all of them - will be happy to be on the list but some in particular will be over the moon - one here and we do not have a member from this electorate but Smithton High School has been -

CHAIR - We have heard all about it, we have heard and we have heard.

Mr McKIM - Mr Gaffney, you would know how long and hard they have campaigned for a new gymnasium up there. Ms Banks has clearly been aware of that campaign. We do have selection criteria for our capital investment program, so projects submitted to that program are prioritised according to seven criteria:

- (1) demonstrating links to improve student learning outcomes;
- (2) addressing space needs and optimising utilisation of facilities at the school or across schools;
- (3) improving building condition;
- (4) demonstrating community benefits and extending the use of school facilities;
- (5) addressing strategic priorities and initiatives;
- (6) incorporating environmental sustainability; and
- (7) ensuring equitable provisions.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Then there is a process that is run, which scores applications using an A to C assessment on each criterion, and then the rating is aggregated into a numerical score by allocating a weighted numerical value to A through to C.

CHAIR - I am sure they are all deserving, minister, as all our schools that are looking for capital works would feel the same way.

Mr McKIM - This is part of our Building Better Schools policy which I have a copy of here, which all schools have access to and are supported to utilise.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mrs TAYLOR - Do you call for applications once every three years or once a year or how do schools get on the list to be assessed?

Mr McKIM - My advice is we have not called for submissions since 2009. However, given that we have funded a significant number of re-development and infrastructure projects through this budget, it is our intent to call again for projects later this year so we will be putting out the call to schools.

Mrs TAYLOR - Lots of schools have benefited significantly through the BER funding.

Mr McKIM - They have and you have to be in it to win it so I encourage any school that thinks it has an infrastructure need to consider submitting when we call for applications later this year. These things are inevitably under-subscribed and there are more schools who genuinely need assistance in infrastructure terms than we are able to provide for so I do not want to offer any false hope to schools but we do intend to call for schools to submit later this year and we will work through the process. As always in my portfolios, I do not interfere because I detest pork-barrelling politicians and I never interfere in the department's assessment of these projects. It is not the way I like to proceed as minister.

Mrs TAYLOR - I hear your criteria and it might well fit within that but does the department take particular note of, say, the socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage of a school. I ask this in particular because if you are in urban Launceston or Hobart or even Devonport, you have access to a gym that you would not have if you were in Smithton, for instance.

Mr McKIM - My advice is that socioeconomic status is not a factor in determining priorities for building but it is a factor in a range of other funding streams that we apply to schools including the SRPs.

Mrs TAYLOR - I would like to ask whether you would consider that because if we want to increase retention and raise the bar and if we want young people and communities to be better educated all round then should there not be a preference for those areas that do not have other access?

Mr McKIM - Mrs Taylor, I will not give you a commitment to make any changes.

Mrs TAYLOR - No, I am not asking for a commitment, I am asking you to think about it.

Mr McKIM - I am happy to think about that.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs TAYLOR - I think of even outer urban schools, when they want to put on theatre productions or all those associated things like back of house and front of house, and all that sort of stuff, they have to come into -

Mr McKIM - There was an awful lot of theatrical production infrastructure funded through the BER, often at the expense of improving learning spaces. I have lost count of the number of schools I have toured and looked at the whiz-bang performing arts centre and then taken into the classroom and they say minister, we really need some new classrooms. I think why did you not fund them out of your BER allocation if you needed them so badly.

CHAIR - Because the arts are very important, minister.

Mr McKIM - Schools made their decisions and we will assess things as we go.

CHAIR - Minister, that is the end of the questioning today and on behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for your participation through the process and I think that everyone was reasonably respectful.

Mr McKIM - My word.

CHAIR - We got some good information. We appreciate it and, minister, if you would like to discuss any of these issues you might like to wander around to the President's room and we will be there in about five minutes.

Mr McKIM - I thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you for your hospitality and can I thank all of the Department of Education. They have done a most outstanding job supporting the committee and me today.

CHAIR - Thank you to everyone, particularly behind the scenes people who were fantastic.

The committee adjourned at 7.25 p.m.