

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY****Wednesday 14 September 1994****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****Chairman:**

Mr H. Becker

**Members:**

Mr M.K. Brindal

Mr R.D. Clarke

Mr M.R. De Laine

Mr S.R. Leggett

Mr J. Scalzi

Ms L. Stevens

*The Committee met at 11 a.m.*

Education and Children's Services, \$950 920 000

**Witness:**

The Hon. R.I. Lucas, Minister for Education and Children's Services.

**Advisers:**

Dr I.R. McPhail, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr B.W. Treloar, Director, Corporate Services.

Ms S. Fueloep, Director, Programs.

Ms G. Hancock, Executive Director, School Operations.

Mr T. Brooks, Coordination and Executive Support.

Mr J. Dellit, Executive Director, Curriculum.

Mr K.A. Boaden, Assistant Director, Personnel.

Ms M.J. Sleath, Director, Personnel.

Ms D. Davis, Executive Director, Children's Services Office.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The Committee will adopt a relatively informal procedure. If the Minister undertakes to supply information at a later date it must be in a form suitable for insertion in *Hansard*, with two copies submitted no later than Friday 30 September to the Clerk of the House of Assembly. It is proposed to allow the lead Opposition speaker and the Minister to make an opening statement. There is a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions, based on three questions per member. The first question will go to the lead member on the Opposition side. I am very reluctant to allow supplementary questions, unless the Minister fails to answer a question, although we cannot force him to answer. Members may be allowed to ask a brief supplementary question to conclude a line of questioning before switching to the next member.

Subject to the convenience of the Committee, a member who is outside the Committee and who desires to ask a question will be permitted to do so once the line of questioning on an item has been exhausted by the Committee. Indications in advance to the Chairman are necessary.

Questions must be based on lines of expenditure as revealed in the Estimates of Receipts and Payments. Reference may be made to other documents such as the Program Estimates, the Auditor-General's Report, etc. Members must identify a page number in the relevant financial papers from which their question is derived.

I remind the Minister that there is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the Committee, but they can be

supplied to the Chair for distribution to the Committee. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the House, that is, purely statistical information, which is limited to one page in length. Questions are to be directed to the Minister and not the advisers. Ministers may refer questions to an adviser. Does the Minister wish to make an opening statement?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Mr Chairman, there are two blue documents available to you, I understand, and certainly to the members of the Committee. One is the Program Estimates with the revised material that you have already indicated to the Committee, in that there are evidently a number of errors in the original documentation from Treasury. The second document is traditionally tabled by Ministers and departments and is a statistical summary that supports the Program Estimates. You would be familiar with it, Mr Chairman; it highlights the costs of various services and goes through the various schools. It is a service which the department and previous Ministers have provided to members and which is tabled for the interest of members and for the Chair as well.

I do not intend to make an opening statement other than to say that, having spent so many years in opposition, and not being able to be part of this process, we are certainly keen to see it being used for the purpose for which it was intended. We are here to provide as much information as we can to members of the Committee and, in particular, to members of the Opposition, as this is one of the few opportunities they have to put questions directly to the Minister—particularly as I am a member in another House as opposed to the House of Assembly, where the members of this Committee normally sit.

My officers are here, similarly, to serve. If we cannot immediately answer a question, we may well be able to bring back an answer before the end of the Committee hearing today. If we cannot do that, we will comply with the requirements outlined by the Chair in relation to taking questions on notice.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I declare the proposed payments open for examination and refer members to pages 57 to 61 in the Estimates of Receipts and Payments and pages 97 to 123 in the Program Estimates. I draw members' attention to the erratum substituting pages 101 to 103 of the Program Estimates. I call on the member for Elizabeth to make an opening statement if she so wishes.

**Ms STEVENS:** In prefacing my statement, I point out that we, too, are keen to make this a productive day, to get information from the Minister and to question concisely and clearly in relation to his programs. For two of us it is our first Estimates Committee and we ask for the Chairman forbearance if we do not get procedures exactly right.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There is no problem; it is a very lenient Chair.

**Ms STEVENS:** Despite Australia's having a relatively youthful population, its expenditure on all forms of education, as a proportion of GDP, is significantly below the OECD average. In primary and secondary education, Australia rates thirteenth of 16 OECD countries in terms of expenditure. It has been argued that State expenditures on schools by high expenditure States should be cut to bring their costs in line with low expenditure States.

This was the general proposition behind many of the recommendations on education made by the Audit Commission. While the absence of outcomes data leaves the debate about the effects of reducing expenditure indeterminate, if such a course were generally adopted Australia's ranking in

expenditure on school education would fall even further. Since the report of the Audit Commission was released in April, the Government has refused to indicate which recommendations of the report are to be accepted. The Government did, however, produce the May financial statement, which announced that cuts to education of \$40 million would be introduced over three years. The budget confirms that strategy. I would like to quote to the Committee some remarks from *Hansard*, as follows:

Never before in my experience. . . has the morale of teachers in South Australian schools been so low. . . Teachers feel isolated, frustrated and angry as a tidal wave of increasingly complex problems sweeps over them.

These were the prophetic words of the former member for Hayward, now the member for Unley, made just a year ago to the Estimates Committee on 21 September 1993. The Minister will remember those words because it was said that he actually wrote the speech. Those words were indeed prophetic, because they describe exactly the situation that exists following the Government's decision to break its election promises and cut spending on education. If ever parents, students and teachers felt isolated frustrated and angry, now is the time. They feel isolated because they have not been consulted; they feel frustrated because the resources to provide the best education services in Australia are to be removed; and they feel angry because they have been duped by the Liberal Government's breaking one of its most important commitments to the electorate.

The bulk of cuts to education will be made by the axing of 422 teaching jobs. Other savings are to be made by closing up to 40 schools, tightening the eligibility to school card, cancelling free fares for school card holders and cutting the number of school services officers. The Minister has also given an undertaking to cut an additional \$18 million over the next two years, for a total annual cut of \$40 million. The Opposition believes that this Government should explain to all South Australians exactly how these cuts are to be made, how many more teachers will lose their jobs, which schools will close and what the flow-on effects are for education in this State. We hope that some of these questions will be answered today. I would like to proceed by tabling some questions on notice.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You cannot, unfortunately. The system we have is that, if you want questions to be answered by the Minister and the answers to be recorded in *Hansard*, you either have to read out the questions and then ask the Minister to take them on notice or you put them on the parliamentary Notice Paper. But I have not yet found out whether the new Government will follow the practice of the old one and take months to answer the questions. If I can get an assurance that the Public Service and the Government will answer them promptly, that may be the best way.

**Ms STEVENS:** I will do that. My questions are as follows:

How many staff are now employed in the Minister's office and what are their titles, responsibilities and salaries?

Which staff are employed under contract and are they entitled under certain circumstances to productivity bonuses and, if so, what are the bonuses and the conditions?

How many media, communication and speech writing staff are employed in the Minister's office?

What is the arrangement for monitoring the media in the Minister's office?

How many staff employed in the Minister's office have cars supplied for their use and the benefit of garaging paid by the Government?

Which officers' cars have private numberplates?

Which staff in the Minister's office have approval to use these cars for private purposes as part of their employment packages?

Which staff in the Minister's office have mobile telephones paid for by the Government? Have these staff been issued with instructions concerning private use of these telephones, and how is this monitored?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Mr Chairman, I can answer some of those immediately and take the rest of notice. The entitlement that my office has is 14, and the previous Minister's entitlement was originally 19.5, then reduced to 16 in the pre-election build-up, and we have reduced it further to 14. I think the current number in my office is 11; so the entitlement is 14 but the actual filling of positions is 11, so we have 11 very hard worked people there at the moment. They would love to have had productivity bonuses, I presume, but I can assure you they do not have them as part of their contract. I had one media adviser. The media monitoring is done in the same way as it was for the previous Minister, through Warburton Media Monitoring Services. My officers would probably like to have a car, too, but they do not have a car, and therefore the related questions about private numberplates, etc., do not apply. In relation to the other detailed questions, I will be happy to bring back a response.

**Ms STEVENS:** The forward estimates 1992-93 to 1995-96 made provision for the payment of a twenty-seventh pay for education staff in 1994-95. This provision was \$4.9 million. The estimates for salaries for the primary and secondary education programs have fallen from a total of \$671 million to \$653 million approximately, a reduction of \$18.55 million. The actual amount was \$655.877 million and this year's estimate represents a cut of \$2.5 million on that figure. The 1993-94 budget figure was reduced to reflect the payment of only 26 pays in that year. This year there are 27 pays, against a budget reduction of \$22 million, meaning that the twenty-seventh pay has been absorbed in the new figure. My first question is: will the Education Department make a twenty-seventh pay this year?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am advised that the answer is 'No.'

**Ms STEVENS:** Does the Minister then agree that this means that the education budget has effectively been cut by \$27 million, rather than \$22 million?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am advised that there is no twenty-seventh pay and therefore the figures that have been released, and they are on part of the public record, in relation to the extent of the cuts are the full extent of the cuts that we are talking about. It really is—and as a new Minister I have been exposed to it over the past eight months—a convoluted process, as to how you look at forward estimates and trying to compare, for example, the amounts of money that were spent actually last year and what is projected to be spent this year. There was a rearrangement, evidently, in relation to SAFA, and the property holdings and loans that we had with SAFA. In relation to that particular arrangement there was an adjustment of \$13 million to programs for 1993-94, which is not reflected in 1994-95. So you have all these sorts of adjustments right through that are going on. What we can do, as has always been done with Treasury, is look at the changes we make on a comparison with a no policy change basis.

Treasury from time immemorial has worked on the basis of no policy change and what that is going to mean for a department or agency in the next.

If you change policy, and we obviously have in relation to a number of areas to try to implement the program of \$40 million worth of cuts over the next three years, you then work back from that basis. But there are all these additions and subtractions, and it is the devil's only job to try to track them all down. We really have to work from a basis of no policy change, what that will mean next year, and work backwards from that. That is how we have operated. The cuts that have been outlined have been clearly enunciated in the budget papers and subsequent to that, adding to the \$40 million—\$22 million this year and \$40 million over the three years.

**Ms STEVENS:** Are you saying then that, if there is such an anomaly, it will come out in the wash?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am sure Treasury would not agree to using that phrase. Basically there are additions and subtractions all the way through, and there are literally dozens of those, one of which you have talked about. However, on the other side are equally significant—and sometimes more significant—additions and minuses. For example, we have, as the honourable member would well know, incremental salary creepers, officers who move through salary increments. Obviously, we have to continue to pay those award rates. Each year, without salary or award increases, our salary bill increases, because we have more officers at levels 10, 11, 12, or whatever. As the honourable member would know, officers automatically progress through those rates. As we have more advanced skills teachers, for example, we have to pay more.

The reclassification of school services officers, which is an agreement we have with the union, incurs additional expenditure. All those are feeding in on the positive or increased cost side that the department has to absorb. So there are the swings and roundabouts. As I said, there are some additions and subtractions, but we work on the basis of no policy change and then come back from no policy change. We have outlined the areas where the \$22 million will be achieved this year and the \$40 million over the next three years.

**Mr BRINDAL:** The opening remarks from the member for Elizabeth were interesting. Historically, the Minister mentioned he has been involved in these Estimates Committees for a number of years and now comes in here as Minister, having wanted to do more in education than this budget allows him to do. I find it remarkable that members opposite can throw words back at us when they are the authors of the cuts that are occurring to the budget, not only in education but across the board. The member commented on the absence of outcomes data. I know that this is one of the things the Minister at the table took to the electorate and is now implementing as policy—the belief that there should be outcomes data in education. I do not believe that the Government benches accept the argument that, just because we have fallen in ranking of expenditure, the quality of education will necessarily suffer. In questioning the Minister, I would hope everybody here today is concerned with two things—

**Mr CLARKE:** Will you get to the question?

**Mr BRINDAL:** Yes, I am; when I want to—teacher's morale and the education of students in this State. I will share with the Committee an observation: as the Minister said, we will not ask very many questions today, so I suggest the member for Ross Smith be a little more gracious. We will not ask many questions at all: we will leave that to the Opposi-

tion, because this is the Opposition's chance to question the Minister. Everyone on this side has the privilege of being a member of the Minister's backbench committee: members opposite do not have that. However, I point out in a collegiate and constructive way that, because it is the Opposition's day, it is for them to keep the numbers in this place, and four constitutes a quorum. So, if members of the Government bench have to be out of this Chamber and this Committee lapses for want of a quorum, it is the Opposition that is depriving itself of the chance to ask questions, not the Government side. I point that out in a collegiate sense so that the Committee can function well.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I do not mind members prefacing their remarks before seeking information from the Minister, but I do not think we need a lecture. It will be difficult today, as I have found in my 25 years in politics that teachers always seem to want to have the first say and the last say. Could you please get on and ask your question?

**Mr BRINDAL:** I refer to the provision of general primary education in schools (page 101). Rumours have been circulating for some time that the Government is negotiating to sell off a number of schools. The Minister has announced that there will be consultation with and discussion between the Parkside, Gilles Street and Sturt Street primary school communities. Can the Minister inform this Committee of the nature of those negotiations, the process that will be undertaken and the work involved?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge the interest of the member for Unley in this matter. There has been speculation for some years, even predating the arrival of the new Government, in relation to the ongoing viability and future of a number of schools. There has been speculation about Gilles Street and Sturt Street, and in recent times about Parkside because of its continuing low enrolments. I recently met with a deputation from the Gilles Street Primary School community, which was concerned about its future. I was able to assure them that the department and I have made no decision in relation to the future of that community. Equally I can say to the member for Unley that that is true of Parkside; and to the member for Adelaide that that is true of Sturt Street as well.

However, a review will be conducted and will look at the best way of ensuring the provision of quality education to all students in the communities served by Sturt Street, Gilles Street and Parkside. The District Superintendent of Education in that area, Mr Chris Majewski, will be managing that review. I am advised that he recently met with the three school communities—it may well have been the school councils—to advise them that a review is to be conducted. That will be conducted in the same way as reviews were conducted by the previous Government over the past five to 10 years. A recommendation will be made to me by that review. The point that I highlighted to the Gilles Street community and to the District Superintendents was that the committee does not make the final decision: the committee will recommend to the department and to me as Minister, and I as Minister—the buck stops on my desk—will make the final decision.

The member for Unley can assure the Parkside community that no decision has been made, that there is no predetermined course. We will review it and a decision will be made. I am advised that the school communities have asked us not to prolong the review and consultation process. They do not want to see an extended two year period as occurred under the previous Government with the western suburbs review.

They would like the review and would like to be involved and consulted—we give them that assurance—but then they would like the decision to be taken as expeditiously as possible.

**Mr SCALZI:** My first question relates to the Languages and Multicultural Education Unit in the Program Estimates, and I refer specifically to 'Services to children and students in a multicultural education'. I have a long interest in the area, notwithstanding that the unit is in my electorate as well. I have noted the initiatives being taken by the Government with respect to further development of languages education and wish to clarify the future directions for the Languages and Multicultural Education Unit. There has been some discussion about the future of languages and the Multicultural Unit. Will the unit continue in its present form, or will it be restructured into two separate units?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Let me acknowledge the strong commitment the member for Hartley has to multicultural education in South Australia, both before becoming a member and subsequently in his period as member of Parliament, and also representing, of course, the area where the Languages and Multicultural Unit resides. He obviously has an ongoing interest in it. There was some concern in relation to the direction the Government might or might not be contemplating in relation to the Languages and Multicultural Unit.

I know that the member, and a number of other members, put strong views to me as Minister and to the department about the need to protect the existing programs within the Languages and Multicultural Unit. The member will know that I gave him that assurance, irrespective of what decision we took.

Certainly, the Government's ongoing commitment to multiculturalism and multicultural education was not to be threatened in any way by any contemplated change. We have reviewed the position and the decision is that the Languages and Multicultural Unit will remain as a unit, that the three foci of the unit of languages (other than English policy), culturally inclusive curriculum and ESL will remain within the line management to the principal curriculum officer for languages and multiculturalism.

The links between ESL and literacy will be reinforced, as will the links between languages and other areas of study. In this way the whole of the Curriculum Division will be able to focus on the needs of students learning languages and those from a non-English speaking background as well.

The matter was considered. There was an external review, in part, done of the appropriate way of structuring the Languages and Multicultural Unit and, in the end, we have taken the decision to ensure that the programs remain together.

**Mr SCALZI:** My next question relates to school closures. The Government has announced a continuation of its modest program of school closures and amalgamations and, given the difficult situation we find ourselves in, it is very modest, and I appreciate that direction. Would the Minister please clarify whether it is intended to change the provision of education at Hectorville and Newton Primary Schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Members will know that prior to the election this was an issue of some controversy. Claims were made by the then Government that the Liberal Party, if in government, would close down 363 schools in South Australia. That is still the subject of ongoing court action, although it has gone quiet in recent months; I am not sure what has happened there. We certainly rejected the notion

that we were going to close down 50 per cent of all schools in South Australia.

In more recent times the Institute of Teachers leadership has been running a campaign that the Government intended closing down 185 schools in the metropolitan area. Again, we rejected that. I met with the leadership of the Institute of Teachers on three or four separate occasions and assured them that that was not the case.

We have now announced in the budget, of course, that we will continue with the existing policy of the previous Government and department in relation to school closures, that is, prior to the last election, over the past six or seven years (between 1986 and 1993), there was an average of around 10 school closures a year by the previous Government using that policy. We have said that we see a ballpark figure of about 40 school closures over these three to four years, which is exactly the same average of around 10 school closures or amalgamations a year during the period.

So, it is an existing policy. There will be consultation and some reviews. Some decisions will be taken at a local level and initiated there. In other cases we will take a decision as a department or Government that we want to review the educational provision in an area, as did the previous Government with the western suburbs review, for example, where it said that it needed to look at all these schools and review educational provision.

In relation to the two schools to which the honourable member referred, I say again that no decision has been taken by me as Minister or the department in relation to their future. We have not even yet got to the stage of indicating whether or not we will have a review of those schools, perhaps together with some surrounding schools. That is a decision we have not yet taken.

We are trying to manage the process as best we can. If there is to be a review, certainly there will be consultation with the local member and obviously the school communities, and the process will be conducted in much the same way as that which I outlined and which has been conducted in relation to Parkside, Gilles Street and Sturt Street.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Government released its financial statement on 31 May; it said:

The Government has given initial consideration to the recommendations in this area, that is, education, and has decided on the following: the Department for Education and Children's Services savings target of \$40 million over the four years or 3.5 per cent of expenditure has been arrived at in a manner which continues to provide resources with the Government's priorities.

The Minister's budget media statement referred to a savings target of \$40 million over three years. What are the forward estimates savings targets over the next three years and four years for the Department of Education and Children's Services, and what is the cumulative total for the four years?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The total we will arrive at in the third and fourth years will be the \$40 million because that is the savings task that we have. The savings task this year is \$22 million. For next year it will be \$22 million plus \$14.5 million, so it will be \$36.5 million in 1995-96 and we will arrive at the \$40 million figure in 1996-97.

**Ms STEVENS:** Can the Minister say which of the 71 recommendations by the Audit Commission on education will be implemented or, alternatively, which ones will not?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We could spend much of the day talking about that. I have already indicated by way of public statement (and the financial statement and the budget papers indicate it) our attitude in relation to some of the recommen-

dations of the Audit Commission. For example, prior to the Audit Commission I made an announcement that we were not prepared to accept the recommendation that we abolish all junior primary schools in South Australia.

I also made the announcement that we do not intend to go down the path of wholesale devolution where we have 670 completely independent self-governing schools within the South Australian school system. I have stated that I believe we are a Government school system and the needs of the system will need to be balanced with increased responsibilities for local school communities.

There are half a dozen areas about which I have publicly indicated my attitude in rejecting aspects of the Audit Commission recommendations. The budget papers clearly indicate a number of other areas where we accept or reject the Audit Commission recommendations. I refer, for example, to a critical one: we have rejected the Audit Commission recommendation that we should move to a national average provision for teacher numbers and school service officer numbers within the South Australian school system.

As the honourable member would well know, the Audit Commission was saying that we should go back to national averages and get rid of 900 to 1 000 teachers to achieve the national average. We have rejected that recommendation and the budget outlines exactly how we have done so.

The Audit Commission also recommended that we get rid of 600 to 700 school services officers in order to bring us back to the national average. Again, we have rejected that recommendation of the Audit Commission and do not accept it as a policy goal for the Government. Instead of the 600 to 700, the total reduction is some 37 full-time equivalents over the whole State in school services officers. In both those areas, rather than moving to national averages, in South Australia we will continue proudly to have the second best or second lowest student/ teacher ratio of all States in Australia.

We will continue to have almost a 10 per cent better or lower student/teacher ratio than non-government schools in South Australia. We will continue to have almost a 20 per cent more generous provision of school services officers in South Australia compared with the national average. So, in those areas we have quite clearly rejected the recommendations of the Audit Commission.

The Premier has announced that, in relation to all those 71 recommendations and from all the other portfolios, by October each Minister will be required to produce in Parliament a response to the Audit Commission recommendations. For those about which I am not already on the public record or those about which you would like to ask me today, a response is to be tabled in the Houses by the end of October from me and all Ministers indicating whether we agree or disagree with them.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer to staffing cuts. The Audit Commission report recommended that action be taken to reduce staff numbers in the following areas: item 12.1.9, student/teacher ratios to the Australian average, 931 teachers; item 12.2, staff reduced to match the number of positions, permanent against temporary positions, 1 039 teachers, surplus teachers, 130 teachers and also 1 060 teachers on leave without pay; item 12.20, non-teaching staff to the Australian average, 680; and item 12.21, reducing non-school staff to the Australian average, a loss of 141, a total of 2 921 jobs.

The budget requires 422 teaching positions and more than 30 school support officer positions to go. What are the

Government's targets for staff reductions over the next three years and will the budget target of a further annual cut of \$18 million over the next two years mean further job cuts?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is an important question. The Government's target for the next three years is 422 with the only proviso, not just for this portfolio but for every portfolio, as announced by the Treasurer, that agencies that might have to pay increased salaries as a result of any union claims will have to meet the cost of those claims from within existing budgets. That is no different for education as for all area portfolio areas. The budgets are predicated on the basis that for this year and next year there is a zero wage outcome for individual agencies.

If we were forced by union action to pay increased salaries, that can only be at the expense of jobs within the education sector. That is certainly a viewpoint that I have already put, and will continue to put, to the Institute of Teachers leadership.

With that proviso, and putting that to the side because it applies to everybody, we are meeting our target of the \$40 million cut with this reduction of 422 teacher positions and 37 school service officer positions. The intention next year is not for a further reduction of teacher numbers.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will the Minister give an undertaking that the Government will not use redundancies to achieve staff reduction targets?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can only give a commitment in line with the commitments that the Premier and Treasurer have given on this issue. I would need to refresh my memory on the most recent ones as they are the subject of Federal Court deliberations and discussions. Certainly the overall commitment we have given is that we believe system wide, including education, we can meet the targeted reductions through teachers volunteering to take targeted separation packages. That is certainly my expectation with regard to education.

I know that it is the expectation of all other Ministers, so we do not believe we will have to consider that issue. It has been the subject of some discussion with the Government and the unions in some of the court and commission hearings which have been going on in recent times and with which the member for Ross Smith would be familiar. Certainly, our expectation is that we will meet our target through targeted separation packages.

**Ms STEVENS:** Has the department undertaken any restructuring as a result of downsizing and, if so, what are the details and have the services been reduced?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, the department has undertaken some restructuring. I announced that in January of this year; it was one of the first decisions that I, as Minister, took. We have reduced almost by half the director-level positions within the Department for Education and Children's Services. We have also announced that our target within the central and regional offices over the next three years is to reduce our staff by about 10 per cent, which is a more significant reduction. That is why all the staff here are so slim, taut and terrific: they are working so hard.

The intention is to make the Department for Education and Children's Services' central and regional offices as lean and mean as they can be and to ensure that we have as much as possible of our resource base out in schools, where it ought to be. There are significant flow-on savings as a result of that, and they are part of the \$40 million savings.

We have announced significant changes in relation to some other structures, which relate, for example, to the

Education Review Unit and which we see as saving annually about \$1 million from the departmental budget. So, yes, there has been some restructuring and refocussing. We have a smaller top end, if I can put it that way. We have taken out some middle levels of management within the department so that we have managers at the top who manage and take decisions and the buck stops on their desk in relation to how their directorates operate. The honourable member would be familiar with the role of our district superintendents. They have been required to take on line management responsibilities.

So there has been a range of changes. In some of the directorates there has been, in effect, a revisiting of the focus of the directorate. The curriculum directorate is one where some changes have already been made in respect of refocusing direction under the leadership of the Executive Director for Curriculum. The answer is, yes, there have been significant changes in relation to the structure and focus of the operations of the department.

**Mr BRINDAL:** We seem to have concentrated on many of the worst aspects of your document. I would like to refer you to page 99 of the Program Estimates and the general section dealing with the resources summary. Will you explain as briefly as you like why the reductions have been forced upon education and what is your vision for the Education Department in the year ahead and under your ministry generally?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I could take some time, but I will not. Put simply, the Government found itself in the position where the best advice available to us was that, as a State, we were spending \$350 million more than we were earning. It was as simple as that. It does not matter what sort of budget you run—whether it is a State, household, family or school budget—you cannot go on spending more than you earn.

Whilst there was some dispute and debate from some members of the academic community about some other issues in relation to the valuations of assets, State assets and liabilities and what the balance sheet might be in terms of unfunded liabilities, there was little if any criticism of the basic, underlying recurrent budget problem that the State faces; that is, the Audit Commission believes it is \$350 million and the Government, in the end, made the judgement that \$300 million was the ongoing problem we had and that it needed to be resolved by the Government. As a result of that, each of us was given savings tasks.

The honourable member is right: if we had our preferences we would much rather be in the climate of the Hugh Hudson's of the past, who lived through the 1970s and had ever-expanding education budgets. Some of the stories of those days are legendary now. People had money coming out of their ears; they did not have senior officers who were trim, taut and terrific—they were somewhat different. That was the climate of the 1970s: there was plenty of money—Commonwealth money in particular. The problems of the late 1980s and the 1990s are much different. That is the background and the reason why.

Briefly, in relation to the focus for the department, again, there are many areas, but as the honourable member knows, and as all members would know, what I see as the absolute No. 1 priority for the department over the next three or four years is a new priority in terms of the early years of education—a focus on doing much more earlier in the school life of our children and young people—and providing more money, more resources, different programs and practices within the early years of education and tackling, in particular,

the thousands of children who have learning difficulties and who will continue to have learning difficulties, not only to their detriment but to the cost of the community and schooling generally, unless we are able to direct the resources and change policies and practices to tackle those issues in the early years.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I believe that the Minister is to be commended for the vision that he brings to his portfolio. Time, better than us, will be the judge of that. I refer the Minister to page 103. I believe the correct line is curriculum services. I refer to the Goodwood Orphanage, which the Minister would be aware is in my electorate. For some time rumours have been circulating that the Minister might be thinking of disposing of the Goodwood Orphanage to the Housing Trust. The Minister well knows that I am totally opposed to that. What plans does the Minister have with respect to the utilisation of the orphanage in the future and is he in a position to guarantee local residents some sort of continuing amenity, because it is a very important resource, not only for the Education Department but also for my electors?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge the member for Unley's very strong views as the chair of my backbench group in relation to the ongoing provision of educational services through the orphanage. Yes, I have been aware that for a little while now there has been some story that the Government might be contemplating flogging off the orphanage and allowing the Housing Trust access to that area. I was not aware that there was any substance to that at all, certainly not from my viewpoint. I indicate to the honourable member that, in line with his very strong representations, I can certainly allay his concerns. As Minister, I do not intend to flog off the orphanage and put the Housing Trust in that nice part of the electorate of Unley.

As the honourable member would know, as a department, we previously had, in Raywood and Wattle Park, important facilities available for professional development and provision of services for teachers and staff. They were disposed of by previous Governments and Ministers, and the replacement was the orphanage. A lot of money has been spent there. It provides an essential service to teachers and staff in relation to professional development. Certainly, we do not intend to flog it off to the Housing Trust.

We are considering some options for the sharing of resources at the orphanage site. First, I can assure the honourable member that no decisions have been taken at all, and that any decisions we take will be within the parameters of improving services to teachers and staff of the Education Department. Secondly, we will ensure that we maintain the amenity for the residents that the honourable member represents bordering on the Goodwood Orphanage site.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Very briefly, the Minister would know that, in terms of amenity, car parking is a problem. I support the Minister in relation to greater utilisation of the site. However, can the Minister have his officers look at the provision of extra car parking within the site as part of any future plan?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge the concerns of residents in relation to that, and that certainly would be an issue we would be prepared to consider. As I said, we have taken no decisions at all about the site, other than the fact that we are not going to flog it off to the Housing Trust. We would certainly be prepared to consider that issue.

**Mr LEGGETT:** On page 102 of the Program Estimates, under the subject heading 'Provision of support for children

with special needs', the Government has announced a program for the establishment of a secondary specialist school for academically gifted students, and a highly respected school in my electorate, Plympton High School, has indicated its interest in becoming such a specialist school. Will the Minister describe the stage of development of this initiative and the possibility of Plympton High School's being designated as the academically gifted secondary school?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** A lot of lobbying has been going on. The Government has announced that it is looking at using the existing model of special interest high schools, which has been very successful in relation to music, agriculture and language, to extend choice in a number of other areas. One has been in the area of academically gifted and talented students; another has been in the area of sport and physical education; and another has been the general area of vocational education. We think the existing models worked well and, therefore, intend to extend the provision. We have announced that we are looking to establish the first of perhaps a small number of special interest high schools in the area of gifted and talented education. Subsequent to that announcement, there has been considerable interest from a good number of schools throughout South Australia and from local members very anxious to support their local school. I see the Chairman nodding.

Let me acknowledge that, not only through asking this question but privately, the honourable member has been lobbying strongly for Plympton to be considered as that particular school. Nothing is locked in yet, but our current planning is for 1996. We will commence discussions late this year or early next year in relation to the identification of a site. All schools (such as Plympton) will be in a position not only to register an interest but also to back that up with documentation. Clearly, it will be easier to establish a special interest school in this area if there is already existing practice, interest, support or programs of this kind within a school. It is not an essential condition but, obviously, it would be an advantage in relation to being able to ensure a smooth transition from an existing school to a new special interest high school.

So, no decisions have been made yet. I acknowledge the honourable member's support for his local school, and I suggest that he advise the principal and staff that, if they are genuinely interested, they need to establish the basis for putting themselves in the best position to be identified by the department and the Government as being perhaps the most appropriate school.

**Mr CLARKE:** The Minister has announced that the eligibility criteria for school card will be tightened. This follows a review instigated by the previous Government designed, first, to increase the access to schooling for students in low socioeconomic circumstances and, secondly, to streamline approval and administrative processes. What changes will be made to the current eligibility criteria, and how many children will lose their current entitlement to school card?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Over the past five years the number of children on school card has almost doubled from just over 50 000 to almost 100 000 this year, which means that in Government schools we have around 45 per cent of students currently on school card. School card was originally intended to be an assistance for those families and children in genuine financial distress. Frankly, I do not accept the view that almost 50 per cent of all students and families in our Government schools are in such financial distress that the taxpayers

of South Australia, through a diversion of moneys from the education budget, should be supporting almost one in two students in our Government schools.

That is not a new position; that is something I publicly indicated both prior to the election and subsequently. We have announced a number of changes for this year and a review is to be conducted next year. The overall bucket of savings we are looking at is about \$5 million. A ball park figure might be that we are trying to get the 100 000 students on school card back to around 80 000 students, which would still mean that around 40 per cent of students in Government schools will still be on school card after the changes that the Government has indicated, and we will still have around 30 000 more students on school card than as recently as four or five years ago, even after the changes that we have announced.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a supplementary question, given that the Minister has been able to hazard a figure of 20 000 fewer students on school card and also has come to the figure of a saving of \$5 million, what are the eligibility criteria to be?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** In a number of areas we are making significant changes. For example, currently, if you are a wealthy business migrant with \$2 million to invest in Australia, and that is the only reason why you get an entry permit and visa to come to Australia, your children are automatically entitled to school card, irrespective of how much money you have. There are certain groups, such as the Aboriginal community, for example who, irrespective of how much money they earn, whether it be \$40 000 or \$100 000 (and obviously there might not be many on \$100 000), will receive automatic eligibility for their children. The Government has taken the decision that that is not the intention of school card. School card is there to provide assistance to families in genuine financial distress, and wealthy business migrants with \$2 million to invest in Australia or any member of the community who might have an income of \$50 000 to \$100 000 should not be getting automatic eligibility for school card. So, we will be changing that aspect.

We will also be reducing from the income eligibility the current arrangement on rent and mortgage as being a deduction. There is a range of such changes that we will introduce this year, together with the abolition of free TransAdelaide travel for school card holders, with which the honourable member will be familiar. We will then be reviewing through next year, for the 1996 school year, the current process of automatic eligibility if you hold various Commonwealth benefit cards, because the holding of a current Commonwealth benefit card basically throws up around 90 000 students as being automatically eligible for school card. If we want to reduce the 100 000 back to about 80 000, we have to look at the current automatic acceptance by the department of the Commonwealth cards and come up with some other more accurate means of defining genuine financial need for access to the school card. We will be doing that over the next six months or so.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a further supplementary to that question, if you deduct the wealthy Asian businessmen or business women, or Aboriginal community people earning \$100 000, that still leaves roughly 19 995 people that you are going to throw off the school card system. You have answered in so far as reviewing Commonwealth benefits and various other matters such as this, but you have not particularised. You must have a bar, I should have thought, or a tariff that says, 'If you earn over this or you are in receipt of that card or this card, you will no longer be eligible for school

card.' I am trying to pin down the Minister on some specifics, which I know he probably does not want to give just yet.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am surprised that the member for Ross Smith has survived for so long in his Party, with the sort of sexist language that he was using there. But we will do our best to work with you, anyway. In relation to the cut off, there is a cut off at the moment, which is about \$426 a week, which the previous Government used, and which works out to about \$22 000 a year, or something like that. The amount of \$426 a week is the existing cut-off point, which your Government and the department has used. The dilemma is that in a variety of ways that cut-off point is not strictly followed, if you accept the Commonwealth benefit cards, and for a whole variety of reasons there are people who earn more than that who get the benefit, and that is why we have the problem with an automatic acceptance of the Commonwealth benefit cards. If you want a cut-off point or line, without locking myself in for ever and a day and saying that that is it, that is the existing one, the one that the previous Government has used. I would not see a significant change from that. It really is a question of trying to stop the people slipping through the system who are not in genuine financial distress and getting the school card and attached benefits associated with it. I am quite happy to be pinned down, and that is the ballpark figure we are talking about. It is a question of somehow policing that provision which the previous Government and department had authorised.

**Mr CLARKE:** What will the Minister offer to children of poor families who simply cannot afford to pay the \$200 per child each year to catch the bus to school?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will continue to provide local neighbourhood schooling for the vast majority of our students in metropolitan Adelaide. We are only talking here about TransAdelaide travel in the metropolitan area, and for the overwhelming majority of students there will be ready access to local neighbourhood schooling for them. In the end, it is no use resiling from difficult budget decisions that have to be taken. The member for Ross Smith supported a previous Government that took away free student travel for all students, after it had been promised at a particular election, and had to take a number of difficult decisions in the past. So, yes, difficult decisions are taken and we as the Government and I as Minister will have to accept either the brickbats or bouquets that go with particular issues. I do not resilie from the fact that for some people there might be a problem, and we would have to acknowledge that.

The only other point I would like to make is that I am advised that the previous arrangements were that the free bus was provided for children more than one kilometre away from school, so obviously some students were not complying. I think there is still an arrangement for some schools—certainly for country transport and I think it also exists for some city schools as well—whereby there is a transport policy provision which caters for some of those students. I am not stating that no-one is going to be disadvantaged by decisions that this Government has taken. Some people will be disadvantaged, and I have to accept the responsibility for that and I do not resilie from it.

**Mr CLARKE:** What are the estimated savings from all of the measures I have just questioned the Minister about and why has the Minister chosen to make all metropolitan children pay to catch a bus to school while maintaining a free bus service, costing \$14 million this year, for country students?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is interesting. It would seem to indicate that a senior member of the Labor Party supports the introduction of fares for country students. I must indicate that previous Ministers of the Labor Government used to be attack me roundly as shadow Minister of Education, quite erroneously of course, that we intended to support a policy of charging country students for country travel. I know there is a new broom sweeping clean in the Labor Opposition, and I am sure that members like the Hon. Ron Roberts who represents country areas such as Peterborough, Orroroo, Tarcowie, Yunta and a variety of other isolated communities will be interested in the views that are being inferred from the member for Ross Smith in relation to that particular question. The member for Ross Smith says he is not inferring that; I would perhaps invite him to rephrase his question. If he is not inferring that, what is he suggesting?

**Mr CLARKE:** Very simply this: it is perfectly equitable for country based students to be provided with free bus travel. It has never been an issue, but at the same time you are giving problems to disadvantaged people in the metropolitan area, many of them my own constituents, on unemployment benefits, with three kids, and on \$200-odd a week to live on. You are staying that they have to pay \$12 a week if they have three kids travelling by bus, that they can't put bread and butter on the table. That is my point. Do not try to infer any other rubbish.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The country bus policy provides transport for students who live more than five kilometres away from their nearest school; so if you are less than five kilometres from your existing school you have to get yourself there. You have to walk or ride, or your parents have to take you. That is a broadly similar position that your constituents will be in. If you are talking about questions of equity, could I suggest that you look at the policies of the department where we provide free travel, or subsidised travel for children of families who live more than five kilometres from their nearest school. If you are within five kilometres you have to make your way there.

If you have a problem with the equity of that, I invite the member to discuss that with his colleagues and come back to me as Minister with an alternative proposition, and we will look at it. If you want to apply the policies we apply to country students and to city students, have a look at that. What the previous Government was doing, if you are talking about equity, was providing free travel for students who live between one and five kilometres from a school and not providing it for country students, even though they live in isolated communities and do not have access to public transport and even though the parents might not have a second car. Where is the equity in that for country students? We can talk equity until the cows come home, and I am sure we will, but I do not want to enter into acrimonious debate with the member for Ross Smith. But we can look at questions of equity from two vantage points. If the honourable member has a particular proposition to recast our transport policy, I am more than prepared over a cup of tea or coffee or something stronger in the bar to do so at a later stage.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I have one brief question: Minister, further to your answer to the question from the member for Ross Smith, will you confirm, if you are able, that many country students live three or four kilometres from the bus route, and just because they have a bus service does not mean that it arrives at the gate of their property, let alone their front door, and some of them to get to that bus service already, and



ever since Governments have provided that bus service, have to travel three, four, five, and sometimes more, kilometres just to get to the bus to get them to school?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is a good point; the honourable member's experience in Cook and other nether regions of the country has come to the fore. That is true, and our bus service is done on a best fit of where children live. It is true that on many occasions students have to travel some distance to get to the bus route, and again they have to do it at their own cost. I acknowledge the point that the member for Unley has made.

**Mr De LAINE:** The Minister has said that the Government does not envisage more than about 40 school closures over the next three years. Given the recommendation of the Audit Commission that schools should move towards the optimum numbers of 300 students for primary schools and 600 to 800 students for high schools, there is a concern in the community in relation to the criteria and the way in which these closures will be managed. What criteria are being used to assess whether a school should or should not be closed or amalgamated?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have rejected that recommendation of the Commission of Audit. The criteria will be the existing criteria that the department and previous Government has used for some years. The essential and overriding criterion has to be the provision of quality education to the children in our schools. For example, with regard to high schools there is the difficult question of being able to provide as broad a range of curriculum offerings as we can. Slightly bigger primary schools can do some things that smaller ones cannot, and smaller primary schools have some attractions as well. So, there is a balancing of all that. Of course, another criterion will be whether there is a close school. If one school has 300 students, one has 70 students, is only half a kilometre down the road, is rundown and will need \$500 000 spent on maintenance in the next couple of years—they are the sorts of factors that the previous Government would have taken into consideration, and the present Government will, too. The criteria will be the same as those used in the past, but the overriding criterion will be the quality of educational service we can provide to the children.

**Mr De LAINE:** Considerable concern has been expressed by primary schools with smaller enrolments in the metropolitan area, for example, the South Road Primary School, that they will be targeted for closure. Will the Minister release details of the schools to be reviewed?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No; I cannot and I will not. A number of ongoing reviews have been or are being conducted, but it is an ongoing process. For example, right out of the blue, in the past month a small country school, which had 10, 15 or 20 students, was looking next year at having maybe two, three, four or five students. That was not part of any planned educational review. In the end, the decision had to be taken, after discussion with the local school community and the District Superintendent of Education, as to what was best for the children who were to remain in that school, particularly given that another school was 12 kilometres down the track on a bus route. Previously I have said that it would be inconsistent of me to list publicly now the 40 schools that we are targeting for review or closure given the policy of the previous Government, which I am pledged to support, that is, for ongoing consultation with school communities before we make decisions. Therefore, it is impossible, given that we are just using exactly the same policy as the previous Government, for me to nominate a hit

list of schools, just as it was impossible for the previous Minister under the previous Government to say, 'These are the 70 schools I'll close down between 1986 and 1993.' Circumstances change; a school that flourishes and is doing well for a variety of reasons all of a sudden may well die on its legs and may well face separately a massive maintenance or upgrade bill. Another school down the road, which has good facilities, which is doing well and which has plenty of room for expansion, might be able to take the students.

So, we cannot predict these things. We are saying that there is no hit list. We are working through reviews. Whether the two high schools in Port Pirie should be amalgamated has been reviewed under the previous Government. In essence, the previous Government had taken that position. Port Augusta is the same. We are conducting a review of Gilles Street, Sturt Street and Parkside schools. There is a review of the Marion corridor schools, and that includes South Road, which is already up and going. There was the western suburbs review with which the honourable member will be familiar. So, there will be an ongoing series of these reviews and, whether this Government is re-elected or there is a new Government, it will be exactly the same under the Government after the next election. You cannot just say, 'These are the only ones we are going to do for the next four years.' It is a movable feast.

**Mr De LAINE:** In relation to the Alberton Primary School and the unfortunate events that have taken place, as the Minister knows, over the past 12 or so months, which have culminated in the action that the Minister took earlier this year of replacing the school council with an interim council, what is the Minister's assessment of the situation at this stage, and is it on track to re-establish the normal school community in January next year?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** First, let me acknowledge the benefits I gained from being able to discuss the problems with the honourable member and with other people as well. I found it invaluable to get the honourable member's perspective on the issue and to hear the concerns at that school, and I place that on the public record. I am heartened by what I have heard. All the problems have not been resolved, and the honourable member will know that, so a number of issues still need to be resolved. I am heartened by the progress that the school community is making and attempting to make in re-establishing itself.

The re-establishment of the school council in the normal course has never been given as a commitment for January of next year, but that is an option. However, the provision basically allows us two years to work through the process. I am not on and will not go on the record today as saying that we are working necessarily towards a move back in January of next year. We have a time frame of two years to try to settle things down. A number of key issues still need to be resolved. The question of the provision of Montessori education for what range of class levels—whether it is R to 4, R to 5 or R to 7—is one of the important issues that still needs to be resolved. Bringing together some of the warring factions in the community is still an issue that needs to be resolved. Much progress has been made, but there are still some problems, as the honourable member would know. My assessment is that I am heartened by the progress but still much work needs to be done.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many staff, teaching and non-teaching, both in and out of schools, have accepted or will accept a targeted separation package, and what is the total cost of these packages?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The total number of targeted separation packages will not be known for a couple of months yet. The expressions of interest do not close off until the end of this week, and we envisage that it will take us some two months or so to work through the jigsaw puzzle of staffing with which the member will be familiar and trying to balance which teachers generally are from a subject area that is in surplus. Clearly, we do not want to allow teachers, for example, in language areas to go when we are crying out for language teachers within our schools. So we have to balance the difficult question of surpluses and the difficult question of country teachers coming back to the city, teachers coming back from leave into the jobs and other teachers going away on leave. So, the staffing exercise is a massive jigsaw puzzle, and the TSP arrangements will be linked with that over the coming couple of months. We do not envisage knowing until about mid November the numbers and the issue of which teachers and which subject areas they might come from. Certainly when we are in that position we will be happy to provide that information.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many teachers will need to be recruited next year to fill vacancies in the country, and how many country teachers will return to the metropolitan area next year?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We hope that none will have to be recruited, but the facts of life are that in recent years we have had to recruit to get people to go to the country. So, our hopes and what the reality will be are starkly different. We have about 250 teachers coming back into the metropolitan area. We now have to work through the jigsaw of trying to find positions for them and encourage others to take their places. There are existing incentives packages, as the honourable member would know, to try to encourage teachers to go to the country. Once we have done that we will now the final position.

The position is that we have about 250 coming back into the city and we have to encourage as many as we can to go the country to fill those spots. We will then have to decide how many we will need to recruit to particular subject areas for country schools.

**Ms STEVENS:** Does the Minister agree that what is presently occurring in schools, where principals are identifying teachers for required placement when there will be further TSP offers, has caused considerable stress for teachers, work for principals and disruption to school programs?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member for Elizabeth as a former principal would be pleased to know that her former peers have had very productive discussions with the personnel directorate of the department this week. There is a story in the paper this morning from Mr John Travers, one of the leaders of the South Australian Primary Principals Association, and other principals associations were represented as well. I also made a statement to the *Advertiser*, but sadly was cut off the bottom by the subeditors: I am sure that was the case.

I said I was very pleased to see that the principals associations and the department had basically agreed on a process and resolved the situation in relation to how we manage this jigsaw puzzle over the next two months. The principals associations' spokespersons were generally happy with the process that has now been outlined. There is some flexibility in relation to trying to resolve the individual problems in schools, but they acknowledge the need for us to handle both processes in a parallel manner.

We cannot have a situation where we wait until the middle of November to find out who has taken a targeted separation package and then start the staffing exercise, because schools would not know their final staffing complement until January next year. If ever there were a recipe for chaos in schools, that would be it.

**Ms STEVENS:** I am surprised that that was not thought through in advance and that those people were consulted before being faced with that situation.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I think there was some misunderstanding in relation to the process that we were undertaking. Let me, as Minister, accept some responsibility for that. Some of it was just genuine misunderstanding. Once the process was explained it was clear why it could not wait for the targeted separation packages and for us then to start the staffing exercise.

The important point is that there is no ongoing significant problem with the representatives of the principals' associations. They have resolved the issue with the department expeditiously. The story was in the *Sunday Mail* and basically it was resolved on the Monday. I do not think there is any enduring or ongoing stress or problem over and above what is always a difficult exercise for principals when you go through a required placement process. Even if you are not doing that and you are going through a staffing process, it can be a stressful exercise for principals.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many principals and deputy principals have taken targeted separation packages? How many of these were on the unplaced list, and how many held current positions in schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We might take some of that on notice, if the honourable member does not mind. We might be able to bring back an answer later today. I think the ballpark figure was 60 to 70. The shadow Minister for Education used a figure of that size, and I think it is within the ballpark. In relation to the breakdowns, let me take that on notice. If we cannot get an answer today we will provide it within the parameters outlined by the Chair.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many schools have acting principals as a result of the targeted separation package program, and how many of these acting positions were filled by school-based people?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Can I take that on notice, too, and bring back an answer within the parameters that the Chair outlined? We decided that we did not want to disrupt unduly school programs this year. Nevertheless, there is an established process of filling principal positions which takes some time, as the honourable member will know. It is always a balancing act. Let me take that on notice and we will provide a response for the honourable member.

**Ms STEVENS:** What was the process used to fill those acting positions, and what was the extent of disruption to schools caused by the flow-on effect of filling those positions?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Let me provide the detail of that as part of the answer to the previous question. I am advised that they were called in the normal way. I know that that covers a variety of situations. I undertake to provide as much information as I can, consistent with the honourable member's questions, within the parameters outlined by the Chair.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Minister, when you were elected to office there was an existing series of procedures for promotions: how principals were appointed, how promotions are effected, key teacher positions in schools, and so on. Have you had a

chance to look at any of these things yet, and would you like to comment on those structures and the procedures with which you were faced? Do you have any changes with respect to these procedures?

The member for Elizabeth has clearly outlined some problems in the area. Implicit in my questions is whether these problems were of your making or whether they were part of the procedure you inherited. If they were part of the procedure you inherited, have you any thoughts on ways in which these procedures can be less disruptive to students in our schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** They are problems that we inherited, and it is a very difficult process. Internally in the department we are considering our options. Some of the issues in relation to staffing are necessarily tied up with potential enterprise bargaining discussions with the Institute of Teachers and they are obviously tied up at the moment with ongoing discussions and debates in courts and commissions around the place as to Federal interim awards and a variety of other things like that.

So, the answer is 'Yes', we are looking at a whole variety of options. We had some clear policy directions in relation to the staffing policy that we wanted to see implemented. As the honourable member would know, we want to see the abolition of the present 10 year limited placement scheme. We want to see a position in the staffing policy where our principals have a slightly greater say in the selection of staff for their schools whilst at the same time acknowledging the needs of the system. There are a number of policy goals that we have for staffing. Our department is working on those as expeditiously as it can.

In the coming months we will be indicating our preferred position and stating how we would like to see the changes implemented. There will obviously then need to be discussion and negotiation with interested parties, including the Institute of Teachers, principals' associations, parents and a whole variety of other groups, all of which have an interest in the way we staff our schools and the enduring problems that we have with some of the restrictive arrangements that exist for staffing them.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Following on from that, in something like 20 years of teaching I never knew a year where there was not disruption because of the size of the system and the processes that a huge system is involved with. As Minister, have you issued any instructions or taken any steps to minimise the disruption, and are you satisfied that wherever possible officers of your department, and indeed principals in schools, always do everything within their capacity and power to ensure that disruption to students is kept to the minimum possible level?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Certainly, there is a commitment from our very capable officers within personnel to minimise disruption to the extent that we humanly can. Certainly, too, that is a policy and procedural goal that our officers and the department have and will continue to have. But, some of the things with which we have to work, such as agreements and arrangements, are quite restrictive and until those can be changed we will need to continue to work with them.

Sometimes what can be seen from the local school level and what is seen from the needs of the system level do not always coincide, as the member for Unley will know. We are a system. There are the needs of the system. We have guarantees and arrangements for teachers in being moved around the jigsaw puzzle and, whilst we have that, sometimes agreements such as industrial agreements, award conditions

and a range of other such arrangements might come into conflict with the local wishes, needs and desires of some school communities. That is an ongoing problem that we have and we will certainly do as much as we can to reduce that conflict in our new staffing policy.

**Mr BRINDAL:** We can only hope that everybody in the State—members opposite, members on this side and members of the general public—will acknowledge the genuine efforts which you and your department are making, rather than always honing in on those things which perhaps are not quite as positive.

**Mr CLARKE:** The Minister announced last year that the Government would scrap the 10-year tenure rule. The Minister later announced this would be delayed until the beginning of 1995. Does the Minister intend to cease the 10-year placement program next year? How will this impact on the placement of teachers returning from the country next year? Does the Minister believe this will have a negative effect on being able to appoint the most experienced teachers to the more difficult to staff schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer to that last question is 'No.' The policy position of the Government is that we want to see the current 10-year limited placement scheme changed, and that can only be done in the context of the development of a new teacher staffing policy. The development of the new teacher staffing policy, because of industrial agreements and a range of other arrangements with the Institute of Teachers entered into with the previous Government, means that we will have to go through a process of discussion and negotiation with the institute to try to achieve those changes. If any change is to be introduced for a school year in relation to teacher staffing, we broadly have to finish by March or April of the previous year.

So, there has been no change in intentional policy; the simple facts were that we were unable to get any agreement or the development of a new teacher staffing policy completely in the first three months of the new Government to enable us therefore to take action for 1995. Our current goal and target is to introduce it for 1996, which means that we need to resolve it by March or April of next year.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a supplementary question, the words used by the Minister were 'change' the 10-year tenure rule, not to cease it or to scrap it. Is the Government's view now simply to maintain the tenure, perhaps of a different duration, or perhaps modify it around the edges, or does your word 'change' still mean you are going to scrap it—that is your objective?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It will be a change for the better, to use a phrase. The current limited 10-year placement scheme will be scrapped, changed, abolished, removed—whatever you want to call it; I am not fussed about the particular word. However, the current 10-year placement scheme will be scrapped, so we have not changed from that. As Minister, I am prepared to look at all options in relation to its replacement, and its replacement might be something radically different, or its replacement might be a change less radical.

So, I do not rule out any of those options. The Personnel Directorate is aware of my broad views on this, and I am prepared to discuss with it first a whole range of options, and then we will need to discuss with the interested parties how we can achieve a better teacher staffing policy. But, the current arrangement will be scrapped.

**Mr CLARKE:** Because of the Minister's answer to the last part of my first question, I have a supplementary

question. I assume from his most recent answer that therefore teachers returning from the country next year are not going to be impacted because you cannot make any radical change until 1996.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is right, yes.

**Mr CLARKE:** So, there is no change for country teachers?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is teachers coming back for the start of next year?

**Mr CLARKE:** Yes.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is right, no change.

**Mr CLARKE:** However, your answer in respect of, at the end of the day, changing, scrapping or abolishing the 10-year tenure rule and the issue of appointing the most experienced teachers to the more difficult to staff schools is emphatically 'No'? I am wondering whether you can expand on that.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Let me clarify that. I am saying that, in relation to trying to get experienced teachers into difficult to staff schools, clearly that is a policy goal. I did not understand that to be the member's last question, I must confess. I will have to revisit the *Hansard* to see—

**Mr CLARKE:** I will read it out to you to be fair. Does the Minister believe that this will have a negative effect on being able to appoint the most experienced teachers to the more difficult to staff schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer to that is 'No,' I do not see it as having a negative effect. Returning to the member's now slightly different question—that of attracting quality, experienced staff to difficult to staff schools—there are a number of options that the previous Government and the department have actioned. The Peachey Road schools, for example, in the northern suburbs, have been a very successful model for attracting staff who want to work there.

There is a range of other incentives that might be able to be offered in order to staff difficult to staff schools, both in the country and the city. I do have a view that the previous distinction that we, or previous Governments, have had of city and country has not been productive from the viewpoint of sensible staffing policies, because there are some enormously desirable country locations that people fight to get to.

**Mr CLARKE:** What about Oak Valley?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am not sure whether people are fighting to get to Oak Valley—not in my experience, anyway. There are others that are very difficult to staff. So there are differences. In the city we have exactly the same thing: we have some schools that teachers fight to get into and we have other schools to which they are perhaps less keen to go. The distinction really ought to be, if we can develop it (and again this is policy goal; we have not resolved it yet), to try to look at difficult to staff schools and less difficult to staff schools, if I can put it in that way—whether it be city or country.

**Mr CLARKE:** Dealing with staff reductions, the 420 odd teachers, has the Minister instructed his department to take into account the Government's policy for staff rejuvenation which entails offering older teachers in high schools TSPs so that they can be replaced by younger teachers at a lower starting salary? If not, why has this policy been abandoned and, if the answer is 'Yes', have principals been given a specific instruction and will the Minister table the document? Also, does this approach to staff rejuvenation have implications for the Equal Opportunity Act?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No direction has been given to the directorate in relation to that issue. It is an issue that we will have to consider. One of the ramifications is the last question that the member put in relation to the equal opportunity

provisions of the Act. It is an issue that the Institute of Teachers has raised with me. In fact it came from a idea of the President of the Institute of Teachers in my negotiations and discussions with the institute prior to the election. Her view was that rejuvenating the teaching force arrangement was something the department should consider. In the spirit of consultation, for which the Liberal Party was well known and which the member for Ross Smith would acknowledge both publicly and privately, we took it on board from the Institute of Teachers and said that we would look at it. The answer to your question is that, 'No, I have not issued a directive.' I acknowledge that there are potential problems with it in relation to the equal opportunity legislation and maybe other issues also. Maybe even the Institute of Teachers does not support it. I am not saying that it supports it now, but it was raised with me by the President of the institute prior to the election. We will look at it, but there has been no decision, no directive and therefore no problems yet.

**Mr CLARKE:** I refer to the scheme of taking one year off in five with respect to teachers. Does the Minister intend to implement the scheme to allow teachers to work for four years at 80 per cent salary and take leave in the fifth year on 80 per cent salary? If so, what impact will this have on the requirement for the appointment of teachers for one year terms, and how would this be managed?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Again, no decision has been taken. It is something in which I am personally very interested. The issue was raised with me in consultation prior to the election by some teachers and principals who are members of my education consultative committee. When it was first raised with me I did not think it was an attractive option or that many people would be interested in it. My personal judgment originally was wrong because it was one of the issues about which a good number of teachers approached me and members of my backbench committee prior to the election and subsequent to it. They say that they want this—it is a terrific idea. I say how would you manage? They say they are a married couple, the children are off their hands and they are able to organise their financial circumstances to have this sort of arrangement. They want it implemented quickly. One of the problems is that the Institute of Teachers is opposing it, which is contrary to the views of its membership in relation to certainly the feedback that I have got.

**Mr CLARKE:** You have taken a plebiscite, have you?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, mass plebiscite. I consulted widely. It is a dilemma and an issue that I would see being discussed with the institute and other interested parties as we develop the teacher staffing policy. One of the options I floated (it is not Government policy but an idea) is that maybe that sort of option could be used as an attraction to get teachers to teach in difficult to staff schools. It is being looked at in that context in Western Australia—as a potential option for attracting people to certain areas. When I flagged that with some of my advisers amongst the principal and teaching ranks, some jumped up and down on the basis that they want to see it applied to everybody and not restricted to a small number of schools because there is widespread interest in the proposition. At this stage I can only give my personal views. There is no final ministerial or Government decision on it. We will have to discuss it within the context of the teacher/staffing policy review about which we talked earlier.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a supplementary, have you analysed the impact that this scheme, if brought into focus, as to the

requirement of the appointment of teachers for one year terms and how it will be managed?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have not looked at all the detail. The officers in the department will consider the ramifications, but we have not yet got to the position of nailing it down; we have to work our way through the opposition of the Teachers Institute to it or work our way around it. Those issues are on the table. If there are problems with it, let us talk about it. If the member in representing others has a particular problem with it, either on that basis or others, I indicate to him to make a submission to me. We would be interested to receive his views or the views of his constituents on this issue.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer to the staffing of the five secondary schools at Inbarendi College. As a result of the changes to the staffing formula across the five secondary schools, there has been a loss of 22.2 teachers and those positions have been in relation to general teaching staff, a teacher librarian, co-ordinators, an assistant principal and a counselling position. The schools have reported that all of them will be cutting their offerings of subjects and increasing their class sizes. Other schools have been reporting that the cuts in teacher numbers will affect what they can offer. A recent example was the case of Adelaide High School reported in the *Messenger*, where they said they would have to cut 14 classes as a result of the teacher reductions. What has been the effect across the system in terms of the contraction of curriculum offerings, particularly at the stages one and two level that these cuts have brought?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There are two points to make. To address the second one, it is too early at this stage to make any sort of assessment of the effects on curriculum offerings throughout the State. As the honourable member would know as a previous principal, those issues are being worked through at the moment and in due course we will be in a position to make a judgment in relation to that. The other point that needs to be highlighted is that, when one looks at the staffing changes for next year from this year, one has to be very careful to ensure that we do not mix up the effects of budget with the effects of enrolment decreases. For example, when we look at Elizabeth West adult re-entry, the figures before me look like there may be an enrolment impact because of fewer students there and the loss of about 3.1 teachers at that school. That has nothing to do with the budget decisions taken. Fewer students are going to the school next year. Irrespective of any budget decisions, there would have been fewer teachers at the school next year because there are fewer students.

If one also looks at Elizabeth City High School one sees that there might be an enrolment impact of about 1.8 teachers. I have not been able to go through all the schools in the Inbarendi group, but that is five out of the 22 teachers, I suspect, who have nothing to do with the budget decisions the Government is taking: they really are enrolment-related decreases in those schools.

**Ms STEVENS:** But Craigmore High School will lose 2.3 teachers and it has an increase of 50 students. I agree, it is from both avenues, but there is an effect because of the changes.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** In that context, we acknowledge that the changes in teacher numbers for next year compared to this year include some of the results of the budget decisions we took and also some enrolment decreases. There is one school in the city that is losing about 11 teachers because it is predicted to have 170 fewer students. No-one can jump

up and down—although some are—and complain that the Government is getting rid of 11 teachers from their school when it is the existing policy and they have lost 170 students. Let us acknowledge that.

As I have said, we are not in a position to make a final judgement. However, as I have already publicly indicated, there will be some pressure on curriculum offerings in our secondary schools. Again, I am not resiling from that. The average loss for secondary schools is about two positions. Some are lucky and will lose only nought to one. Some of the bigger schools, like Norwood-Morialta, which has 110 teachers, on my figures is losing 5.4 positions. However, I see in the *Messenger* that the local SAIT representative says that the figure is 5.9 positions. I do not know what the difference is. That is the biggest impact on the tier one staffing as a result of the budget, and it varies in between.

So, yes, I acknowledge that there will be some pressures on curriculum offerings. However, we will not be in a position to know the individual effects on schools until some time later in the year.

**Ms STEVENS:** What will the Minister do in relation to monitoring that and working with schools in terms of the reduction in curriculum offerings at stages one and two of SACE, which, of course, are crucial to students?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Our monitoring will be conducted by district superintendents, who are obviously in ongoing contact with schools. However, as I said, I am not resiling from the fact that there will be some pressure on curriculum offerings in our secondary schools. In some cases, principals will be able to reorganise and protect all their curriculum offerings; that is technically possible within the arrangements for the overwhelming majority of our schools.

There is a range of other options as well. Again, the honourable member will know of the expansion of clustering arrangements. She will be familiar with the fact that at Fremont High School at the moment chemistry students are being transported to Elizabeth City High School because they cannot do chemistry at their own school. There is a number of clustering arrangements with secondary schools already. Of course, there is also access to distance education techniques that the overwhelming majority of country schools and a number of our secondary schools in the city are using.

There are other specialist facilities, such as the South Australian Secondary School of Languages. There is a range of options such as that, which we will have to consider. Perhaps they are not all as attractive an option as face-to-face teaching in the local school in every subject that SSABSA offers. However, there are no schools in the State that can offer every SSABSA subject—there are about 150 subjects. So, school communities have to make decisions anyway and, yes, there will be some pressure.

We will monitor the situation and our district superintendents will be working with principals as far as possible to protect the curriculum offerings that we can. We cannot give guarantees, but we will work as hard as we can to protect the curriculum offerings. We will have to look at alternative mechanisms in some cases, like the Elizabeth City High School-Fremont High School arrangement with which the honourable member would be familiar.

**Ms STEVENS:** You mentioned using distance education as one of the options for handling that situation. Does that mean that you would be willing to consider extra funding for schools, because distance education involves a lot of technology? Would you consider that option?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have to work within the

existing budget. If there is an existing budget line available, we can talk about it. However, there are certainly no additional funding lines available within the current budget.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Would it be possible for you either to take on notice, or perhaps bring back after lunch, a summary of the number of maintenance requirements in schools? I believe that when you took over as Minister at least one school in my old electorate had no gutters at all because they had such big holes in them that they had to be pulled off. Anecdotally, right throughout my electorate—and I know it is the case in other electorates—there is a huge backlog of maintenance in departmental schools. Is there any list detailing the backlog of maintenance that you inherited? How long will it take you to catch up on that backlog of maintenance and what sort of program will you put in place?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have some answers now, but I will discuss it with my officers over lunch and answer that as best I can when we return.

*[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2 p.m.]*

**The CHAIRMAN:** I understand that the Minister has an answer for the member for Unley.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, just a general one. We will need to obtain more detailed information for the honourable member, and I undertake to do so, but the ball park figure that the Public Accounts Committee, that very responsible, reputable and august parliamentary committee with which you, Mr Chairman, would be familiar, previously reported that there was some \$230 million or \$250 million worth of backlog maintenance. There have been other estimates. The Audit Commission, looking at it in a different way, believed that the sum of money might have been less. So, there are varying estimates of the extent of backlog maintenance. From the discussions I have had with members both Labor and Liberal, and also from my own experience, it would seem to be a very significant sum of money, but we will undertake to get that information and provide it to the Committee.

#### **Membership:**

Mr Atkinson substituted for Mr De Laine.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I should point out to the Committee that, with the concurrence of the member for Elizabeth, for which we are grateful, we will ask one more question before we go on to Childhood Services Office questions. I want to refer back to some comments the Minister made before lunch on school card. I remember his saying that he does not accept the view that 50 per cent of the students in our schools are in such financial distress as to have the amounts of money concerned diverted from the education bucket. I want to ask a question that embodies a series of small questions about the application of the current school card, to know whether the Minister is aware of certain matters and whether he is able or has a will to do something about them.

I am told that as of now there are something like 99 000 students on school card and there were only about 93 000 to 94 000 on school card at the same time last year, so it is a dramatic increase. I am told, and other members of the Government can support this, that self-employed people are able to get school card, provided that their taxation levels are below a certain income. It was pointed out to me that an executive on a package of \$100 000 a year, say, if he takes \$35 000 of that in salary and then has a mortgage of \$150 000 on his house, which is not a high mortgage for somebody in that bracket, is then eligible for school card. In other words,

somebody with a basic \$100 000 a year salary package can, by proper manipulation of the package, get it down to eligibility for school card. The member for Ross Smith raised the very serious point about people in genuine need and I concur on those points, but I am told that if you get a health card in, say, August of the year, because you are unemployed, even though you might be unemployed for only one month, you can get all your school fees that have been previously paid for this year rebated to you because you are in possession of a health card, and then, if the time window is right, you can claim school benefits for next year, even though you are unemployed for only one month.

In other words, you can claim two years school card as a concession for one month's unemployment. Finally, and this touches on TransAdelaide, is the Minister aware that very serious allegations are being made in my office by teachers and students that there is a trade in some of those free passes, both in terms of children on school card selling their free pass at a discounted price to other students not eligible for school card and, in some cases, and this is why I believe it is a serious matter, selling the free pass to delis and people like that who, unsuspectingly, then have those tickets sold on to the public?

Finally, some students (despite the previous Government's ruling that they be used only in school time), because of the nature of the ticket, continue to use those cards on holidays and in other periods. All those things reflect inappropriate and possibly illegal use of Government benefits. Is the Minister aware of all those factors? Does this concern him and is there anything he can do or might be prepared to do about it?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is an important question, because as I indicated prior to the lunch break this issue of the rorting of school card had been raised with me in opposition as shadow Minister of Education. I had some information in opposition but, subsequent to becoming Minister, much more information has been made available to me, and there is no doubt that there has been widespread rorting of the school card system.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! Permit the witness to answer the question.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can't see what's behind me; the member for Ross Smith is the only one turning round and facing the cameras at the moment. Should they be there, all they are getting from me is the back of the head, so it is through no arrangement of mine.

As I said, I had some concerns for some time about the widespread rorting of school card. That is one of the reasons why we have seen the numbers explode from some 50 000 to almost 100 000, and another is that we have almost one in two of our students on school card. I will address some of the issues that the honourable member has raised and raise one or two others, if we want to get into the area of rorts on school card. There is no doubt that there is a black market at the moment in trading in the free TransAdelaide travel, previously free STA travel.

**Mr ATKINSON:** It is beyond reasonable doubt.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Even the member for Spence would agree that it is beyond reasonable doubt that there is a black market in existence with students trading in the free TransAdelaide travel. They get it, and the students who do not need it either sell it to other students who want to use it or they have been selling it through some retail outlets to try

to gain some benefit for themselves at the taxpayers' expense, at the education budget's expense, because it is the education budget that is having to pay for this. The total cost of school card is about \$16 million.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The honourable member can ask questions in a minute.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am very happy to explore it. We are told by TransAdelaide officers, the ones who are expert in this area, that it is very difficult to put a figure on the exact extent of the fraudulent activity that has been going on in relation to school card. However, one guesstimate that was given to the department under the previous Minister back in 1993 was that there might, and I say that advisedly, be as much as \$1 million worth of fraudulent activity going on in relation to the school card. That is a lot of teachers and a lot of bikkies from the education barrel that must be spent on fraudulent activity. Even the member for Ross Smith would concede that, if fraudulent activity were going on to that extent guesstimated by a TransAdelaide officer to the previous Government, that is an important and serious issue that needs to be addressed.

The second issue that the honourable member raises is quite right. The honourable member, together with others, is familiar with the salary packaging issue, because a number of semi-governmental instrumentalities attracted some publicity last year in relation, I think, to SGIC and some other agencies, where executives with over \$100 000 of salary packaging were managing to get their salary component down to a relatively small component of the total overall package. The member for Unley is right. If you have an executive—whether in the private sector or public sector, it does not matter—with a remuneration package of \$100 000 plus, who can take the salary component at \$35 000 or less; if they have an expensive home in the eastern or southern suburbs, West Lakes or wherever, with a significant mortgage of \$150 000 or so, then they are able to organise their finances so that they get school card.

I am told that we did have a claim last year from a very angry member of the public, a parent, alleging that a senior executive in a semi-government instrumentality, on a package of \$130 000 was, in effect, organising themselves in this particular way. In relation to that case we were not able to nail it down whether that was the case. The bottom line would be that under the previous arrangements under the previous Government there was nothing that could have been done about it anyway. It was completely consistent with the guidelines for the provision of school card that that would occur.

The third points raised by the honourable member relates to access to the health care card benefit. It was one of the point discussed this morning in response to a question from the member for Ross Smith. Again, the member is right. There is this window through the latter part of the year that if a person who has been employed all year, has paid their school fee, or perhaps not paid it, and has then been unemployed for a month, they get a health care card, which is valid for six months. An officer of the Department of Social Security told us that no-one has ever been prosecuted for continuing to use it, even if they go back into employment after the month, and they are also then entitled, as the member indicates, not only to reimbursement of the school card fees for that year but then to get school card for the next year, even though they are fully employed again.

There is a number of other areas. We discussed a few this morning with the member for Ross Smith. Under this automatic eligibility with Commonwealth cards, it is possible, for example, if you have two adults in a family circumstance with two children who are both on Commonwealth benefit cards of some sort or another, that potentially they could be earning about \$635 a week or \$33 000 a year and still be qualifying for school card. The arrangements with some of those Commonwealth pensions and benefits is that one can be getting a pension, as small as \$5 a week, but earning income through part-time or full-time employment. So potentially one can be on a full-time job but on a carer's pension or something else, perhaps a disabled pension. One can still have a full-time job and be earning \$20 000 to \$30 000, up to \$32 000, a year and be qualifying for school card, on the current arrangements.

There are many other examples of rorting of the school card system, which is costing the taxpayers of South Australia an arm and a leg. It is for those reasons, and a variety of others, that the Government took the decisions that it did in the budget, and in response to the questions of the member or Ross Smith earlier and from the member for Unley today I can only indicate that these widespread rorts of school card can no longer be accepted by the taxpayers of South Australia.

**Mr CLARKE:** Prior to calling on the member for Elizabeth, I take it that, given the lunchtime adjournment, the Minister has had his departmental officers scurrying around and makes a number of allegations on school card, which gives the Opposition the opportunity to ask for some further and better particulars on that issue.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Minister has made a number of statements there in relation to rorting of school card but has given no specifics. Obviously it is very important that we do not have rorts on something like that, but the Minister is making a lot of generalisations there and has not been able to back them up with specifics. I would particularly like to draw attention to the black market trade of the free travel vouchers that students on school card got. I would like to ask the Minister why he chose to remove the school card from those students rather than address the problems that will occur in terms of managing the system. I think you have thrown out the baby with the bathwater and have deprived students who desperately need that assistance to get to school, and you have deprived thousands and thousands of those people of free travel so that they can actually get to school and obtain an education. So, why did the Minister make that choice rather than address where it was not working?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** First, I have indicated in response to that question and the earlier questions this morning, in quite some detail, the problems that exist with the current school card system. I system happy to go over all that detail again, but I do not think it serves the committee's purpose to do so. In relation to the ongoing provision of school card, as I indicated this morning, even after we implement the changes we will still be providing school card to approximately 80 000 children in schools in South Australia, and about 40 per cent of all our students in Government schools will still be receiving school card even after the changes. I have to say that, given that school card was intended for those families in genuine financial distress, I still do not believe that 40 per cent of South Australian families, come 1995 and 1996, will be families that can be described as being in genuine financial distress. I think, therefore, the Government is continuing to be extraordinarily generous in ensuring that

80 000 children, or 40 per cent of all our students in government schools, will continue to receive the school card benefit.

**Ms STEVENS:** But they will not receive free travel and they will all have to pay an extra \$5 a week to actually get to school?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If that TransAdelaide officer's guesstimate to the previous Labor Government was right, and I am not an expert in this area, then, in relation to a situation where the taxpayers of South Australia are having to pay out \$1 million for fraudulent activity for people to trade on the black market, I am sure even the member for Elizabeth would not want the Government to continue with such a practice.

**Ms STEVENS:** You are staying that it was too hard to sort out the system so you removed it?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** What we are saying to you is that there is just so much fraudulent activity going on within the school card system—

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Mr Chairman, I will not respond to the member for Ross Smith's provocative comments to my right. As I said, we are not going to enter into acrimonious debate here this afternoon. It has been conducted in good spirit, and certainly from my viewpoint it will continue to be conducted in that spirit. However, we have made the decisions, as I said to the member for Ross Smith this morning. I am not saying to the member that there will not be some students who will be disadvantaged, and I do not resile from that particular position. But the judgment that we have made overall is that we cannot continue to spend \$16 million a year on school card and related payments out of the education budget, and, if we continue to do that, we would have had to remove even more teachers and school services officers from schools, something which the members for Elizabeth and Ross Smith I am sure would certainly not want the Government to do.

**Mr CLARKE:** This is quite a scandalous situation. During the lunch break, the Minister suddenly realised how he had dropped himself right in it when he, prior to lunch, admitted that 20 000 students who previously had school card would no longer get it. He nominated that people earning over \$426 a week—the princely sum of \$22 000 a year—will not get school card. So, over the luncheon adjournment he has gone away and realised that he has landed himself in it and come back with these scandalous, all embracing comments regarding massive rorts in the system. Prior to the luncheon adjournment, he made not one mention of the word 'rort'. How many of these 20 000 children whom the Minister wants to push off the school card are rorting the system? If the Minister has the figures, will he detail them for the information of the Committee?

Is it not a fact that there has been such a ballooning in the number of children on school card because, first, of the economic recession in this country and in this State and, secondly, literally thousands more children in the farming community have it because the farmers are not in receipt an income—they may be asset rich but they are extremely income poor? Of course, schools such as the Lameroo Primary School—and I am only going from memory now, and the Minister will no doubt correct me if I am wrong—are well in excess of 50 per cent school card because the farmers do not have two bob to rub together. They are not rorting the system. The Minister came in here and talked about people rorting the system. Given that he will push 20 000 children off school card at great financial disadvantage to their

parents, he should not just blacken the name of every parent who claims school card simply on the basis that he wants to cover up the gutting of the education system over which he is presiding.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Good try, but sadly the member for Ross Smith misses out on a number of counts. First, the reduction of 100 000 children down to 80 000 students was reported in the *Advertiser* three or four months ago. So there is nothing new in relation to that issue. As I said, my view, irrespective of the view of the member for Ross Smith, is that few people, other than the member for Ross Smith, would argue that 40 per cent of all children from all families in Government schools are in such a state of financial distress that the taxpayers of South Australia should prop them up with the school card and related payments. I understand that is the member for Ross Smith's view. I say to him that few people would accept the proposition that economic circumstances are such that 40 per cent of families are in those circumstances.

In relation to the farming issue, I do not have an exact figure, but the total number would be less than 5 per cent. If the member for Ross Smith goes out to some of the schools we have visited in the northern suburbs in recent days, he will find that some schools have a school card use of 96 per cent.

**Mr CLARKE:** Not in my electorate.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No, not your electorate: north of your electorate. You should speak to one of your colleagues. So, 50 per cent is about average. At the moment, almost one in every two children in Government schools is on school card. A vast number of schools have a school card usage higher than 50 per cent because of the way it is being implemented.

The third point on which the honourable member had a good try but missed out is the \$426 figure. That is not a figure we introduced: that is a figure his Government introduced.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It's not much use to a Housing Trust tenant; \$426 is the figure the honourable member's Government introduced. This morning I indicated that, if one is looking for a line, that is the line that exists at the moment. That is not a decision we have taken: that is a decision of the honourable member's Government—he supported it; he was a leader of the organisational Party for some time during the past Government and a man of some influence over the Premier. I will not get into the factional discussions. That is not something we have introduced, and the member for Ross Smith knows that that is not the case.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Minister has placed special emphasis on early childhood education but at the same time changed staffing ratios and the mix of qualifications required for kindergartens and preschools. Can the Minister detail changes to the staff ratios and staff mix proposed for kindergartens?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have two separate versions of four year old programs in South Australia. Currently, kindergartens are being staffed 1:10, based on attendance, but we have four year old programs in child-parent centres being staffed on enrolments, from 1:10, 1:11½ and 1:13. So, we currently have some child staff ratios as high as 1:13, under the policies of the previous Government. In relation to staffing, the Government has said, 'The four year olds who are in child-parent centres are really no different from the four year olds who are in kindergartens; we have only one group of four year olds in South Australia.'

It really makes a lot of sense to staff our four year old programs in as consistent a fashion as we can. That is not an



issue that the previous Government or the Minister was prepared to tackle, but it is an issue that we have tackled. We have got rid of the 1:13 staff ratio that the previous Government had, and we now have two ratios, 1:10 and 1:11. The high need kindergartens and child-parent centres, both in the city and the small rural centres, will be staffed on the basis of 1:10, which is a continuation of the existing practice for many or most of them.

The others, the kindergartens in Burnside, Springfield or whatever, will be staffed on the basis of 1:11, based on attendance. That is the reason for the change: to try to introduce an element of consistency between the four year old programs.

**Ms STEVENS:** What savings will be generated by these changes?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No more than about \$1 million all up. Certainly, that staffing change would involve a ball park figure of about \$720 000.

**Ms STEVENS:** You mentioned that you will be staffing on average attendance. What is your method for determining average attendances for children for individual child-parent centres? How will whatever you decide cope with a situation where a centre that is being staffed on average attendance and more children arrive on a particular day and you therefore will find yourself with a much higher ratio?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member for Elizabeth will be pleased to know that we are continuing with a policy that the previous Government and Minister introduced in relation to staffing on attendances. So, it was an initiative introduced by the previous Government, and we looked at it and thought that it had some merit. We are not a Government that immediately looks at what the previous Government has done and throws its hands up in the air saying, 'Shock, horror, we've got to change everything.' We have looked at some aspects and thought, 'Well, let's continue with those policies and programs.' This is one of them. So, it is a continuation of existing practice. A centre's average attendance is worked out over the previous four terms and is staffed accordingly. There have been some problems on the odd day in rapidly growing areas. That has been a problem in the past, so it will not be a new problem.

We will try to handle that as sensitively and flexibly as we can. There is a problem down the Willunga Basin area with some growth in one of the programs there. We will look at what we can do. We cannot promise; we are just continuing an existing program which we inherited with its strengths but with some of its problems, and one of its problems is that it is a rapidly growing area. We will continue to monitor that and address it as best we can.

**Ms STEVENS:** Are you saying that in rapidly growing areas you might be able to do something, but that you do not know?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I cannot give a commitment. We are doing exactly what the previous Government did with this same problem. If there is flexibility in the budget—there is no new budget line—and if we are able to assist we will try to assist, but we cannot give a commitment. We are working with a policy which was inherited from the previous Government with its strengths but with the odd weakness here and there. We will have to try to work on that as best we can.

**Ms STEVENS:** So the odd weakness here or there could lead to some preschools in rapidly growing areas having much greater student/staff ratios?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No, the situation is that the existing arrangements, which as I said will be used sensitively and

flexibly to provide some additional staffing, will be provided if we can. The Executive Director of Children's Services tells me that there is an existing arrangement where we try to assist as best we can.

**Mr ATKINSON:** I refer the Minister to Program Estimates (page 115) and the program titled 'Provision of Support for Children with Special Needs'. The Liberal Party's election policy document dated November 1993 promised to appoint extra speech pathologists and special education teachers to ensure that children's learning difficulties were identified as soon as possible. The Opposition agrees that early intervention is important. The early years' strategy has promised \$10 million over four years and a subprogram provides extra speech pathology services. Where are these services to be provided, and how many extra staff will be employed?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge the support of the member for Spence for the early years' strategy and the early years' initiatives of the Government. The Government obviously shares that view and welcomes the support. In relation to speech pathology, a decision was taken earlier this year to appoint three additional speech pathologists in the children's services sector. We are one department now, so we will be moving towards a seamless service delivery (which is the departmental phrase for winking out the wrinkles). We will be providing three additional speech pathologists: my understanding is that two will be in the metropolitan area and one will be working in the country. I think that the country one is a half time share between school education and the Children's Services Office.

**Ms Davis:** At present that support is provided in Mount Gambier and Port Lincoln, and we are looking at sharing the additional resources that were provided in the budget.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is children's services. In the old school education sector, if I can call it that—we would like to look at this as one service eventually—the budget figure was about \$168 000 in a full year for extra speech pathology services. Potentially you could be looking at the equivalent of another three or four speech pathology positions. We are not locked into a model which says necessarily that all these additional speech pathologists need to be salaried employees of the department. If we were to do that, potentially we might look at an additional six to seven positions as a result of the new Government's initiative, and that comes on top of I think 25 that exist currently within school education and something like four or eight in children's services. We can get the figure, but it is of that order. If we were to put them all into salaried positions there would be six or seven additional speech pathology positions, so it is quite a significant increase. However, we are looking at alternatives in addition to salaried additions. We may look at contracting some of the arrangements to private speech pathologists if they can be shown to be delivering a superior or equal service at a more cost-effective price.

**Mr ATKINSON:** I refer to a letter from a constituent of mine, Judy Dyson, who wrote to the Acting Regional Manager of the Western Metropolitan Region of the Department for Education and Children's Services on 11 August about her son, Scott Granton. (The Minister has a copy of this letter.) When Scott started kindergarten in August 1993, Ms Dyson completed forms for him to be assessed by the Children's Services Office Speech Pathology Unit. In May 1994 an appointment was arranged for him to be assessed on 16 June, and his next session was to be on 25 July. The 25 July session was cancelled by the unit owing to changes at the

unit. Ms Dyson was asked to wait for a call from the unit in the week beginning 25 July. No call was received.

It now appears that Scott will not have one session with the CSO Speech Pathology Unit before he leaves kindergarten for school. Ms Dyson does not have a reply to her letter from the CSO. Are such delays usual? Will the Minister investigate the case?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If the honourable member is prepared to give me some detail we will follow it through. Let us trade horror stories. For every one the honourable member can offer I can give hundreds of others. Some children in our junior primary schools who have been identified by their teachers as requiring an assessment—this is prior to even getting to speech pathology—have been waiting 14 months to get that assessment. You are talking about a problem in relation to the delivery of the service. Let me acknowledge that, because it is an issue I have raised and we will endeavour to address as best we can.

If we go back one step further, there are some quite horrific stories of children being identified as requiring assessment who have been waiting 14 months because of previous delays. We got a list of them at the end of last year. I was visiting some schools in the Mid North of South Australia early this year and I was told that in their group of schools 100 students at the end of last year and at the start of this year had been identified by teachers as requiring an initial assessment but were still waiting for it. I acknowledge that some horrendous stories abound because of the lack of priority that was given by—sadly, I must say to the member for Spence—his Government to the important area of the early years of education. I thank him for highlighting what has been a scandal in relation to the early years of education and is an ongoing problem. This Government is addressing it by committing \$2.7 million at a time when many other areas of the budget are suffering cuts. This area will find itself with \$2.7 million of additional funding for extra guidance or assessment services, extra speech pathology services, for a maintenance of, and a very slight increase in, special education, extra funding for training and development for classroom teachers so that they can do more with the students they have in their classrooms, and a range of early intervention programs both within the four year old programs that we have and within junior primary schools.

I am sure the member for Spence, being the statesman that he tells me he is, will welcome and support that particular commitment in relation to the early years of education. We will certainly investigate the problems of the particular constituent to whom the member refers and we will do as much as we can to try to resolve that as quickly as possible. But, as I said, if we want to trade horror stories, for every one of those that he can trot up, I can assure you I can trot up another hundred across the State.

**Mr ATKINSON:** That does not help the Dyson family.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No, exactly, and it does not help the other hundred students either. What will help them is the commitment from the new Government of putting additional resources into speech pathology and assessment, in the first place, and the early intervention programs, so that we can do as much as we can. We cannot solve 20 years of neglect overnight, and even the member for Spence could not expect that. So, in areas like this and maintenance, which we talked about earlier, and a range of other problems which have developed, all we can do is set ourselves to work as assiduously as possible to try to catch up as best as we can.

**Mr ATKINSON:** I refer the Minister to the Program Estimates at page 108. The Liberal Party's election policy document undertook to expand work-based child care in South Australian companies through the establishment of a work-based child care study fund to provide grants to assist companies to assess options in providing child care for their employees. Has the work-based child care study fund been established and, if so, how much will be allocated for this purpose in the financial year 1994-95 and how will the program be offered to companies?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer to that is 'No,' we have not actioned that particular section of the policy document yet. We are in the middle of a program, Commonwealth/State agreement, of providing an additional 4 300 child care places in schools and care centres and other sites between the years 1992 and 1996. So, there is a significant additional commitment in process in relation to child care. The issue of work-based care is a difficult one. Officers in the Children's Services Office section are looking at the various options that the Government might like to adopt. They were part of our initial pre-budget discussions as to the various options. I made the decision at that stage to proceed with some other priority areas and to leave for further consultation and discussion what the Government might do in this particular area.

**Mr ATKINSON:** As a supplementary question, is failing to action a policy the same as not having done it?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Not yet; that is right.

**Ms STEVENS:** In relation to the national child care strategy, South Australia developed plans under the 1992-96 child care strategy for a significant increase in the number of child care places by 1996. The agreement with the Commonwealth provided for an additional 890 centre-based care places; 2 520 outside school hours care places; and 890 family day care places. In referring to the Program Estimates on page 108, you have a specific target in which you state that you will implement 400 out of school hours care places and 100 family day care places as part of the 1992-96 national child care strategy. Is the program for additional places being implemented in accordance with agreements entered into by the previous Government?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** My advice is the answer to that is 'Yes.' The report that I have is that in 1993-94 we had 160 family day care places, 141 long day care places and 840 outside school hours care places—a rough total of 1 100 or 1 200 places there. This year there are the 400 outside school hours care places, 100 family day care places and 166 places in five new long day care centres. There are another 142 to commence construction at places like Nuriootpa, Ceduna, Goolwa, Port Lincoln, Seaford and Bordertown. There is a total there of another 800 or 900 places. My advice and understanding is that the Commonwealth and State Governments are proceeding on track with that arrangement. Certainly, we are continuing our funding commitment and so is the Commonwealth. It is just a question of proceeding apace.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many children are attending child care facilities operated under the auspices of the Children's Services Office, and is this number forecast to increase or decrease in 1995?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We might take that on notice, and if we have an answer before the end of the session we will bring it back. If not, we will provide it in the normal course.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many staff are now employed by the Children's Services Office? How does this compare with the

same time last year, and how many staff have accepted targeted separation packages?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I could not think of anyone in the CSO who has taken a TSP, but I thought I had better check that. My understanding is that no-one has, but we will double check that. If there is, it would be no more than one or two. In relation to the numbers of staff this year compared to last year, we will take that on notice and bring it back to you if you would like.

**Mr CLARKE:** In 1993 the Children's Services Office undertook a review of child care centre regulations. When does the Minister expect to introduce these new regulations; will the new regulations incorporate agreed national standards; and will these standards result in an increase in the cost of child care?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** What year did you say that the written review commenced?

**Mr CLARKE:** 1993.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have been shadow Minister off and on for Children's Services for seven or eight years and the review for child care regulations has been going on for as long as I have been the shadow Minister, and now the Minister.

**Mr CLARKE:** You ought to know then.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No, it is not easier, I can assure you. I remember writing various policy documents in 1989 and 1993, and maybe even 1985, saying we would review the child care standards and implement them. Every year both Parties said it. The previous Party did not do it and we are still looking at it. We have not done it yet. There has been continuing discussion and consultation with both the private care industry and community-based child care in relation to the review of child care regulations. It would be my wish that this particular year will see the end of it after some six to eight years, or whatever it is, of review. It would put everybody out of their misery one way or another. Not everyone is going to be happy with it. The member refers to the prospect of maybe some increased costs. That is the issue that is concerning some parents and some private care operators as to what the effect on cost and affordability might be for families. All I can say is we will try to finish it this year.

**Mr CLARKE:** In part of his answer the Minister referred to concerns of parents with respect to some increased costs. Can the Minister give some idea as to the quantum of these increased costs causing this concern?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can, but they are really guesstimates by a whole variety of different groups. I am happy to give the guesstimates, but they range all over the place. Some say that the cost increase will be so small as to not worry too much about it. Some at the other end in the Eastern States have looked at those national standards (and these are reputable firms of private chartered accountants), and they argue that the costs in relation to the Eastern States may go as high as \$30 a week for care. Back here the figures have tended to range between \$10 and \$20, some arguing that it will be \$20 and others arguing that it will be as low as \$10. It is an important issue in relation to affordability.

**Mr CLARKE:** Per week?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes. So, it is an important issue that has not been resolved. There are so many estimates at the moment.

**Mr CLARKE:** I refer to Aboriginal communities and children with special needs. What initiatives are being developed by the Children's Services Office to meet the

needs of Aboriginal communities, and will the Minister detail additional services being provided to children with special needs?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I may have to seek advice. In relation to Aboriginal child care, if we cannot turn up something quickly we may take it on notice. I will ask Dawn Davis to comment.

**Ms Davis:** We have an initiative around indigenous language programs for preschools. We have been successful in securing two years of funding to establish an Aboriginal preschool languages program. The program will focus on language learning for children and their families and aim to build confidence and skills of Aboriginal staff to provide ongoing language curriculum. The program will also engender a positive attitude towards an understanding of Aboriginal culture by non-Aboriginal children through the teaching of Aboriginal languages within preschools. Ten preschool and child care centres throughout the State are currently establishing the programs and funding of \$95 000 over the two years has been received under the national Aboriginal education policy. This project builds on the 1990 indigenous language workshop series, which provided language training to all Aboriginal staff. The three Aboriginal languages will be covered through the program.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** New services are being committed to Ceduna and Port Lincoln (which are Aboriginal specific) and I am also told that 50 family day care places have been allocated specifically for Aboriginal families in the northern country.

**Mr CLARKE:** My question may have been a bit confused. I was not simply referring to Aboriginal communities with respect to children with special needs. You have given an answer with respect to Aboriginal communities, but I am also looking at the issue of children with special needs—Aboriginal or otherwise.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** A number of services are being provided. One particular service is the intensive speech and language unit service being provided in six of our centres over the State for children with speech and language communication problems. That is a significant increase in numbers in those places. We are to provide for about 36 children whereas in the past we have provided for only about 12 children. In the preschool setting we are now seeking to provide for 36 children with intensive speech and language unit support. We have a number of other programs.

**Ms Davis:** We have six speech and language programs operating at Warradale, Brentwood Drive, Valley View Kindergarten, Salisbury Lutheran Kindergarten, West Lakes Kindergarten, Newland Park Kindergarten and at Erindale. Programs are operating at those centres.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There is also the continued support for the early intervention networks where we work with CAFHS and other Government agencies in trying to provide extra assistance for children deemed to be in need of early intervention. Some of our early intervention programs, if you are talking broadly of special needs and not simply students with disabilities, those who may have a language acquisition or early literacy development problem, the eclipse program (which is a \$100 000 pilot program we are looking at within CSO) looks at emerging literacy problems for four year olds. The first start program has been very successful in the northern suburbs. Again we are looking to expand it. It is a \$100 000 program for this area of early intervention and tries to identify problems as early as we can in the hope of doing something about it.

We also have the extra speech pathology, as referred to in relation to the question by the member for Spence earlier. Again it relates to children with special needs being provided with additional assistance. From a social justice viewpoint, I am sure the Opposition will give it a big tick.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer to national standards. Is the Government proceeding with the implementation of national childcare standards and what is the timetable for their introduction?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I refer the member for Elizabeth to the answer I gave to the member for Ross Smith. It is the same answer to the same question. We are hoping to complete it this year. It is something that has been going on for six or eight years.

**Ms STEVENS:** What will be the changes required under the standards to staff/child ratios and space allocations for national child care?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It depends in the end on the decision the Government takes. The recommendations under the national standards are 3.25 square metres of indoor space. The new standard will be seven square metres (if that is accepted) in the child care regulations at which we are looking. Under the existing arrangements it is 2.85 square metres per child indoors. There are all sorts of calculations about whether furniture counts as indoor space. That is broadly the figure. The national standard looks at 3.25 square metres. The current suggestion in relation to national standards, so that we do not necessarily put a number of child care centres out of business, is that there may be a grandparent clause that comes in with it so that it protects existing services and might only apply to new services in some way. That is again one of the difficult issues in relation to any new standard—how you treat existing services? Do you put them out of business or do you require of them to spend large buckets of money to bring them up to the new standard?

**Ms STEVENS:** What specific projects have been undertaken for the Women's Suffrage Centenary Year by the Minister's department and how much of the allocation for these projects was made during the 1993-94 budget and how much for the 1994-95 budget?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Is that in relation to the old Children's Services Office section or the whole department?

**Ms STEVENS:** If you want to answer it all at once, I do not mind.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are doing lots of things. The honourable member would be aware that we are doing a whiz-bang video and teaching package, which is going to all schools in fourth term and which has cost \$85 000 all up.

**Mr ATKINSON:** An arm and a leg.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member for Spence says 'an arm and a leg'. I am much too cautious to say that for fear of being attacked; he is much braver than I am. It is certainly costing a significant sum of money for a video and resource package. The CSO has been doing other things.

I launched a brochure dealing with prominent women in early childhood services which the Children's Services Office put together and which was distributed. It encouraged and highlighted women's involvement, which has been extraordinarily strong over the decades in early childhood and children's services in South Australia in particular. It encourages further involvement of women in that area. There is a range of other activities. We can provide the honourable member with a full list of all that the department is doing.

**Ms STEVENS:** How much of the allocation for these projects was made during the 1993-94 budget and how much in 1994-95?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The vast bulk of it will be allocated in 1993-94, because unless you get these sorts of activities up and going early in the year it probably will not be as productive as it would if you did it later in the year. The vast bulk will be done in the first part of this year.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Minister for the Status of Women has decided to dump the women's budget, which highlighted a range of programs across Government agencies which are either targeted directly at women or which impact significantly on women's welfare or status. This was a useful document which encouraged agencies to ensure that program and budget planning took better account of the needs of their female clients. However, since the Minister's colleague has done away with women in the budget, will he say what budget allocation has been made in the Minister's portfolio area for programs specifically for women, what are these programs and what is their individual budget allocation?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** First, it is a little unkind to dump the decisions of the Cabinet and the Government on my colleague the Minister for the Status of Women. The decision was taken by the Government and not by—

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am a member of the Government and I am prepared to accept responsibility for the decisions of the Government.

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will not respond to the provocative comments from the member for Ross Smith. However, again, there is an almost countless list of initiatives that the Government and department continue to provide to women and girls in education. I will undertake to produce for the honourable member that full list of all that we do in relation to the education of women and girls.

**Ms STEVENS:** Together with their individual budget allocations?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As much as we can, I will try to do that.

**Mr BRINDAL:** How easy would it be to do what the member for Elizabeth has just asked? How do you separate programs for girls from general education provision and should you always be doing this? I am interested in the point of the question and the line of reasoning that the member for Elizabeth seems to be following.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The Government is strongly committed to continuing some special programs and assistance for the education of girls and women. The point that I have made as shadow Minister and again as Minister is that I believe that in doing that we as a Government need not necessarily ignore the special needs of boys. I have raised this issue at the national level. The ministerial council meeting established the Gender Equity Task Force to try to look at the particular problems of boys and those of girls.

It is true that we can establish specific programs for girls and also for boys; for example, we have girls-only schools. The costs of those are clearly attributable to a policy which states that we continue to provide it as an option. We have girls-only classes in some schools, which—to answer the member for Elizabeth's question—it is probably almost impossible to cost, if it is a cost. Nevertheless, it is a policy initiative we continue to offer. There are girls-only classes in maths and science and a range of other options like that, and there are other specific programs. We have two curriculum

officers dealing with the education of girls. We currently provide a coordinator for the Women's Studies Resource Centre and we have a number of other positions. As I said, I am prepared to bring back a summary document.

However, there are other areas, as I am sure the member for Unley is highlighting, which provide education opportunities for boys and girls, and it is impossible to distinguish between the two. I would hope that in this day and age, when equal opportunity has been well developed in South Australia for some 20 years or so, a continuing or increasing number of our programs will be directed to boys and girls and their needs, whilst acknowledging that in some cases we will have to do some special things for both groups.

**Mr BRINDAL:** The Minister is getting to my point. If the last Government was at all successful in achieving some measure of gender equity, and if, as a result of policies pursued by this Government, gender equity is much more satisfactorily achieved, does that mean there may be a lessening of specific targeted programs? Instead, there may be a general education provision because of the achievement of equity rather than any lessening of a future Government commitment to the area; that is, success in the program rather than a lessening in commitment.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** A good number of people with whom I have had healthy debate in relation to targeted group programs all acknowledge, to me anyway, that if and when the day arrives that genuine equity has been achieved there will no longer be a continuing need for particular programs. Certainly, the whole argument—

*Mr Atkinson interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member for Spence is being unduly provocative again, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Just ignore him. He will get his chance later.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** In relation to those programs, once genuine equity exists there is obviously not the continuing need for that program. Most will agree that we have made significant strides in some areas of the education of women and girls. However, there is still more to be done. For example, not enough girls or young women are studying maths and physics, in particular, in year 12. However, if one looks at their year 11 results, one sees that right across the spectrum they are significantly out-performing boys, on an average of about 12 per cent at the stage 1 level, even in subjects such as maths and science. Those girls or young women who do maths, science and physics at year 12, whilst they are fewer in number than the boys or young men, perform at a significantly more successful rate in relation to the achievement of high scores in the year 12 PES subjects in particular.

There have been great strides. However, there continue to be areas where much needs to be done. The Government is committed to addressing those issues, whilst at the same time urging everyone and directing those within our control also to address the special needs of boys and young men.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Would you concede that some credit can be given to the previous Government for many of the advances that we have made in this area? We are celebrating the centenary of women's suffrage in South Australia and much more credit than can be given to any individual Government can be given to women on both sides of this Chamber who have been some of the greatest advocates of the cause of women and girls, especially in education.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can be magnanimous in this area. I think that the previous Government and Governments have

done a lot in relation to improving the lot of the education of women and girls. However, I acknowledge the point that the honourable member has made; it is an important issue. If one looks at the senior executive officers of the Department for Education and Children's Services one can see the extraordinarily prominent role that women play in directing the services of the department.

**Ms STEVENS:** No-one would argue that, when we reach a situation of genuine equity, there will be no need for specific programs related to either gender. But we have still quite a way to go, despite the gains that have been made over the past few years. Will moves to investigate and establish programs focusing on boys' education actually mean that funds will go away from the area of girls in education?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is an issue that remains to be addressed by the Government. All I can say is that we will continue to provide additional resources to the programs. We are not necessarily directing programs from girls to boys but, in the end, all program lines and budget lines within the Department for Education and Children's Services will need to be considered in light of the budget restrictions that we have. I cannot give any absolute commitments other than that a continuing priority and additional support will be given to the special programs for girls and women.

**Ms STEVENS:** I have finished my questions on these lines.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How do you wish to proceed from now on?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** What we will do is move to the Ministers's miscellaneous lines and actually do them and vote on them, which will allow members to ask questions on SSABSA, non-government schools and a variety of other such things. We will vote on that and then return to the free-for-all on education.

Minister for Education and Children's Services—  
Other Payments, \$194 317 000

**Additional Departmental Adviser:**

Mr R. Halsey, Acting Director, Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia.

**Ms STEVENS:** We know that the budget has increased by \$500 000 this year: can you give us the reason for this please?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have acknowledged that we had some problems processing last year's results and there was a review of that process to find out what the problems were and how to tackle them. We identified a number of spending initiatives that would have to be undertaken to ensure that when the 1994 results are processed they are done as efficiently as is humanly possible, and to that end there was a budget submission from SSABSA for an increased allocation, and there has been a one-off increase in the budget allocation of \$500 000 for SSABSA, for equipment such as optical scanners and things like that. I will hand over to Mr Halsey who will be able to explain some of the things that are being addressed in relation to 1984 with that budget allocation.

**Mr Halsey:** A good percentage of the funds is being spent on securing expert consultant advice to upgrade our software platform, in particular, to ensure that the software platform of the organisation is robust enough to deal with the volume and complexity of the work associated with the SACE and

getting the results out, correct and on time. The other major expenditure line, as the Minister has indicated, is in equipment. In addition to optical mark readers that we are going to trial this year, which are a fairly advanced but very simple technology and which have the capacity to save considerable time, there has been an upgrade of the actual computing platform itself, the hardware, such that it has greater speed and storage capacity and back-up facility.

We now have, at the latest count, a triple deck back-up capacity. I was advised by the Manager of Information Systems before I left that, evidently, to get the shuttle on the moon there were 14 back-up systems; we hope that that is not necessary to launch the SACE! But we now have three back-up systems which back-up automatically at two-hour intervals. So a good percentage of the money is to go on improving the software platform and improving the hardware platform and, thirdly, on ensuring that there is adequate in-service training development for staff of the authority and the key staff in schools, to ensure that the one-off in expenditure that has been provided by the Minister is in fact as fully capitalised on as possible and normalised within the operations of the authority.

In addition to those three matters, the final point is that a proportion of the money is being used to conduct an evaluation of the SASO software system, which is used to facilitate the electronic data exchange between SSABSA and schools. It is acknowledged that there have been some problems with the system. It has worked better in recent times, I am pleased to be able to say. But it is clear that the system has its limitations and needs to be evaluated and replaced, and a component of the funding will be allocated to that as well.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer to the recommendation 2.3 that:

A new electronic database management system with enrolments, results, exchange and student tracking functions be designed, developed and thoroughly trialled so that it addresses the requirements of both the authority and schools and incorporates input from all user groups.

Is that what you are talking about, with the \$500 000?

**Mr Halsey:** That is part of it, yes.

**Ms STEVENS:** Another recommendation was also in relation to the training and development management plan for training school-based SACE data operators?

**Mr Halsey:** Yes.

**Ms STEVENS:** This probably links into what has been said, but can the Minister assure the Committee that problems in relation to the release of results and student feedback processes have been rectified?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are doing all that is humanly possible to ensure that we get things right for the 1994 exam result release process. I can attest to the considerable amount of work that Dr Gary Willmott did before he left us for sunnier climes in New South Wales and I can attest to the work that Mr John Halsey is doing and his staff out at SSABSA. No-one wants to go through the 1993 process again. The Government has given a significant funding commitment, in the light of cutbacks across the systems and the portfolios, in acknowledging that we need to upgrade the software and the hardware and the processes to ensure that we get it right. Students, families, SSABSA staff—and I can assure you, the Minister—do not want to again go through the 1993 process. So we are doing all that is humanly possible, and I cannot give any stronger guarantee or undertaking than that.

**Ms STEVENS:** I again refer to the review of the SSABSA results and procedures undertaken earlier this year.

Can the Minister comment on the progress that has been made in relation to the implementation of all the recommendations that were made in that report?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I shall refer that question to Mr Halsey. He has in part touched on that matter, but there may be other aspects that he wants to refer to.

**Mr Halsey:** As soon as the review report was received formally by the board a commitment was given to the board to provide a monthly progress report on its implementation, and that has been done basically since that review report was received by the authority. What I have been asked to do for the October or November board is to do a stocktake of where we are. What I can say is that virtually all the recommendations have been commenced to be implemented or actioned, and I can briefly summarise those in a range of ways for you. First of all, I have already mentioned the upgrade to the hardware. I have mentioned the upgrade to the software. We have engaged a consultant to develop and implement a results monitoring procedure so that we actually monitor the production of results throughout the production rather than at the end. There has been some reorganisation internally within the authority in relation to the information system as an unit, within a broader branch, known as the SACE Operations Branch, and that will be reviewed at the end of March next year. I can report that it is working much more effectively.

We have established a group known as the SACE Operations Reference Group which has school based people as well as authority people, as well as people who are in administrative support services in schools, to meet regularly to provide feedback on the operation of the SACE in the schools and on adjustments that need to occur to it, particularly in relation to the transfer of the data, enrolment procedures, modifications to documentation, and so on.

We have developed a computer based inquiries system to assist with the results release, and that is being trialled. We have developed a SACE pattern results checking program which is in its final stages of development so that students and teachers will receive a visual map of what students have done. I have undertaken consultations with New South Wales in terms of possibilities of replacement for SAASSO, as well as commenced negotiations about the possibility of EDSAS and its commercial version.

There has been additional training and development for staff, a survey of schools in relation to SAASSO and paper exchange of data, a marked reduction in the amount of paper flowing to schools from SSABSA, and a better coordination of information to and from schools to SSABSA. In broad terms, they are some of the major undertakings that have occurred in terms of those recommendations.

I have also talked about the flagging of a further audit of the hardware and a further commitment to look at procedures to do with ensuring absolute integrity of our software. From memory, that is about the range.

**Ms STEVENS:** The issue of improved communication with schools was raised in that report. You touched on that, and I know it is a big issue. There was also a whole set of issues in relation to the management practices within SSABSA itself. Can you comment on those and any changes you have made in relation to that report?

**Mr Halsey:** Just to elaborate slightly on the issue of communication with schools, with the SACE operations reference group, there is a proposal in October this year to issue to schools a plan of critical dates and exchanges of data enrolment prior to the year commencing, so there is a better

opportunity for schools and for SSABSA to work together, as well as to improve communication with memoranda and other written forms. We also want improved communication as soon as there are any problems with SAASSO, so that schools are immediately advised rather than advised with some sort of time delay.

In terms of management practices, we have undertaken several things: first, there has been, for want of a better term, some restructuring of the information systems, assessment services and client services areas, plus research, to form, as I have said, this new SACE operations branch. There has been a change from a very hierarchical model within the information systems area to more of a project team model and a disbursement of responsibilities and a much more interactive environment. That has been coupled with much greater attention being paid to detailed documentation of procedures.

The report to which the honourable member referred was somewhat critical of the level of documentation of procedures and also of the arrangements which in a sense ensured that we were, if I can put it through image terms, trying to fill a reservoir through an inch pipe, and it was being suggested that we needed either many inch pipes or a bigger pipe. What we have gone for is a model which says that there is an overall manager but a clearer delegation at a fairly senior level in an IT platform sense. So, we have a database administrator, a SAASSO results person and a monitoring and evaluation person with program analysts underneath. That is in the IT area.

In terms of the organisation itself, I have initiated a more open approach to management agenda and a more rapid communication with staff to keep them in the picture. Also, following the review and also the departure of Dr Willmott—and both of those events were quite significant in the life of the organisation—I initiated what I have called (for want of a better term) corporate staff meetings whereby staff can ask any question they feel they need to ask and receive an answer from anybody from whom they think they need to receive it.

Part of the important strategy which underlies that document in terms of regaining staff confidence in themselves in doing the job is to have them being given full and frank information of where we are. To that extent, I very much appreciated the answer of the Minister in terms of guarantee. What we must recognise here is that quite literally on the eleventh hour a gremlin will come out of somewhere. Yesterday, we had a gremlin in one of our key pieces of hardware, and I actually asked the engineer, 'Was it in fact that we had driven the chip so hard for so long that the constant heat caused some migration of the molecules and affected the program?' He said, 'That is exactly what happened.' It can happen in a non-detected way.

That is why, first, we have to be honest with staff and those with whom we work about issues such as that and, secondly, why we have had to put in multiple back-up services. What I have tried to do within the organisation is open up the environment as to what is happening and give more opportunities for input, and we have reorganised the way in which the work is done, and augmented it through the grants that have been provided with upgraded hardware and software.

**Ms STEVENS:** What feedback have you received from schools in relation to the changes that you have made?

**Mr Halsey:** The feedback that I have received and I believe board members have fed into the organisation is that improvements have occurred between the operations of SSABSA and schools. We received several pieces of positive

feedback about the improved release of SAASSO. We have received positive feedback about less paper and clearer paper instructions going into schools. We have received feedback to the extent that schools feel more confident about the authority's capacity to do the job and get it right this year. They are basically the three kinds of feedback we have received.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I just heard Mr Halsey say that it was like trying to fill a reservoir with a one inch pipe. You would know how concerned members on the Government benches—and I presume the Opposition benches—were in January this year when certain problems occurred. The SSABSA budget was set by the outgoing Government. Like the member for Elizabeth, I have a long memory. I recall in this place and in the House at the Minister's request asking a series of questions about the implementation of SACE and being guaranteed by previous Ministers that SACE could not or would not be implemented until the whole system was ready to cope with it.

I do not attribute blame to anybody for what happened in January. It was most unfortunate, but the Minister already said that it will not happen again. I hear that the Minister is putting \$500 000 into upgrading SSABSA. It is a most legitimate question to ask the Minister: was SSABSA properly resourced to handle that which was expected of it, or was it given a task that it could not handle because the previous Government did not resource it properly, despite the fact that previous Ministers absolutely guaranteed this House that no child would be put at risk or disadvantaged because it would not be implemented until it was properly resourced?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There are two parts to that question. I was an opponent of what I thought was the rushed introduction of the SACE generally in that I felt much more needed to be done. That is more in relation to the introduction of the SACE and does not have as much to do with the processing of results. Certainly, the fairest way of putting it is that there have been some difficulties with SSABSA's budget and its meeting its statutory responsibilities during what is a collapsed time frame.

For a whole variety of reasons, such as holidays and interstate requirements, South Australian Tertiary Admission Centre requirements, interstate university entrance requirements, the time frame for SSABSA and the staff is becoming more difficult, and, because of the increasing complexity two and three year—and maybe even longer—SACE students who spread their SACE out over a long period, it is becoming increasingly complex. It is an issue that SSABSA has found difficult to confront with its existing budget.

However, we have given a commitment to give a significant one-off increase to SSABSA. That is the current position of the Government: to upgrade the equipment and facilities and get things right, and hopefully see a relatively problem-free results release process in 1994. The ongoing budget for SSABSA will have to be revisited as part of the budget process next year.

**Ms STEVENS:** Is the Minister aware of the enormous amount of time that schools have to dedicate to work on SSABSA issues in relation to SACE? Is he aware of any effects that the staff cuts that have just come on line will have on the ability of schools to be able to perform those tasks?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am aware of the increasing responsibilities and requirements on secondary schools as a result of the SACE. In relation to potential budget effects, I give the same answer as I gave to the question that the honourable member asked this morning in relation to

curriculum effects: we are going to have to sit back and wait to see what effects there might be. All that the Acting Director has said indicates a significant advance on consultation and reducing the flow of paperwork hopefully between SSABSA and schools, which has been a criticism from schools. So much of what he said I can only endorse and hope that that will reduce some of the requirements on schools and senior staff.

**Ms STEVENS:** The concern I have with the answer that we will just have to wait and see is that in this whole business of collecting and collating results, getting it altogether and getting it into SSABSA takes a lot of time and has to follow in sequence, otherwise we end up with what we have again. It seems to me that you need to take more action than just waiting and seeing. It seems to me that there will be effects in relation to schools managing that process and that some contingency plans should be put in place now.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** What the Acting Director outlined to you with regard to what SSABSA is doing to meet the requirements of schools I see as being a significant improvement on last year in reducing the work load. What I am saying to the member for Elizabeth and others who are claiming that the budget effects might cause some problems is that my judgment is that we, through SSABSA, are doing as much as we can to reduce the impositions and commitments on school staff in relation to their relationships with SSABSA. It is our hope and expectation that that will be the case. If the member for Elizabeth wishes to continue with her point of view, as I am sure she will, then all we can do is wait and see whether or not the member for Elizabeth's judgment is right or the judgment of me as Minister and the Acting Director is right, that we have done a lot to try to reduce the requirements and expectations on school staff as a result of SSABSA.

**Ms STEVENS:** I do not see it from the point of view of who is right and who is wrong. I think the most important thing is that we actually get something that works for next year's students. I take the point that SSABSA has done all those things that have been related here. My point was that things still have to happen in schools and that contingency plans probably are in order, seeing there have been staff cuts and there will be extra duties for teachers.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** What the member for Elizabeth will need to accept is, first, that there have been no cutbacks. In relation to the results process for 1994, we have exactly the same number of staff working in schools with SSABSA. If she has a problem it is a problem for the 1995 results release rather than for this year's release. In relation to getting it right for this year, what the Director and Acting Director of SSABSA have outlined should allay many of her concerns. Certainly, the effects as announced in the recent budget will not flow over to schools this year because all the staff are still there.

**Ms STEVENS:** But it will be a problem in the future.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It might be in the future, and we can talk about it next year.

**Ms STEVENS:** I think we need to do more than talk about it next year; we need to think about it this year.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are responding to that this year in all the ways that the Acting Director of SSABSA has outlined. Let us see how it works this year. If there are other problems we need to address next year, the Government together with SSABSA will address them.

**Ms STEVENS:** Has the timetable for the release of the exam results this year been coordinated with SATAC to

ensure that students are able to consider their options for entrance to the universities or other tertiary institutions so that those offers can be finalised at least a week before students are required to decide to return to school to repeat year 12?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer is 'Yes', it has been coordinated. I will ask the Acting Director to give an outline of the timetable.

**Mr Halsey:** The results timetable has been coordinated. It is anticipated that a tape will go down to SATAC in the first week of January. It has always been the case that we do not give a precise date for the public announcement of this within a day or two, but it is within the first week of January. That has been coordinated nationally through the admissions agencies because of the problems that were associated with sufficient time for students to change priorities and preferences. There has been correspondence between SSABSA and SATAC recently to establish the database that SATAC needs for the 1995 intake. As is well known in schools, there is a modification occurring to the 1995 intake calculation score which needs to be factored into the work that has to be done.

**Ms STEVENS:** Dr Willmott has left as Director. What is the timetable for the appointment of a new director?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It has been advertised and short-listed. Interviews will be conducted next week. As soon as possible after that.

**Ms STEVENS:** Imminent?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Imminent, yes.

**Mr ATKINSON:** My question is about year 12 assessment. Some changes were raised with me by a student at Christian Brothers' College. This student says that when he began year 12 this year he was told that year 12 results were assessed out of 70 marks. The student's best three subjects are marked out of 20; the remaining two subjects are also marked out of 20 and then assessed according to a bonus system, with the maximum possible for each subject being five bonus points.

The student, Mr Scriva, said that he was told that bonus points were allocated as follows: 20 becomes five; 17 to 19 becomes four; 14 to 16 becomes three; 11 to 13 becomes two; and 10 becomes one. Mr Scriva says that students have recently been notified that this calculation will change—this is during the school year—to a sliding scale of half marks so that 20 becomes five, 19 becomes 4½, 18 becomes four, etc. He does not object to the new system but to its being introduced three-quarters of the way through the academic year. He says that students have structured their studies in such a way as to maximise their chance of gaining a university place using the information that they were given about assessment methods at the beginning of the year. It is now being changed when it is too late for them to change their study program. Can the new system be delayed until the next academic year? If it cannot be delayed until the next academic year, what is the justification for changing the assessment rules mid-stream?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The first point we need to acknowledge is that the decisions in relation to acceptance in universities are decisions taken by universities and their governing bodies. The Department for Education and Children's Services and the Government have a very strong interest as does SSABSA, but in the end decisions are taken by the governing bodies at the universities. The member for Unley is on one of those councils, and Mr Atkinson has been on one of those councils and still is, is he not?

**Mr ATKINSON:** No.



**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** In the end, these decisions are taken by university councils. I will ask the Acting Director to respond to one or two of the specific details of the question, but there was a very strong push in the early or mid part of this year, in effect, midstream, to change the whole system from the three subjects and the two bonus subjects. It is relatively a smaller change. That is, all that has been done is some fine tuning of the bonus points. Instead of getting one, two, three, four or five, you can actually get half points as well. But there was a very strong push from at least one of the universities to, in effect, move completely to a five-subject scaled score aggregate straight away.

There was enormous opposition to that from me and virtually everyone involved with schools to moving to a system half way through the year. The whole system was thrown out from the three subjects plus two bonuses to a system of five lots of 20 being scaled and being changed. I put that as background for the member for Spence for him to bear in mind that whilst there have been some changes (and I will ask the Acting Director to respond to that particular aspect of it) he needs to bear in mind that a considerable battle was being waged by a good number of people to change the mind and the intent of at least one of the universities from changing the whole box and dice half way through the year, when it is technically within their right. The legislation that the previous Labor Government and Liberal Oppositions have supported about the autonomy of universities very much leaves these powers with the universities in relation to how they decide who enters and on what score into their various faculties.

**Mr ATKINSON:** I am surprised that the Minister is denying responsibility for this area because it so happens that earlier this month I raised this very point with the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education, the Hon. Bob Such. I have a reply here from that Minister saying, 'Please be advised that responsibility for this matter falls outside my portfolio'—which covers the universities—'and, in fact, devolves on to the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia.' I thought, given that we were having Estimates Committees today and SSABSA was before us, it might be an opportune time to raise it. Who is right, Bob Such or you?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member for Spence should always know that what I have said to him is a fair and accurate reflection of the situation. I would only refer the member to the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia legislation and also the university statutes, which are Acts of this Parliament. The situation is that I cannot direct, and the member knows that, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia. The Act does not allow that. Secondly, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia cannot direct the universities. Thirdly, the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education is right in saying, at least in part anyway, that he cannot direct the universities either. He is the Minister responsible for that broad area and has the carriage of it on behalf of the Government, but he is not in a position to direct the universities in relation to either their admittance policies or anything else.

**Mr ATKINSON:** That is not what he said, is it?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will leave that for the member for Spence to explore with the appropriate Minister in the appropriate Estimates Committee. What I have said to you is a fair and accurate reflection of the facts, and I will ask the Acting Director to respond to the fine tuning of the bonus point score part of your question.

**Mr Halsey:** The primary reason for the introduction of the fine tuning to the bonus point system was that the experience of last year's higher education entry process was that the bonus point system, as constituted, acted in a way which sometimes caused what is known as score reversal, the somewhat ridiculous situation in a few instances whereby if a student, because it is a combination of scaled score and bonus points on subject achievement score, had attained less overall they might have received a higher aggregate because of the way in which the bonus point system and the scale system worked together. The second and important thing, particularly at the high range cut-off point—and you are right when you said that the former process operated on grade bands—was that a student who had 17, 18 or 19 points would receive the same bonus points as did the student who attained a B grade or a C grade. When universities in particular were making selections based on cut-offs and there was high competition for places the view that prevailed was that that coarser grain did not provide sufficient discrimination, and in technical terms the aggregate score process was not acting in kind of a linear way.

So, there was considerable debate and discussion at what is known as the higher education consultative level, which comprises mostly university personnel but also personnel from SSABSA, school sectors and TAFE centres, about what could be done about it, knowing full well that if you introduced any change at all in essence it would be a change after the game had already started, so to speak. But the overwhelming view of the members of HEC, which included SSABSA as well, was that the finer grain bonus point system would operate more fairly and equitably for students and that, because we could develop a conversion process to put everybody on the same footing, the relative positions of students would virtually, in nearly every instance, remain the same. Fundamentally what an aggregate does is that it provides a basis for ranking students which in turn then is used to allocate places within university courses and it is the relativities that are critically important.

The committee, and indeed the board of SSABSA, which had some justifiable concerns about this, is aware that students in a sense made choices last year under one set of rules and then saw those rules fine tuned. Students were saying, for example, 'I got a 14 for biology; it is a B grade. I do not think I can jump up to an A and get a 17, so I will park it.' Now they have found if they had got a 15 they could get an extra .5, but the point needs to be made that everybody is on the same system with the same relativities and will be subject to the same rules and the best advice I can give, and having briefed the Minister and been advised by all of those involved with the technical aspects of this, is that it will operate in a smoother, fairer way, preserve relativities and provide a greater degree of distinction between high performance scores and scores which are near high performance.

The matter you have raised has been raised again by HEC and by the SSABSA board and a letter has been drafted for the Chief Executive Officers of the universities and TAFE to send to schools to explain in more detail than they did originally, which was a fairly short and to the point letter, how the fine grain bonus system will work, what is most likely to be the net impact of it, and the fact that all students, whether they were completing their SACE for the first time this year or repeating subjects in order to improve scores, will all be converted across and treated on the same scale.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I would ask the Acting Director to explain for the benefit of members the concept of school reversal to which he referred earlier.

**Mr Halsey:** Because the aggregate was made up of scaled scores and subject achievement scores, the primary thing is the three best scaled scores. That formed a mark out of 60 and then you got bonus points for the two remaining subject achievement scores. If you got a subject achievement score near a boundary, and if it were scaled down, it would have given you, in a sense, a leg up in the bonus point system, but if you had put it back into the scaled system it could have drawn your score down. It is probably something I need to illustrate on a wall chart. Depending on what happened to the subject achievement score and its position when scaled, because we were primarily driven by a rule which said that you must first take the three best scaled scores, in some instances if the subject had not been scaled the way it had it might have attracted a higher bonus point. So, the total score, in some instances, could have varied depending on whether the subject was used for a scaled score or for a bonus point section.

In some instances the difference could have been two or three points and when we are talking of cut off distinctions where people are contesting it over .5, it was intolerable. In most instances it was not of that order, but there were enough of significant difference, which either meant that students could or could not get into courses, to cause very considerable concern about it and therefore there being a need to reverse it.

I suppose the most dramatic example was in medicine (which is always the one cited), where the cut off score last year was 66 out of 70 and a student gaining 65.5 with a subject achievement score of 19, which attracted a bonus point of 4, and a student with a subject achievement score of 17 also getting a bonus point of 4. It was contested vigorously by parents, and indeed students, that, in fact subject achievement scores are a recognition of achievement in a subject, in measurement terms there is significant difference between a 17 out of 20 and a 19 out of 20. However, in terms of the aggregate there was no difference in recognition and that in itself had to be corrected.

**Mr ATKINSON:** I thank the Minister for that comprehensive explanation, but is there not something wrong with a grading system that is so complicated that parents and pupils cannot imagine it in their mind's eye, and why must our assessment system be so complicated that a wall chart is necessary to demonstrate it?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can sympathise with the concerns of the member for Spence because many parents have that view. It is an extraordinarily complex situation and many parents, members of Parliament and, I expect, Ministers, almost shrug their shoulders at the complexity of the situation. The facts of life are that universities, in wanting to accept students into their courses, currently decide to take on the basis of year 12 results and they make the judgment that there needs to be some sort of evening up of the sorts of subjects. This is a matter on which the member for Spence has waxed lyrical to me in relation to some subject offerings at some schools.

The universities take the view that some subjects are possibly not as difficult as other subjects and that there therefore needs to be some sort of balancing system. That is what scaling in a very complicated and convoluted way attempts to do: even up the results so that perhaps those students who are doing physics and mathematics I and II may

not be unfairly treated when compared with some students who may be doing a range of other subjects. That is the issue. It is complicated.

Unless the universities move to a system completely apart from year 12 results and scoring and do it on interviews and a variety of other things like that, you are locked into a system that is complex, complicated and very difficult for most people to understand.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a follow-on, with respect to the point made by the member for Spence on universities, for a number of years I was a member of the Industrial Commercial and Training Commission, whose representatives, in particular its Chairman, Mr Graham Mills, sit on the SSABSA board. I well recall a number of occasions at ICTC meetings where trenchant criticism was made of the universities and their influence within SSABSA in relation to the direction of the type of subjects to be studied in the SACE subject levels and that, given that the overwhelming preponderance of the student population go out and achieve a job, hopefully, in a trade or some other commercial field, there has been an unnecessary skew in our education system as dictated by the universities.

Is the Minister aware of that criticism, which is very important to the links between industry and education authorities (in particular, the State school system), and, if so, will he try to prevail upon the universities to take a less dogmatic approach with respect to the subjects that are to be studied at SACE level and be more in tune with general industry's needs?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, I am aware of the concerns and criticisms that some have expressed. A fair summary of my position is that I would not be looking to prevail upon the universities, but certainly I would enter into constructive discussion with the Vice Chancellors and members of their councils to see how we can develop a system which meets their needs, which are important not only to them but also to the future of the State. We have to turn out graduates in engineering and a variety of other disciplines that are world class and world competitive.

If one spends any time with the physics, science and engineering lecturers, one finds that they have some strong viewpoints about the concerns they have in turning out internationally competitive graduates from their universities to compete on the world market. They have a genuine role to play. What the universities have to accept (and this is the view that I would continue to put), is that there needs to be a balance. There are the needs of all the other students as well, and that is an ongoing issue that we will have to continue to discuss with the Vice Chancellors. SSABSA will continue to discuss it with the universities on the various working parties and groups to which the Acting Director referred earlier, and we will do the best that we can.

**Mr CLARKE:** What were the findings of the inquiry into the break-in into the offices of SSABSA earlier this year? Has anyone been charged with any offence and has security been improved to ensure the protection of examination material?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer to the security question is that a number of things have been done. In relation to whether anyone has been charged, no apprehension of any suspect has occurred. Security arrangements have been upgraded as a result of the break-in, including detailed briefings on security for all staff and appropriate external assessing of staff, new combination locks on the safe, additional sensors, upgraded and individualised access codes,

changes to locks, new access keys, a strict key register and improved security surveillance arrangements by Wormalds. So, yes, a range of things has been undertaken to ensure, as best as we can, that it does not happen again.

**Mr CLARKE:** Can the Minister provide details of SSABSA's overseas program? In which countries is SSABSA working? Are there special staff dedicated to managing this program, what are the expenses this year and what is the projected income?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, SSABSA is active in a number of overseas markets, especially through South-East Asia. I will ask the Acting Director to provide what detail he can. If he does not have all the detail, we will take the question on notice and bring back a reply in relation to expenditure and things like that.

**Mr Halsey:** The predominant area of overseas activity is Malaysia. We have approximately 1 000 to 1 100 students each year sitting for year 12 examinations at private colleges. They study exactly the same syllabus as our students here and they sit for the examinations at exactly the same time. The completed examination papers are freighted back to Australia under security, marked in Adelaide and the results are dispatched from here.

We place a senior member of staff on the ground in Kuala Lumpur each year to conduct the examinations, and that is one of our strong marketing positions. We also in-service staff there and our result—which is not very well-known in South Australia, but it is a point that I make when I talk to schools—enables students to gain entry to all Western country universities, particularly in the UK, Canada, and the US, as well as Australia and South-East Asia.

The income from the Malaysian program varies a little each year, but we are estimating that this year it will be about \$280 000. In the 1993 calendar year, my memory says that we cleared approximately \$136 000 in surplus as a result of that.

We also provide services in year 12 to the Northern Territory. This is estimated to generate an income of \$265 000 this year. The Northern Territory conducts its own year 11 part of the SACE, but we do all its work for year 12 and its aggregation work for university entrance. Some discussions are under way with the Northern Territory Board of Studies to ensure a handover at about the year 2000.

The board has done some exploratory work in Hong Kong and Indonesia and we are looking to expand to other parts of Malaysia with two additional colleges next year. We also have a memorandum of understanding between ourselves and SAGRIC, because of its role in the international arena in relation to educational and training services. We have provided consultant and in-service courses to contingents from the Philippines and Pakistan and currently we have one officer, through Flinders University, from Ethiopia.

It is likely next year that there will a contingent of middle to senior level assessment bureaucrats from Indonesia. There is a potentially huge market there for senior secondary assessment services, particularly in terms of the design and management of an assessment system that is secure, valid and reliable. Modest as they are, we have devoted from our enterprise funds \$18 000 for additional exploratory work with agents such as SAGRIC and others to see what other markets exist.

**Mr CLARKE:** You may not have the figures on hand, but I asked about the expenses.

**Mr Halsey:** I will provide that information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer to back-to-school grants. Included in your media statement was the announcement that the back-to-school grants scheme, which allocates funds to schools for expenditure on capital works or maintenance, would be continued and would amount to \$12.5 million. How will the allocations to individual schools be determined? Will a formula be used and, if so, what are the details of that?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Earlier in the day, the member for Unley raised a question about maintenance, which, of course, relates to back-to-school grants. I have some further information to place on the record for the benefit of the Committee.

One of the concerns that has been expressed to the department, as I understand it, by some principals and school councils has been the accuracy of the information held by the department with respect to the asset needs of their schools. This comes back to the question about the true extent of the backlog maintenance. There are varying versions of that backlog. As I said, it was as high as \$230 million or \$250 million in one estimate from the Public Accounts Committee, and others have varying estimates of it. We have a version of the estimate, which is provided in a print-out from the Department for Building Management and which is called the Building Land Asset Management System (BLAMS). We get this print-out from the department in relation to all our school buildings. This indicates at least one version of the extent of the backlog of required maintenance in all our school facilities.

As a result of the questions today, I have made arrangements to send to all schools in the State the information on their backlog maintenance, as detailed on the BLAMS print-out. I have asked the department to invite schools to comment on this information and to provide their views of additions to or deletions from this list and to indicate their priorities. So, in a genuine, consultative fashion we will provide some information to schools as to what the Department for Building Management thinks of their future and ongoing maintenance needs and ask them for their views on the additions and deletions. We cannot necessarily guarantee that we will agree 100 per cent on every occasion. Nevertheless, in the spirit of cooperation, we will seek their views. On the basis of this information, we want to try to get the best value for the dollars we are putting in.

One of the positive features of the budget announcement is that we are allocating approximately an extra \$7 million to programmable maintenance and minor works over and above last year's allocation, part of which is the back-to-school grant funding, which is the subject of the honourable member's question.

In relation to that, we have \$12.5 million. We have decided on the quantum. There is an arrangement at the moment—an existing formula. I have asked the Chief Executive Officer of the department and others to review that formula and also to look at the procedures. I am uncomfortable with the fact that I am told that some schools, for example, are spending their back-to-school grant money on things like computers and then lining up at the department saying, 'We have this particular minor works or maintenance problem at the school; will you please resolve that?' That is not the purpose of the money, and I have therefore asked the department to review the guidelines and procedures and to develop a new set of procedures and guidelines—amongst a number of other things—at least to address that particular

issue so that we can ensure that that circumstance does not continue.

We will need to try to ensure that schools provide us with information on how the money has been spent or whether it has been retained. My recollection is that, out of 500-odd grants, only 70 of the 640 or 650 schools have forwarded an acquittal statement as to where the money has been spent.

We will be pursuing that and will also be reviewing the basis of the formula to see whether or not it was an appropriate formula. I am awaiting a report from the department, which is imminent. As soon as we can, we will announce the new criteria and new guidelines.

**Ms STEVENS:** So, you will be using a formula but you have not decided yet what it is?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am awaiting a report.

**Ms STEVENS:** You refer to schools not having used their grant, and it is really important to think carefully about the reasons why, because there are some very valid reasons why some schools have not used those grants.

**Mr Brindal:** What are they?

**Ms STEVENS:** They may be waiting to discover whether the schools will be closed, for instance.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have no problem with schools holding it in their kitty and saving it up for either a bigger minor works arrangement or redevelopment, or perhaps they are about to be amalgamated, closed or whatever it is. I have no problems with that; it is when they spend it on a non-maintenance or minor works item such as purchasing new computers. This is not the budget line for that. It is to try to address the significant backlog we have in maintenance and minor works.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What is the formula in relation to internal and external painting of our schools? What is the time span?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If it is anything like some of the schools I have visited that have not had internal painting for 17 years, I am not sure what the formula is. External painting is a little more frequent than that. I am told reliably that there is no formula.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I was always told that there was; that is what worries me.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have taken advice from the Director of Corporate Services, who is the person who ought to know, and no formula currently operates. Whether or not there was in the past, I do not know. The Chairman has been a member of Parliament for some years, and it may well be that in his period of two decades of service there used to be a formula, but currently there is not one.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will the committee that was convened last year again be asked to provide advice to you and, if not, who are the members of this new committee?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will take that on notice and come back to you with the names of the people on the review panel. The review basically is being done at this stage by departmental officers. We will have some consultation with peer groups, but I will reserve a position on whether we formalise it by establishing a new oversight committee. We have not established a new committee.

**Ms STEVENS:** I want to make the point that the committee that was in operation before did have parent representation.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There will be some. In fact, there already has been some. A month or two months ago I had discussions with representatives of SAASSO and, I think, the South Australian Association of School Parent Clubs, about

the back to school grant arrangements. We had some discussion as to my intentions in this area, and the Chairman of SAASSO, Mr Bryson, is familiar with those.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will schools receive an allowance for the number of students on school card in relation to back to school grants?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** All those issues are subject to review.

**Ms STEVENS:** Is that a criterion that you believe is worthy of inclusion?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is worthy of consideration.

**Ms STEVENS:** But you will not be drawn any further on that?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No. All issues in relation to the review are on the table for review. There is a number of arguments in relation to that aspect. Some will argue to me, as they have, that what we are talking about in maintenance is, in effect, the extent of how bad the actual facility is. It is the asset we are talking about. We are trying to rebuild the asset base of all our schools. There are others who argue that it is important only to look at the assets of those schools that have school card numbers greater than 50 or 60 per cent, or something like that. I have heard both views, and all I am prepared to say at this stage is that it is worthy of consideration, but it is all on the table for review at the moment.

**Ms STEVENS:** Obviously, the needs of the school must be considered, but in the previous allocations one of the factors that went into making those decisions was equity in relation to the number of school card students, because it was acknowledged that schools with a high proportion of school card students had much less capacity to make changes to their own funding base.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge that. As I said, it is worthy of consideration, but the whole formula is being reviewed at the moment and that is all I can say.

**Mr CLARKE:** I refer the Minister to the 'Grants to other organisations' at page 62, \$499 000.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have done that. We cannot go back to that now: we have just voted on it. If you want to raise a question with me separately, I am happy to look at it, but we have voted on that.

**Mr CLARKE:** That was my mistake. I had a further question with respect to grants to non-government schools. Is that all under the same line?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes. If you want to write me a letter, I will undertake to respond expeditiously. I would not like the honourable member to miss out on being able to put a point of view to me.

**Ms STEVENS:** I want to return to the back to school grants. Have schools been advised that they may apply for special funding from this source?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No. As I understand it, it is a distribution rather than an application. We make a decision that there is a bucket of money and then we will distribute it; it is just a question of resolving how we distribute the bucket.

**Ms STEVENS:** When will they receive that allocation?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As soon as we can organise the formula. As I said, the report to me from the department is imminent, and we will try to do it as soon as possible. I think last year the grants were actually handed out just prior to the election, in October or November, so we are not running late at this stage.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will each member of Parliament be advised of the allocation for each school in his or her electorate, and will the Minister undertake to pass the cheques

to each member of Parliament for delivery to the schools in their electorates?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is my current expectation that this year we will continue that process, which I understand was warmly endorsed by members.

**Mr CLARKE:** In view of the statement on page 48 of the June Financial Statement, that the Government has factored into forward estimates a significant but controlled program of asset sales, can the Minister detail those assets controlled by his department which may be sold under the program?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Not comprehensively at this stage, but I can tell the member that we are looking to fund \$18 million out of our \$92 million capital works and minor works and maintenance program through sale of assets. So where schools have already been closed and declared surplus, we have assets, for example, at West Lakes Shore High School, Playford High School, and a range of others like that, which have been on the books for a while. But there is a range of other assets that we are looking at. Some schools, for example, are selling off their oval or parts of their oval for half a million dollars or a million dollars, or whatever it is, and that will be part of the asset sale program. There is not an overall list, but there is an expectation that \$18 million out of the \$90 million program comes from asset sales.

**Mr CLARKE:** The Minister has referred to the \$18 million that they are hoping to pay in capital works from the sale of assets; what is the amount of money that you are expecting to receive from the sale of assets?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** \$18 million.

**Mr CLARKE:** That is 100 per cent, and so therefore you are undertaking that all the proceeds from the sale of school properties will return to the Education Department budget rather than to Consolidated Revenue?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes.

**Mr CLARKE:** I want to deal with the issue of devolution. On 29 June, the *Advertiser* reported a large-scale pilot program aimed at giving schools more say in the way they are run. Under the program, school councils will control spending in areas such as school maintenance, water, power and the hiring of teachers. This transfer of responsibility to individual schools has significant consequences and has been trialled in other parts of the world and in Australia in terms of devolution. The consequences include concern about the capacity of schools and their councils and staff to manage these new responsibilities, concern that inequities will be created between larger and wealthier school communities and those in other areas, and concern about the way in which funds are allocated and accounted for.

I have several questions on this, so if the Minister wants me to go over them again at some later time I will be more than happy to. How many schools are expected to take part in this pilot scheme and which schools have already agreed? What is the complete list of responsibilities to be transferred to the schools? Will there be any training program for principals to equip them for their new responsibilities? How will schools be funded? Who will have authority to authorise the expenditure of public money and how will the accounts be audited? Will schools and their councils be open to claims for damages as a result of them entering into contracts for the supply of goods and services? Lastly, how will the requirement for safety and other building standards be guaranteed by the Government for the audit to be arranged at the local level?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The *Advertiser* article was substantially right except in relation to the hiring of teachers,

and I do not know where that came from. We are looking at a large-scale voluntary pilot next year in relation to control over maintenance perhaps and control of utilities. There have been small-scale pilots conducted for sometime but we are looking at expanding that. It will certainly not be extending to the position of hiring of teachers. In relation to the questions about legal liability and issues like that, I will have to take those on notice. The member will know that I am not a lawyer and I will need to take legal advice in relation to those vexed questions about liability and who is going to be held responsible, etc. They are important issues, and we will take advice on them and provide the member with an answer.

As it is a pilot program, there will be discussion and consultation with the schools to be involved as to the best way of conducting that pilot program. In the end, the key officer in the school, the educational leader, the person responsible, is the principal, and substantial responsibilities will rest on the shoulders of the principal, and there will need to be some training and development in relation to any on-going decision on widespread devolution of some responsibilities in these areas to all schools. But they are issues on which we would seek to work with principals and with parents in trying to resolve them harmoniously. We do not seek to impose a solution. We are prepared to work with them. Other aspects of the member's questions that I have not responded to I will be happy to take on notice and bring back a reply.

**Mr CLARKE:** I appreciate that there were a number of questions, and I am not expecting the Minister to have all of the answers at his fingertips; but as a supplementary question, how many schools will be involved?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have not made a decision yet in relation to the number of schools. We will seek, as we did with the basic skills testing, expressions of interest to ascertain how many schools are interested in participating in a pilot. We will not direct schools to be involved. We will find out how many are interested in participating in a pilot and then make a judgment as to what is a reasonable number to handle as a pilot. Clearly, with a pilot you do not want 400 schools; we need something that is relatively manageable. With the basic skills testing we had 41. We have not finalised a decision on this.

**Mr CLARKE:** What about the training program for principals?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, as I said, we see that as being important.

**Ms STEVENS:** Minister, I refer to a consultation paper that I believe was circulated recently to all school councils called 'Shared responsibility: the role of school councils'. My question is: who is or who are the authors of this document and to whom has this document been sent?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** A school council reference group was established, I am told, back in 1992 under the Labor Government, which worked through 1992 and 1993 under the previous Government. We saw the product or the fruits of their burdens unleashed on the school communities earlier this year. On that group we had representatives of the Institute of Teachers, departmental officers, the PSA, the South Australian Association of State School Organisations, the South Australian Association of School Parent Clubs, and principals' associations, who were, evidently, part of that process, and then, of course, departmental officers pulled it all together and it has now gone out as a discussion paper—no more than that.

**Ms STEVENS:** The last sentence on the back of this reads:

If you would like any points to be clarified, please contact the Manager, Schools Restructure/School Operations Division.

So this is this departmental officer working with that school council reference group?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes.

**Ms STEVENS:** What is the process and time line for consultation in relation to this and for any decisions resulting from it?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I think 30 September is the time for responses to come back and we will work as expeditiously as we can after that.

**Ms STEVENS:** What support and expertise is being provided to school communities to enable them to adequately consider the document?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The department provides administrative support by way of grant funding to a range of these organisations, but others like the Institute of Teachers are big enough to look after themselves in relation to consultation on any particular document.

**Ms STEVENS:** I asked the Minister about support and expertise being provided to school communities.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I see the Institute of Teachers as being an important part of school communities. In relation to parent associations, we provide grant funding to provide administrative support to run parent organisations, and part of that administrative process would be to consult on important documents such as this.

**Ms STEVENS:** Am I to understand, then, that parent organisations have received some sort of funding to enable them to go out to school councils to work through these?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No specific funding has been allocated for this, but they receive support from the Government and the department to run their organisations administratively. One of the reasons for their organisation's running is to provide advice to and consult with their own communities about issues that are of concern to them. This is obviously a key concern, and in part they would use some of our grant funding and some of their own income to run their offices and their secretariats to provide advice to us on this issue.

**Ms STEVENS:** Does the Minister endorse any of the sentiments expressed in this paper?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am not endorsing anything at this stage. It is a consultation paper that was conducted for two years under the previous Government. I am not indicating opposition or support for anything. Prior to the election our policy document talked about sensible cooperation between school councils and parents, and the department and the Government, and I see that as being important.

**Ms STEVENS:** The first assertion in the document is as follows:

Education systems both interstate and overseas are now investigating the idea of shared responsibility and its implications for school communities as they look for more flexible responsive ways of providing services.

What evidence does the Minister have that school councils are looking for more responsibilities, and want to devote more time to being responsible for matters most are not willing or competent to be responsible for? What evidence does the Minister have that school councils are currently under-worked?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I suggest that the member for Elizabeth work through the Urrbrae school council's concerns

about the document in the broad, because that is the first question that it puts. I do not share all its concern and alarm in relation to what is a discussion document. It is a discussion document, and no more than that. In relation to the first question the Urrbrae council puts to members and to me as Minister, it is self-evident that anyone who looks at the ongoing debate and discussion will see that interstate and internationally the issue of parent involvement in education is one of the pre-eminent issues. It is self-evident in any educational discussion that the issue of parent involvement is important. The extent of that is an issue of some debate and discussion.

**Ms STEVENS:** I would certainly agree with the Minister's last comment. The extent of parent responsibility is a matter of concern. Will council members be paid for their increased responsibilities, which include developing policy statements, incorporating procedures and decision making in areas such as human resource management and school management, which at the moment is the province of principals?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have taken no decisions yet in relation to the school council discussion paper. It is a discussion paper, and we await the input. If the member for Elizabeth and communities in her area have strong views one way or another, we welcome that input, and it will be considered along with all the others that we get. No decisions have been taken, and we do not intend to take decisions until we have received the input from local school communities.

**Ms STEVENS:** The document states that there has been:

... developed a number of management proposals which aim to help local school councils with support from the department to take on key responsibilities.

What is the nature of this support, and for how long would it be provided?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Again this is a question that Urrbrae raised, and I can only give the honourable member the response I gave earlier to the first Urrbrae question: no decisions have been taken, it is a consultation. Therefore, I am not in a position to be able to say one way or another what we would or would not do. We have not decided anything yet; it is all on the table for discussion.

**Ms STEVENS:** The document suggested that the performance of school councils would be monitored by district superintendents and the quality assurance unit. Does the Minister see this suggestion being at all a possibility in terms of the role of the quality assurance unit? Will there be a managing poor performance scheme for councils that did not come up to scratch?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is a good try, but all I can say—and I will continue to say it in relation to these questions that Urrbrae has asked (and there are dozens of them)—is that this is a product of two years of discussion under the previous Government. I do not have a strong view one way or the other. I am awaiting consultation and submissions, and I welcome those. We will then look at them and make a decision.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Minister has stated that from 1995 all school children in years 3 and 5 will sit for the same two hour test of their literacy and numeracy skills. What feedback was provided to the Department of Education and Children's Services from New South Wales with regard to the value of standardised testing in improving student learning outcomes?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It would be very similar to the experience in South Australia in that we will find some who are very staunch advocates for basic skills testing and others,

in particular members of the teachers unions and some principals (although it is different in the New South Wales: the Labor Party supports it New South Wales but opposes it in South Australia) oppose it. So there is some support across the political spectrum in New South Wales where the major political Parties support this measure. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr Bob Carr) and the shadow education spokesperson are outspoken advocates for a continuation of basic skills testing as meeting an important community need in New South Wales, and that is different from South Australia, where, as I understand it, the Australian Labor Party is still opposed to it.

In New South Wales, there is strong opposition from the Institute of Teachers, or its equivalent. Some principals and others support it and some do not. Generally the parent communities support it, although again there are some within the parent communities who oppose it. It is the sort of issue on which there will never be a 100 per cent view one way or the other: it will always have some divided opinion. Certainly, the information provided to me from the Minister for Education in New South Wales is that with the passage of time the opposition to it has subsided to a reasonable degree. Some still oppose it and do not see the benefit in it. The bottom line is that the new Government here is committed to it. It was part of our policy, and I am sure that the honourable member would want us to implement at least that part of our policy. It will be introduced from next year.

**Ms STEVENS:** What specific feedback did the New South Wales department give in relation to specific improvements in student learning outcomes?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The advice from the department and through the Minister to me is that it has been advantageous in relation to performance in New South Wales. That is the report to me from the Minister, but, as I said, there are some who do not see that there is any merit in it. If you are talking about within the school system, I guess it depends on how you define the department or the school system. Your most recent question was the department, but if you are talking about the school system generally, when you visit New South Wales you will find some principals and teachers who oppose it and do not see much merit in it but equally you will find supporters. We did not do a quantitative survey, so we are not in a position to be able to make an overall judgment. But there are a good number of people who see merit in it and see some improvements or a monitoring of student learning outcomes. What we have to do, allied with that, is put more resources into doing something with the information. I have said on a number of occasions that we are not education voyeurs; we do not want the information just to be able say, 'There you go.' What we want is information together with putting in the resources to tackle the issues in the early years of education.

**Ms STEVENS:** I have no argument with the need to monitor student learning outcomes. Did I hear you say that in New South Wales there is a division of opinion about whether or not these things are advantageous?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I think that is the same here, too.

**Ms STEVENS:** Did you mean that some people in New South Wales believe there is no merit in these tests?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes. I think you could go anywhere in Australia and you will find people who are absolutely passionately staunchly opposed to it. If you went to any Institute of Teachers or union movement, you would be hard pressed to find anybody in leadership positions in the union

movement who would support it. There are some people who are staunchly opposed to it.

**Ms STEVENS:** You said that some people in New South Wales said that they were advantageous to student performance. Can you be specific with how they are?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Advantageous in being able to identify performance. In relation to how it can be applied in South Australia, we see it as being advantageous in being able to make judgments about the effectiveness of various programs. As the honourable member would know, we are looking at a range of early intervention programs and we need to be able to evaluate those. One measure—not the only one—might be the use of information that basic skills testing is able to provide. It would be advantageous to be able to respond to the criticism that the media or prominent business leaders sometimes make about the level of standards in Government schools and to be able to point to something which many people would accept is independent of subjective judgments by teachers about the level of performance, albeit in a defined area of literacy and numeracy, and to be able to say that over four years things have improved, stayed the same or whatever. From my viewpoint, it can be advantageous in a variety of areas. It assists in making sure students are not slipping through; a sort of safety net provision is another important advantage. There are a number of attributes I see in the system, and that is why it is being introduced.

**Ms STEVENS:** I note that in the standardised testing approach basic literacy and numeracy were considered as the things that would be tested. Was any consideration given to looking at things such as the Mayer competencies, which we know are the competencies for the future?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are looking at those in a three year pilot program. It is difficult to measure problem solving, which is one of the competencies. We, with all the other States, are looking at how you ensure students have the abilities and how you measure them.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will they be in a standard test format?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is a pilot program at this stage. I think that would be difficult. Everything is possible, and all States and Territories are tackling the issue.

**Ms STEVENS:** What is the cost of the tests?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We do not have a final figure, but the ballpark figure of the cost of the test itself is around \$300 000. We have budgeted more, but that is the most recent best estimate we can make for the delivery of the test and the processing of it.

**Ms STEVENS:** Is it worth spending \$300 000 on a program about which, in New South Wales where it is operating, and in South Australia, there is a wide range of opinion as to whether or not it has merit?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If you want to talk about South Australia, it is my judgment that the overwhelming community view from parents is supportive of the Government's intentions. I have acknowledged that the Australian Labor Party and the Institute of Teachers opposes it.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge that. The new member for Ross Smith has indicated, as a senior member of the Opposition and of the Labor Party, that that is not true; that the Labor Party has not taken a decision to oppose it. If that is the case, I welcome the support of the member for Ross Smith for basic skills testing in South Australia. As I said, it is strongly supported by Bob Carr and the New South Wales Labor Party. They have made the judgment on educational grounds but also on the fact that the overwhelm-

ing majority of the community—parents—support basic skills testing in New South Wales. I welcome the possible support (I will not put it any stronger than that) of the member for Ross Smith. I know that other front bench colleagues of his within the Labor Party are strong supporters of basic skills testing and have indicated that to me. I will not name them, but their views would be similar I suspect to the views of the member for Ross Smith. It is really their responsibility to turn around the attitude of the Australian Labor Party and to support what the community wants.

*Mr Clarke interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The previous Government and Ministers strongly opposed it. It is true that with a Party new in Opposition you are in a position to change your view. I think that you, and I know the colleagues within your Caucus who support it and support it strongly, ought to prevail upon the Labor Caucus to put a point of view, as the New South Wales Labor Party has, to support what is overwhelmingly supported by the community generally. The opposition to which I referred earlier—let me put the Labor Party to the side for a moment because there may be some movement on that front—comes from the Institute of Teachers, some teachers and some principals.

**Ms STEVENS:** My point in raising that was the importance of spending \$300 000 on something that does not have wholehearted support and validity.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We may get support from your Party yet for this. If that is the case, I do not think there will be a concern in relation to the funding. We have worked very hard to reduce the costs. New South Wales spent over \$1 million in developing the tests. One of the reasons we have joined with them in jointly refining and developing their tests so they are suitable for us, as well as being suitable for them, is to ensure that we do not waste money unnecessarily on development and so that we can still put the \$2.5 million or so into early intervention programs to assist the students that we identify as having problems. That is the priority from our viewpoint.

**Ms STEVENS:** Who will mark the tests and how will parents know that the marking process is uniform and fair?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** They are machine marked, done through this joint arrangement with New South Wales.

#### **Membership:**

Mr De Laine substituted for Mr Atkinson.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will parents be able to obtain detailed information about or access to their children's results, and will parents have a right to contest the results of the test?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** They will certainly have access to the information. In relation to contesting, that would be an issue that they would need to take up with the teachers and with the principals. If it was a process problem, and they were maintaining that an incorrect mark or score had been given, or something, then certainly they would be able to take up the issue, if not at the school level then with the department or with me as Minister. But, generally, that is not the issue. It is really a question of looking at the results. I have looked at results of my own children recently where they have done Westpac maths tests and things like that. You look at the areas; they have done very well in number, but, in space, or something else like that, they have shown some difficulty in understanding it. It is a question for teachers and parents, if parents are able, in working their way through the areas which might have been identified as a particular problem.

**Ms STEVENS:** To what extent will standardised testing be adapted—and I quote a phrase used by the Chief Executive Officer, Dr McPhail, in the August edition of *New Times*—‘to meet South Australian needs and priorities’?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is an important issue. As I said, we are jointly developing the tests for next year. We have used the New South Wales' one for the pilot this year, but there is a commitment for an officer, or officers if need be, from our department to work with the New South Wales' officers to ensure that the tests for the South Australian educational culture, the curriculum offerings and the way we offer, whether literacy or numeracy subjects in primary schools, are suitable for our students, as well as being suitable for New South Wales students. It is correct to say that, in some cases, in New South Wales they do things a little bit differently.

With the introduction of the new curriculum statements and profiles maybe that difference between the States might be reduced a bit, but there will always be the potential for States tackling things in slightly a different way. The reason for having South Australian officers and New South Wales officers jointly working together is to ensure that we cater for both education systems.

**Ms STEVENS:** What resources will be required to do this adaptation?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are looking at maybe an officer having to work on this; whether it is full time or part time is an issue I will continue to discuss with my departmental officers. There are some views on that. We will look at that. We would look at whatever resources are required, but we do not see them as being significant. We are not talking about dozens of people spending the whole year working on it.

I notice that the member for Elizabeth has the tests in front of her. There is one bracket of tests for literacy and one for numeracy, and that is once a year. So, we are not talking about a massive expansion of the bureaucracy, I can assure you. It might be a part-time officer; it might be a full-time officer.

**Ms STEVENS:** Returning to the adaptations of the material, are you seeing them as being fairly minor or rewrites?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is really a question for the officers to work through. At this stage it is not for me to say what we are going to do. It is basically a question of working together and identifying the concerns. Certainly, we do not have all the feedback from our own pilot here, but the initial feedback that we have received—anecdotally—is that we are not looking for major rewrites. There are some particular areas that New South Wales perhaps has done at that stage of their schooling and we have not in South Australia, and those are the issues that we would need to address with the New South Wales officers.

**Ms STEVENS:** I will quote a short passage from the little insert that went into the year 3 tests to illustrate a point about adaptations. It is called ‘A Letter from Morris Lurie’, and is as follows:

Dear Year 3, I'm in the middle of writing a book. No, not about hippopotamuses this time. This time I'm writing about robots. My book is about a boy in his pyjamas being chased down the street in the middle of the night by a robot called Zeek.

I will skip a couple of sentences because they are not part of my point. The letter resumes:

The robot, by the way, is all made of metal and has got a head that goes up into a point.



I had a sister a bit like that. Well, actually she was a lot like that. I advised her to wear a hat at all times, including in bed. I saw her a few weeks ago. Yes, she was wearing a hat. 'Don't take it off, please!' I said. She took off her nose instead. Well, you know how it is with sisters.

It goes on a little bit further. Does the Minister have any concerns about the nature of that content in relation to our department's equal opportunity policies?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As I said initially, we used the New South Wales tests. The whole reason for having the trial was to work through any concerns that people might have. If there are concerns, we will work on them to make them acceptable for South Australian students and schools.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will the Minister make available the feedback from the trials of the standardised tests that have just been completed in the 41 primary schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will produce a summary report and then release that, yes.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will private schools be doing the standardised tests?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is a choice for them. As you know, we cannot direct the non-government schools. I note that in New South Wales an increasing number of non-government schools are voluntarily taking up the testing, but that is a judgment for the non-government schools. I know they are contemplating what they might do. I think they see that this is something that will have community support and they may well think that they need therefore to provide something similar in the non-government schools, but that is a judgment for them.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will the Minister undertake to provide additional resources to schools whose results are below the State average?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are still working through this issue but, in relation to the \$10 million for funding that we are looking at as we get further down the track, whether we can provide additional resources to those schools and how we target it is an important issue, and I acknowledge that. As I said, we are not educational voyeurs in all this; we want to use the information and we want to assist children who have been identified. The overwhelming priority of the Government and the department is to look at the information and to identify those students who need assistance. So, that is certainly one of the issues we are going to try to work through. How we best do that is still an issue that has not been finally resolved.

**Ms STEVENS:** So, you cannot say that you will provide additional resources?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will be providing additional resources. Indeed, we are already providing additional resources. We have \$10 million at least. We had hoped, maybe as the economy improves later on in this parliamentary session, that we might be able to do more, but even in the difficult circumstances we are talking about \$10 million in the whole area of early years and tackling the problem of children with learning difficulties, early intervention programs, etc. Yes, we are committed to doing more—putting in new resources—but how we refine that process will be an issue for us to work through over the coming years as we see the results.

**Ms STEVENS:** You have mentioned the early years area. Year 5 students also do this test. Do you still see them as classed in the early years?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have said on other occasions that early childhood is generally seen as nought to eight and

chopping off at junior primary. I have used the term 'early years', and the Government certainly has, in a slightly broader fashion and we do see the middle years as being incorporated. So, when we are talking about speech pathology and training and development, we are talking about trying to increase, over the coming years, the training and development not only for junior primary teachers but also for teachers in our middle primary years. The year 3 and year 5 levels will give us an opportunity to make some judgments about the success or otherwise of some intervention programs or training and development strategies over a period of time.

**Mr CLARKE:** Following the line that was taken by the member for Elizabeth with respect to standardised testing, and in particular the issue of non-government schools, the Minister indicated that that was an issue totally at the discretion of those schools themselves.

My query to him is that, if indeed there is widespread community concern about the levels of literacy and the like in Government schools, with comments made by employers in this State concerning school leavers and their educational outcomes, surely the Government would also want to see a consistency with respect to those many thousands of students who attend non-government schools and to ensure that there was an across the board standard set to ensure that students attending those schools were not disadvantaged, if indeed they are, by not undertaking standardised testing. Why is the Minister adopting such a hands-off approach with respect to non-government schools? I appreciate that he cannot issue a direction, but he could nonetheless play a key and influential role in their thinking.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I would be pleased to see non-government schools take up the issue. I have already had discussions with the key movers and shakers within non-government school administration in South Australia to that end. If that fits within the model of a role for the Minister, that is appropriate. As the member rightly points out, I am not in a position to direct them to do it or otherwise, but I would be pleased to see them do it. Certainly when we visited New South Wales and talked to principals and parents in the Government schools system, we said to the Independent Schools Board and to the Catholic Education Office, 'If you want to come across at your expense and send someone along, come along and have a look,' and they did so. So, there is some interest and we are doing all we can to be inclusive in this whole process.

**Mr CLARKE:** Have the non-government schools indicated to the Minister any reasons for their reluctance to enter into it at this stage?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Nothing in particular. They have to make judgments about costs and they may have to take into account the views of their own communities. I am not sure what the issues are, but that is a judgment in the end for them to make. They may well provide further information down the track, but it is an issue for them to resolve.

**Mr CLARKE:** Have they identified to the Minister the cost per pupil?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** In New South Wales they are being charged \$20 to \$25 per head for the tests, but we have negotiated a different arrangement. Clearly that may be a factor from their viewpoint.

**Mr CLARKE:** I will briefly read an extract from a document, a copy of which I believe most members of Parliament would have received back in March of this year. It is known as the *Business Council Bulletin*, issued by the Business Council of Australia. It reprints a letter that the

President of the Business Council of Australia wrote to the Prime Minister and, as part of the attachments to that letter to the Prime Minister dealing with education, it stated (as outlined on page 14 of the bulletin), after a table indicating percentages that were spent in the OECD on primary and secondary education (to which the member for Elizabeth in her opening comments referred), that Australia ranked thirteenth out of 16 OECD nations with respect to primary and secondary schools and in tertiary areas third out of 17.

With respect to others we were fifteenth out of 16 and, overall, fifteenth out of 19 countries in the OECD. It goes on to state:

Expenditure on tertiary education is above the OECD average whilst expenditure on primary and secondary education is well below the OECD average.

I have read out those figures. It continues:

It has been argued in some quarters (see EPAC—mid-term review 1993, page 76) that State expenditures on schools should be cut by high cost States to bring their expenditures into line with lower cost States. The absence of outcomes data leaves the debate about effects indeterminate. However, were this course to be generally adopted, Australia's already low ranking in expenditure on school education would fall further. The move would also run counter to the priority which companies are placing on the development of their human resources.

How does the Minister reconcile his Government's cutbacks in education spending with the statement by the Business Council of Australia and why does not the Minister encourage other States to improve their benchmarking rather than have South Australia follow the lowest common denominator?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** One aspect of that quote is important (and that is why I say, 'More strength to the arm of the member for Ross Smith' in relation to basic skills testing), namely, the phrase 'absence of outcomes data'. That is the whole point in relation to education. All that we have been able to discuss for 20 years in effect has been inputs—the dollars that you spend—not the quality of the outcomes that we are churning out of education. The comparisons that we ought to be making with OECD countries and other States are in terms of the quality of student outcomes. That ought to be the pre-eminent and only issue of concern to us all. As I said, more strength to the arm of the member for Ross Smith in trying, together with some of his colleagues, to change the attitude of the Labor Party towards outcomes data such as basic skills testing. That is an important issue.

In relation to OECD figures and comparisons, I can only say that we would like to see other States in Australia devoting as much resource to education as does South Australia because we have the second best or second lowest student/teacher ratio of all States in Australia. Clearly the South Australian Government's commitment to education is significant when compared with the other States. If the other States were to be able to provide that same commitment, we may well see ourselves jump the OECD table, if that is an important issue for some people.

I take a different attitude from the Business Council of Australia, the Institute of Teachers and others. In the end it is not the level of expenditure about which we should be talking or where we rank as a nation or State; rather, it should involve the quality of the outcomes in terms of student learning that we are churning out through our school system. That ought to be the important issue—not the input data, not the dollars but rather what we are providing to our young people through schooling and when they become young adults and leave school.

**Mr CLARKE:** I will pursue the point with the Minister further because, whilst he seized on the words 'the absence of outcomes data leaves the debate about the effects indeterminate', he did not seize on (for obvious reasons) the point I read out earlier where the Business Council of Australia said that, notwithstanding the absence of outcomes data, were this cause to be generally adopted (that is, to cut back on State expenditure on education), Australia's already low ranking in expenditure on school education would fall further. In primary and secondary education we are talking in terms of expenditure and we rank thirteenth out of 16 OECD nations, although in the tertiary field we are third out of 17. So, we can pat ourselves on the back there.

However, in one of the most important areas—primary and secondary education—we only rank thirteenth out of 16. South Australia ranked first out of all States, until this Minister, and we now have to accept second best. That is placing our students and our future in South Australia in serious doubt when we are falling so far behind the pack. I would be interested to hear more from the Minister as I take issue with him on how he can turn around and say that the quality of education has nothing to do with the amount of money we spend. Surely the amount of money we spend on education reflects on the resources that are available, whether there is computer equipment for every child (irrespective of socioeconomic background), the student/teacher ratio, the type of classrooms in which your students are taught and a whole range of other factors which are obviously influenced by the amount of money you spend.

I do not understand the Minister's answer. It was probably a good answer from his viewpoint. I cannot understand the Minister saying, 'Look, money has got nothing to do with the quality of education—absolutely nothing to do with it whatsoever—or to the level of resources you allocate in that area'. I would like him to expand further on that rather interesting theory of his.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am very capable of putting words in my own mouth: I do not need the member for Ross Smith to attempt to do so, I can assure you. He will not find on the record any such statement from me in relation to quality having nothing to do with the level of expenditure on schooling. What he will find on the record is that this Government is funding our schools so that we still have the second best student-teacher ratio of any State in Australia. The honourable member suggested that we used to be first. That is not true: Victoria has been ahead of us.

It may be that, as a result of recent changes, when the 1994 and 1995 results come from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the form of the National School Statistics Collection Data, we might even find ourselves in first place. However, we are being very conservative in saying that we are the second best or second lowest, and that we have an almost 10 per cent lower or better student-teacher ratio than non-government schools in South Australia.

I am saying that the resourcing that we are providing to schools will mean that there is no reason why we cannot provide the best possible quality of education of any system in Australia. That is the position that the Government maintains and maintains strongly. We see quality as the important issue. OECD tables that relate, in essence, to what other States and Territories do are fine from an interest point of view—if you are an educational voyeur and you want to look at the statistics. However, we are interested South Australian students and South Australian schools. We want to look at how we do compared to the other States, and we

have the second best and the second lowest student-teacher ratio of all the States.

**Mr CLARKE:** In primary and secondary education we barely rank above Portugal.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** But you are talking about Australia. If I were the Commonwealth Minister—Simon Crean or Ross Free—come back and talk to me at Estimates. I can talk to you about South Australia's school system: that is what we are interested in and that is what this Estimates Committee is about.

**Mr CLARKE:** I want to deal with conditions of service for teachers.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Under what line?

**Mr CLARKE:** Page 57, under the heading 'Recurrent Payments'. In November 1993, the former Arnold Government negotiated and registered the first award for teachers in South Australia. The award and associated registered agreements covered existing conditions of employment and the *status quo* for educational standards, including those issues covered by the curriculum guarantee agreement entered into in 1989. It included country incentives and class sizes and the agreements were established to protect existing standards and to establish a base line for enterprise bargaining.

However, prior to the release of the Audit Commission report, the Government ceased negotiations on enterprise bargaining. Has the Government recommended enterprise bargaining discussions with SAIT and, if so, who is representing the department? What are the major issues? What progress is being made and will the negotiations be complete before the current award and agreements expire in 1995?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Discussions are going on Government-wide, or Public Service-wide, at the moment, as the honourable member would know. Until now, we and the agencies have been waiting to see whether or not there can be some resolution of the issues that have been taken up with the UTLC and the Department for Industrial Affairs, representing the Government.

I would like to see some of those issues resolved. We will then need to make a judgment as to when we then go into discussion and negotiation with the Institute of Teachers about a whole variety of issues, some of which we discussed this morning. I refer, in particular, to teacher staffing issues and issues like that, which clearly relate not only to the staffing of our schools but also to some of the conditions of employment for teachers.

**Mr CLARKE:** Who is representing the department?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have not gone into the formal negotiation stage with the Institute of Teachers as yet, so we do not need anyone to represent us.

**Mr CLARKE:** Do you anticipate that negotiations will be completed before the award and agreements made in 1993 expire in 1995?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** My understanding is that the award does not expire in 1995. The industrial agreement expires in January 1995 and the enterprise bargaining framework expires at the end of 1996. So, we will have to try to work within those frameworks. Certainly, I would hope to have resolved something before the end of 1996.

**Mr CLARKE:** I refer to the issue of the teachers' union seeking Federal award coverage, which is being hotly contested by the State Government. The legal costs are quite significant for the Government, particularly as a result of inviting a New South Wales silk to appear on its behalf. Will the costs associated with defending the Government's

position be deducted from the Education Department's budget?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No.

**Mr CLARKE:** Then it is purely being carried by a special allocation?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is a Government or Cabinet allocation.

**Mr CLARKE:** Have the conditions of service for metropolitan and country teachers been changed during 1994? Which changes to conditions of service for teachers recommended by the Audit Commission will the Government implement?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No changes have been implemented for 1994. I stated earlier that we will be responding to the Audit Commission recommendations no later than the end of October this year.

**Mr CLARKE:** As we wait with bated breath for next month, has your department got to the stage of putting together its views as to which Audit Commission recommendations will be accepted?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We are working solidly and assiduously. However, we have had to get over a few things like budgets, Estimates Committees, industrial cases and a range of other things like that. But, yes, officers are working on that and it will be a priority to have that prepared for October.

**Mr CLARKE:** Is the Minister concerned that proposals by his department to axe the four-year right of return for teachers who serve in country areas will make many schools very difficult to staff and is the Minister taking any action to ensure that alternative incentives are negotiated through the enterprise bargaining process?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I make it clear that the department does not have a policy of axing the four-year right of return. I think it was a recommendation, at least in part, from the Audit Commission. It may well be part of discussions, but it is certainly not a policy position of the department or the Government.

**Mr CLARKE:** I assume that we have to wait until October.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes, or perhaps later. It is the sort of issue that we may well want to discuss with the union as part of enterprise bargaining. The four-year right of return is, in effect, delivering every year between 200 and 250 surplus teachers in the metropolitan area. We have teachers coming back from the country to the city as a result of a guaranteed right of return and we have no teachers wanting to go to the country. So, every year we have to employ an extra 200 to 250 teachers to teach in the country and we have 250 too many teachers in the city. That is not a sensible way to run the system.

*Mr Brindal interjecting:*

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I know it was the way it was done previously. However, it is not a sensible way to run a system in that every year there are 200 teachers left over, which incurs a cost of \$10 million in surplus to formula teacher resources that must be paid for. In my judgment, that is not a sensible way to run a staffing policy. Somehow we have to tackle the issue and that is one of the issues we will have to talk about with the Institute of Teachers and other interested parties.

**Mr CLARKE:** Does the Government intend to increase the percentage of contract teachers in the work force?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes. I have indicated that I do not believe a system of 98 per cent permanent and 2 per cent

contract is a sensible proposition. Again, that is the sort of issue, at least in the short term, that we will need to discuss in the context of enterprise bargaining. My personal view is no secret, but we will need to consider the industrial agreements and enterprise bargaining framework arrangements and see whether or not the personal views of the Minister can be put in place.

**Mr CLARKE:** What are your personal views with respect to the percentage?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have just stated them.

**Mr CLARKE:** You must have an idea of the percentage.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I do not have a fixed percentage, but what we have at the moment with the current arrangement is 1 100 permanent teachers, in effect, being moved around the system in a temporary position. They are called PATs: Permanent Against Temporary positions. There are 1 100 out there being used, sometimes on a term by term basis, to fill in the gaps in the system all over the place, and it is not a good way of treating some of your best teachers; in effect, to dump them out of a school with the limited 10 year placement policy, make them a PAT for four years and send them from school to school on a term by term basis, as we do with some of them, when you have someone with expertise and excellence in teaching. Even the member for Ross Smith, if he were still running a union, would not want to treat his staff in that way, yet that is the way our system has treated some of our best teachers.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a supplementary question, the Minister has said that the 98 per cent to 2 per cent ratio is unacceptable from his point of view. What ratio does he, as Minister, believe is acceptable?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am not locking myself into a position, other than to say that we need more flexibility than the 2 per cent and, within the constraints of industrial agreements and enterprise bargaining frameworks and the like, we will need to see what flexibility greater than 98 to 2 per cent we are able to negotiate.

**Mr CLARKE:** Will the Minister rule out the imposition of a quota to restrict the number of teachers able to become eligible for the award of Advanced Skills Teacher 1?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is part of current arrangements. I understand that it is in the award, and that is the advice I have. There is a rigorous assessment criterion rather than a strict quota.

**Mr CLARKE:** What progress has been made in relation to the implementation of AST2 and AST3 with respect to teachers?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The advice I have is that at this stage we have only just worked out the general criteria for them. I do not think we can add anything else. I will ask the Director for Personnel, Ms Sleath, to indicate the position.

**Ms Sleath:** We have had working groups look at the criteria for AST2 and AST3, and we are looking at the outcomes of the AST1 implementation to guide us further on the implementation of those other classifications of 2 and 3. We would hope to be in a position, possibly next year, to move on 2s and 3s.

**Mr CLARKE:** What departmental resources will be made available to support these processes?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can bring back a reply on notice for the honourable member, but considerable resources are going into that AST1 process, in particular.

**Ms STEVENS:** I want to clarify something. You have ruled out that there will be a change in the arrangements: that

the AST1 award will not revert to a quota, a ceiling on the number of people obtaining that?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** All I am saying is that I am acknowledging the restrictions that a Minister has in the current environment. As I understand it, it is part of an award; I do not have the power to vary an award unless there is some agreement or someone makes some sort of decision. If I am not bound by an award, perhaps that is an issue we can discuss with the Institute of Teachers in the context of enterprise bargaining. Basically, in all these areas I would be saying that, if there is the opportunity to discuss things in the context of enterprise bargaining, we will do so, but if we are tied up and it is an award provision, then we are tied up.

**Ms Sleath:** The AST1 has no quota and the trade-off was a very rigorous assessment procedure. Either the department or the Institute of Teachers can instigate a review at any time if either believes that too many teachers or too few teachers are receiving that personal classification. At this stage, it is my understanding that DECS is quite pleased with the progress of assessment, and the Institute of Teachers has not initiated a review into how many teachers have been granted that personal classification.

**Ms STEVENS:** Why would there be a concern in the department at too many people gaining that classification, bearing in mind that they are already going through a rigorous process? Would that not be something to celebrate?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** To my knowledge, no-one in the department has expressed a concern.

**Ms Sleath:** That came from the Commission of Audit, but at this stage our team, who report to the personnel division and then to the Chief Executive, has no concerns about the number and the quality of teachers who are being granted that personal classification.

**Ms STEVENS:** I asked the question because you said there could be a review and that that would be one of the grounds for having a review. I wondered why that would be a ground for a review, if you have a very rigorous process and you are having a lot of people through it.

**Dr McPhail:** The award provides triggers for review from either side.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** For example, if the department had the view that the procedures were not as rigorous as they needed to be, and we found out that 95 per cent of our teachers were becoming AST1s—

**Ms STEVENS:** Would that not be possible?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It might be, but there may equally be people who think that not 95 per cent of our teachers ought to be in the AST1 category. I am not stating a view one way or another, other than saying that that would be a reason, I presume, why it was put in the award provisions, so that if there were a concern at any stage, that could be activated. Of course, there is a cost to Government and to the taxpayers in relation to this issue, so if you have 20 per cent of teachers who are ASTs as opposed to 95 per cent, there is a significant cost difference. They are issues.

**Ms STEVENS:** So the Minister cannot rule out that that situation will change? Will the quota remain?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There is not a quota. No decision has been taken or contemplated by me to change the current arrangements.

**Ms STEVENS:** Could the Minister provide us with information in relation to number of people who have gained in classification this year?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We have some information here which says that in 1993 there were 939 teachers assessed as

being successful and 165 assessed as being unsuccessful. The number of applications ineligible for assessment, 92; and still processing, seven. In 1994, comparatively, there were 112 assessed as successful, 14 assessed as unsuccessful, seven ineligible for assessment, and we are still processing 307. There are also other figures on the number of people who actually withdraw before going through the process.

**Ms STEVENS:** In the last few minutes before the dinner adjournment, I refer to an answer the Minister gave earlier about the staff in his office.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If the member would like to send me a letter or raise the matter with me privately, I would be happy to talk to her. But it is part of the miscellaneous lines, which we have voted on.

**Mr CLARKE:** I have a couple of specific local electorate matters that I would like to make some inquiries about. The Enfield Primary School has put in a request, which I have supported and which the Minister is aware of, for a school council. As the Minister is probably aware they were due to lose one for this year, at the end of last year, but were given a ministerial order to allow a school council to be present for 1994, and the school council was looking for a three year appointment. As the Minister is probably aware also, the Enfield Primary School has about an 80 to 85 per cent school card component as far as their school children are concerned. They have a very transient school population, partly due to the women's refuge home which is nearby and which supplies a number of children and, of course, that varies from week to week, month to month. It has been designated a disadvantaged school and it certainly does need the assistance of a school councillor to help those children. I am therefore asking the Minister whether or not the school council will be reappointed as per the request of the school council?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As I understand, the department has been extraordinarily generous to the Enfield Primary School, as the member has acknowledged. There are 70 school councillor positions for primary schools, to cover 450-odd primary and junior primary schools. We have not reduced the allocation; we have maintained the allocation of primary school counselling at 70, and the advice that I have been given is that special arrangements that were given to Enfield Primary School were for one year and therefore we are reverting to the normal arrangements for next year.

**Mr CLARKE:** So no school councillor?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No school councillor, that is right.

**Mr CLARKE:** As the Minister is aware, I have made representations to him regarding the Chromosomal Association and the provision of an additional two vehicles, to enable those teachers who are not employees of the Education Department but who nonetheless receive a grant from the Education Department in particular to service the needs of country children. At the moment those teachers are actually paying for their own transport costs out of their own wages.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That is part of the miscellaneous lines, which we have already voted on. I am prepared to respond to that in due course outside the restrictions of the Estimates Committee. I thought that I had written to the member on that.

**Mr CLARKE:** You acknowledged the letter.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is a miscellaneous budget line. We provided significant additional resource last year to bail them out of the particular problems that the Down's Syndrome Association was going through, and certainly there is not enough funding flexibility to provide significant additional sums of money. But we will consider it, and if the

letter has not come back to the member we will get back to him as soon as we can.

*[Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.]*

#### **Membership:**

The Hon. Lynn Arnold substituted for Mr De Laine.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Could the Minister get some information on what is happening with funding for schools in the Pitjantjatjara lands?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The existing policies and staffing practices that were implemented by the previous Government are continuing, so to my knowledge there is no significant difference.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** In the past couple of years we saw the development of (and it is not called the Pitjantjatjara education council) a concept of ownership by the local community of their schools. What information can be given about how that is going and what budget impact, if any, there will be as a result of that?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** To my knowledge, there is no impact on the staffing arrangements for the group of schools to which the member has referred, but we can check that. The arrangements that were being entered into in relation to local control will continue as they were under the previous Government. The financial management processes have been put in place to allow the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunjatjara education committee to have total control over prioritisation for development of education programs, and emphasis has been placed on greater effectiveness and efficiency of programs and expenditure. That is really a continuation of that process with which the honourable member would have been familiar under the previous Government.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Are specific training funds available for new teachers appointed to the Pitjantjatjara schools to learn the Pitjantjatjara or Yankunjatjara languages?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will take that question on notice.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I am interested not just in allowances for the teachers but in the cost to the Education Department of providing training in language skills to any new teachers. Some preparatory work was being done for some years, and I am not sure whether it is still being done, to enable new teachers appointed there to get some language skills in Pitjantjatjara particularly.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will take that question on notice and try to get a reply.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** There have been some changes in recent years in terms of what was referred to as bilingual education programs; in fact, that was something of a misnomer as to some of the programs that were taking place. There have been changes between some of the schools, and some schools were moving towards English as the main language of instruction. What is the present situation with respect to all the schools and the outstation schools in the Pitjantjatjara lands in terms of bilingual education or monolingual education in terms of English, or monolingual education in terms of Pitjantjatjara at the junior primary level?

**Dr McPhail:** The PYEC, the education committee, is quite adamant that the language of instruction should be English, because it believes that is the language of empowerment, it is the language of opportunity for their students. The Pitjantjatjara people themselves prefer to teach culture rather

than have our teachers involved in the transmission of culture. The bilingualism involved relates to Aboriginal English and English as much as anything else. However, the whole issue of pre-service training for teachers in Aboriginal culture is something that is being addressed on a broad front right across the organisation. However, we do provide training and development for teachers specifically working with Anangu groups through the Aboriginal education unit.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Some years ago a program was run through what is now the University of South Australia but in those days was the South Australian Colleague of Advanced Education called the Anangu Teacher Education Program that provided a program of maybe two or three years study that was one year short of a full teacher diploma. The aim was that graduates of that course would go to the Pitjantjatjara lands and teach in those schools. I have to say that, since it has been some years that I was directly involved in education, I am not sure whether that program still runs. If it still runs, is the Education Department providing employment opportunities to those teachers who are graduates of that course?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer to the question is 'Yes.' Fourteen Aboriginal graduates were placed in 1994: six permanent in A vacancies; four in permanent against temporary (PAT) positions; and four in contract positions.

**Dr McPhail:** There was an absolute shortage of Aboriginal graduates.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** As the Minister who introduced the policy of providing offers of employment to all successful Aboriginal graduates, I am pleased to hear that that program is still running. What resources will be available in the budget this year for the maintenance of Aboriginal languages in South Australia, and with which languages will those funds be dealing? I know of the support that is going to Pitjantjatjara, but what about Adnyamathanha, Ngarrindjeri, Kurna or any other languages that may be in focus? I would appreciate advice on that.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will take that on notice and bring back an answer.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** The Languages Other than English (LOTE) program that was put in place and commenced in the primary school level from 1985 was to see by 1995 that all primary school children were given access to a language other than English. Could I have a progress report on that and in particular what provision there is in this year's budget to enable the 1995 target to be reached?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That was a policy commitment of the previous Government and one we supported in Opposition, and we are on target to meet that. We have particular problems in some small rural communities. Last week I visited Warminda, a school on the West Coast, and was told that its allocation of LOTE hours was .025, and they did not feel that that would get them a Chinese teacher. We have problems in some country areas in relation to gaining access to qualified teachers in particular languages. There may well be a small number that we fall short on for that reason, not because of the budget resourcing question but because of supply.

I visited, in its first 12 months, a new school which put a strong view to us that it was trying to pull the place together and that there were so many things to do; and they asked whether this could be deferred for 12 months to enable the school to get up and going and establish staffing and the programs. So, there is a range of issues like that which we will have to address, but it will be a very small number of

schools. It is not a resource question; it is a variety of other issues like that.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Could some aggregating of figures be done to indicate what languages are being taught under the LOTE program? What year levels in aggregate are being covered by the program?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We can endeavour to do that. We have some brief information: 28 languages are being taught.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Are you able to estimate (if not now, later) the numbers of students with regard to those 28 languages?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We can attempt to do that. All I have here is the list of languages, not the numbers. Approximately 109 000 students in 1994 are studying a language. We can endeavour to get as much information as we can for the honourable member and bring back a reply.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I think the LOTE program is one of which we can be very proud collectively in South Australia. We certainly led the nation in it. Some concerns have been expressed by educators about the number of hours available in the program to a student and therefore the likely language outcomes for some students, namely, that they might not have enough exposure. Has there been an evaluation of the methodologies used in the LOTE program and an examination of the language outcomes for students?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There has been some initial evaluation. Part of our policy commitment was to conduct an independent review of the Language Other than English programs. That is something we are still considering. The arguments for such a review are exactly the arguments that the honourable member has put. Basically we offer 90 minutes or two lessons a week for students. There are those who argue that that is not the best way to see language acquisition amongst children, and there are a variety of other questions as well. We provide language through the non-instruction time component, which means that teachers in some schools have up to 400 to 500 students to work with, and they have to remember their names and assess them.

There are a variety of issues like that which I believe we need to consider as we move into what will be the next 10-year plan, from the year 1996 to the year 2005. I am still considering how we might conduct that review. I am advised that the introduction of curriculum statements and profiles, which cover the Language Other than English area, will enable some version of Statewide reporting of outcomes, depending on how they are to be structured and how that is undertaken. It is an important area. I am still considering what mechanism or process we ought to adopt to review where we have been, with the viewpoint not only of looking at where we have been but also of deciding how we can best tackle the next 10 years in relation to language development.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I thought I heard on the speaker in my office earlier today the good news that the Language and Multicultural Centre is being maintained. Am I correct in what I thought I heard?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** That is good. I am very pleased about that. I congratulate the Government on making that decision. Is the Minister able to give any information regarding the numbers of students and range of languages in the secondary level, and say whether or not there is any resource variation in this year's budget that is designed to promote an extension of such language teaching?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I understand that there are about 20 000 students in secondary schools studying a language

other than English. The most recent figures I saw from the Senior Secondary Assessment Board, which I think were 1992 or 1993 figures, indicated a percentage of students studying a language other than English at year 12 as a percentage of the total cohort. Year 12 students have dropped significantly over the passed five or six years. I think it has now dropped to about 11 per cent, when not too many years ago it was about 16 per cent. That is of concern to those who are wanting to see more young people not only taking on but also maintaining a language other than English.

One of the concerns is that we have had this Language Other than English policy in primary schools now for 10 years, and one would have hoped that there would be some flow-on of that. It is one of the issues that some people are putting (whether they are right or wrong I do not know): that perhaps what we are doing in primary schools does not encourage people to continue with their language. I suspect that that is not the case: I suspect that it involves a range of other issues—how our South Australian Certificate of Education is structured and the perceived difficulty of languages in the all-important aggregation of schools at year 12. I suspect that they are probably more important issues. We can try to get more comprehensive figures than that, if that is possible, as to particular languages. I know that they are available at year 12 as SSABSA produces those figures. We will look at the other issues and see whether we can bring back a more definitive response for the honourable member.

**Mr LEGGETT:** I refer to page 101 of the Program Estimates and the heading 'Provision of General Secondary Education in Schools'. Over the years there has been community concern about the effectiveness of student behaviour management in our schools. Will the Minister describe the steps he has taken to address this very important issue?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The Government announced in its budget package that it was looking to commit additional resources to the area of behaviour management—some \$2 million extra over two years. We would like to see an increase of about 50 per cent in the number of places in alternative learning centres or annexes in alternative schools. The message we have received loud and clear from teachers and principals is that when they arrive at the end of the behaviour management process at their school and there is meant to be a consequence of behaviour for a student, that is, exclusion from the school to somewhere else, they do not believe it is productive for them to be told that there is a long waiting list and no alternative location in a learning centre for that student.

We have heard that message from teachers, parents and principals, and we have put in the additional resourcing. There will be some increase in salaries for behaviour support staff operating out of the department to assist teachers in schools managing the small number of students with significant behavioural problems.

There will be some changes in the suspension, exclusion and expulsion policy of the department. We look to provide principals with the authority to expel students above the age of compulsion, and there will be two other changes, too, in the review currently being conducted of the department's behaviour management policy. So, there will be some policy changes. Importantly, increased resources are being provided as well to try to tackle what is an important issue in schools.

**Mr LEGGETT:** Along a similar line, still on page 101 of the Program Estimates, under 'Provision of general secondary education', I must say that concerns have been

expressed all over Australia about the apparent decline in the quality of physical education and sport programs in schools. What is the Minister doing to redress this situation in South Australia?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The Government shares the view of the Senate committee and various other interstate committees (the Monaggetti report in Victoria, for example) regarding the decline and importance of physical education and sport programs within schools. There is a lot of evidence which indicates that fitness and health programs within schools are important, not only from a health basis but also from an educational basis, and for young adults in particular. There is a range of programs that the Government is looking at. For example, the three year plan for the Education Department includes, for the first time, a commitment to physical education and sport as a priority.

The new curriculum statements and profiles within the health and physical education stream include a commitment to physical education and sport as important parts of the curriculum within schools nationally, but also within South Australia.

The Government has committed itself to maintaining the level of spending, which is around \$1 million a year, on sport and physical education programs in schools, without including a calculation of the salaries tied up with phys-ed teachers within schools. So, in a variety of ways, the Government is committed to expanding the options. We are considering a number of other options, and before the end of the year the Government would hope to be in a position to make a further announcement in the area of physical education and sport provision within schools.

**Mr SCALZI:** My question is in reference to services for remote and isolated children, page 102. Concerns have been expressed by parents of isolated children with respect to the level of the allowance. What response has the Minister made to these concerns?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The Government has acknowledged that. There was a lot of argument that we should have increased the State education allowance, and it should have been increased over recent years. The Government has taken the decision that the allowance, which is a little above \$700 at the moment, will be increased by \$100 this year and \$100 for the following two years. So, there will be approximately a 35 per cent to 40 per cent increase in the allowance to try to cater for the special circumstances of remote and isolated students.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Coming back to secondary language learning, one of the problems that was starting to develop with the success of the LOTE program at primary level was sometimes a mismatch between primary schools' languages and the secondary schools' language programs that the primary schools fed into. What work is being done to optimise the situation? Although I realise that the mismatch can never be totally eliminated, I guess that it can be somehow improved.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** There has been a lot of work done over recent years on the LOTE Map Project, as it is called, to try to wrinkle out the problems in transition from primary to secondary education, and that is continuing. It is a goal and commitment of the department to try to ensure that the LOTE Map Project enables as many primary school students as possible to continue their particular language choice at secondary schools.

The dilemma, of course, comes back to sometimes questions of what parents and local school communities want.

It may well be that the local high school is offering Japanese, but the local primary school may well want to offer Spanish. It is very difficult then. The LOTE Map Project might suggest that one or the other will have to give ground, and it is sometimes difficult to reconcile those differences.

It is a policy commitment of the department. The people in our language and multicultural area clearly do a lot of work there, but so, too, do our district superintendents in trying to ensure that we can allow transition from primary programs to secondary programs.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** In fact, the problem even gets more complex than that obviously where a secondary school draws perhaps from four primary schools and potentially all four could have a different language. The only way you could have a total perfect match is for the high school to have the four languages, and that is not a viable situation, except in a very limited number of our secondary schools.

One institution that has helped in this matter is the South Australian Secondary School of Languages. Has the budget for that school been maintained or have there been any variations to the budget for that school in this budget?

**Mr Boaden:** It would be the same for 1995. It is based on a formula allocation and, therefore, will increase per number of students. As the number of students rise the number of teachers will increase.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** So it is demand driven?

**Mr Boaden:** Yes.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Could we have some information as to what demand there has been, say, over the past couple of years?

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** That has been my feeling, but I would like to see that translated into figures that could be printed in *Hansard* rather than a non-verbal cue.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We would be happy to bring back a response, but the demand is obviously increasing and I am sure—

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Including the range of languages?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Certainly over the years it has; whether it has been in the last 12 months we will have to check. I visited SASSL earlier this year and they are increasing programs; they are offering them now in places like Hamilton Secondary College, and in a range of other sites as well. We would be happy to get the figures for the member and provide them.

**Ms STEVENS:** I have a supplementary question on that issue. Can you comment on the development of languages other than English that students can pick up from scratch at, say, stage 1 level? I cannot remember the term now—

**Mr Dellit:** Accelerated.

**Ms STEVENS:** That is right, accelerated academic courses.

**Mr Dellit:** Yes, it is an important factor of the SACE that students can select a language other than English that starts at year 11 and use that study to accumulate points for entry to higher education. The enrolment I would have to check, but I know that it is growing.

**Ms STEVENS:** How many different languages are there in that category now?

**Mr Dellit:** I would have to check that, too, but there would be well over 12.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Mr Chair, I would seek your guidance here and that of the Minister because it may

be that this is dealt with under a line that has already been voted upon, but grants to ethnic schools—

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member had a question and I have given an undertaken in other areas. If he would like either to indicate to me after the Committee meeting what he wants or write to me I would be happy to respond as expeditiously as possible.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I appreciate the Minister's cooperation on this matter. Is the Multicultural Education Coordinating Committee being continued, and what funds has it been allocated?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** That similarly is in lines that have been voted on. Again, I would be pleased to respond if the honourable member would like to see me after the Estimates Committee or correspond.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I am particularly pleased to hear that it has already been voted on because that confirms that it is still a ministerial committee advising the Minister direct and has not been reabsorbed into the department from which it was extracted some 12 years ago. There were rumours that it was going to be reabsorbed.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The member has been around long enough to know that he should never believe all the rumours he hears, and he will be pleased to know that is one that he does not have to believe.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Will the Minister provide information on the enrolments at the Kaurna Plains School?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will take it on notice and provide a response.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** In the process I would appreciate a break-down of the figures in terms of the primary and secondary component at the school.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will be happy to do that. I have a total figure here of 59 estimated in February of this year, but I would have to look at the breakdown. It is not a significant number.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I would appreciate a breakdown into the primary and secondary components. We dealt a while ago with schools in the Pitjantjatjara lands and briefly with the schools like Nepabunna and others with a different type of educational approach. What changes to programs have there been in this budget with respect to provision of educational support for Aboriginal children in schools in the metropolitan, peri-urban or provincial city schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I would have to take that question on notice and bring back a response. Consciously, as part of the budget process, we have not addressed any particular policy changes in that area, but I would be happy to prepare a response on the ongoing situation and bring back a reply.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** If aggregate figures of fulltime equivalents involved in such programs for this budget compared with last year can be extracted, I would appreciate that information.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am told that in relation to Aboriginal education generally, in 1993 a total of 270 Aboriginal people were employed in a range of roles, including over 100 AEWs, 53 teachers, and about 70 community people working as occasional instructors. My understanding is that that has not changed at all or significantly as a result of this budget, but we will check it and provide a response to the Leader.

I am not sure of the detail of the reasons, but if one looks at the Program Estimates, services for Aboriginal children, classroom instruction in schools, the actual number of



fulltime equivalents was 128.7 last year and this year it will be a significant increase to 163.5. As to the reasons and where they are being deployed I will bring back a response, but on the surface it appears that there is a significant increase in provision. Part of the reason is that the Aboriginal resource teachers now identified against this program were previously shown against primary and secondary. It is an accounting adjustment. It is a maintenance of the program rather than a significant increase.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** In an area related to language—English as a second language—what is the budget provision in the Education/Children's Services Department this year and how does it compare with the provision for last year? In particular can a breakdown be provided between the new arrivals element and the general support element?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will be happy to take it on notice. I do not think there has been a reduction to the program. I will be happy to provide information on the breakdown.

**Dr McPhail:** We provide 20 salaries for mother tongue maintenance.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I gather that it is partly demand driven also, so any further information provided would include comments on whether there has been any variation in demand, particularly in the new arrivals area.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will take it on notice and bring back a response for the Leader. I am told that new arrivals' programs are entirely demand driven and the majority Commonwealth funded.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** What range of languages are involved in the ESL work at this stage, as it is something that changes from period to period?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will take it on notice and bring back a reply.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I now turn to another area, the need for schools in outer urban areas that are growing rapidly. It was a concern of mine as Education Minister many years ago that the governmental or departmental response to rapid urban growth on the outer perimeter often lagged some years behind demand. Two or three years may not have meant much in the broad planning, but it means a lot if you are a family in an outer urban area and it looks as though there will be either no school available for your children or they will have to travel some distance to get to one, or there or will be a grossly over crowded school because the facilities will be inadequate for the number who want to go there. As the member for Taylor I face the situation again, unless provision is built in early enough for the growth areas of the western part of the city of Salisbury. Does the department have a strategy plan for the primary enrolment growth that can be expected as a result of the ongoing rapid development of the western part of the city of Salisbury? That is a particular question, but I would appreciate the answer also having a general component in dealing with equivalent such areas in other parts of the metropolitan area.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The answer is 'Yes.' The tentative forward capital works programs for the department incorporate provision for primary schooling in a number of areas such as Smithfield, Munno Para, and Gawler and other areas down south such as Sellicks, which is another potential growth area. As to the specific area west of Salisbury, I would have to take the question on notice and bring back a reply. The department clearly has learnt from the mistakes of the past if the Leader accurately reflects his time past and experience. The tentative forward capital works program includes a number of primary schools dotted across the

horizon as tentatively being required, should the future predictions of growth eventuate in certain areas.

**Mr LEGGETT:** I refer to page 101 of the Program Estimates, provision of general secondary education in schools. Today the Minister referred to the importance of student outcomes and we realise that the key contributor to this achievement is the quality of principal and teacher performance. What special steps are you taking to ensure effective staff performance?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The department has released a performance management policy, which is the first comprehensive policy to cover all staff within the department both in schools and within the department. An aspect of that is the use of performance statements for the first time on a trial basis in terms three and four for the selection of principals for principal positions. That will be reviewed in term one of next year before, hopefully, its wider extension for use not only in principal selection positions, but also in a range of other promotion positions. An aspect of the overall policy is a continuation of the previous Government's and department's managing poor performance program. There are some 20 or so teachers at varying stages, we estimate, on that program and that will be an important part of the ongoing performance management policy of the department.

Hopefully, in large part, the performance management will be developmental in that it will encourage the development of further skills and abilities of teachers in a positive fashion in discussion with their principal or line manager, if that happens to be someone other than the principal. Certainly, we see it as an important priority for the Government and the department that the new policy and resultant practices become part of the Department for Education and Children's Services culture over the coming years.

**Mr SCALZI:** I refer to the Program Estimates—Curriculum Services (page 103). One of the major curriculum changes occurring across Australia involves the introduction of the national standards and profiles. What is happening with this curriculum initiative in South Australia and has the Minister made any special budgetary provision?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The first stage of a three-year implementation program for the new curriculum statements and profiles for all primary and secondary schools will commence at the beginning of next year. They have been with schools this year as part of the familiarisation year for teachers. We again see it as a very significant educational program policy initiative. It will provide, for the first time, an agreed structure and framework for curriculum offerings right across the key learning areas in our primary and secondary schools. The Government acknowledges that significant additional resourcing will need to be provided to assist in training and development, to assist teachers in becoming familiar with the new procedures, and, importantly, in learning to make the best use of those statements and profiles for the benefit of the children. This budget contains a funding commitment of \$4.7 million over the next 2½ to three years to smooth the implementation process.

**Mr SCALZI:** In the recent budget the Government has announced the building of a new drama facility at Norwood-Morialta High School. Will the Minister describe the extent and cost of this work?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge the significant support and lobbying that the local member has provided to Norwood-Morialta in trying to get this project off the ground. Whilst it is an expanded capital works program, there were significant commitments floating around the system that did

not fit in, even to an expanded capital works budget of \$90 million for education and children's services. I acknowledge the local member's strong support for his school and I am sure those involved will be grateful for that.

The previous Government had given a commitment of some \$600 000 for the new drama facility at Norwood-Morialta. There was a strong view from the school that that would not be sufficient to do the job that it required in integrating the new facility with the existing buildings on the site. The Government has listened to those views and the views of others and has committed \$830 000 in the 1994-95 budget.

The drama facilities will be on the senior campus of the school, obviously. The scope of the works has been developed in conjunction with school representatives and, in particular, with members of the school's drama faculty. The facility will have the capacity to serve as a performance area, thus allowing for meeting the provisions of SACE without leaving the school site.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I refer to the Program Estimates at page 121—transport, in the area of primary and secondary education. I note that the broad objective is the efficient provision of transport or transport assistance to students required to travel more than five kilometres to school or the provision of special assistance in the case of students with disabilities to enable them to attend school and special centres.

I have a constituent who has a disabled child who is eligible for taxi travel to a school—Salisbury Park Primary School. However, this family has sought permission to have one of their other children also travel in the taxi to save the ridiculous situation of the taxi taking one child and the parent having to have a second car, since the father is at work, to take the other child. That has been ruled against. Instead, the option open to them is a travel allowance on a kilometre basis, where they get a refund per kilometre. But it is a modest amount, certainly not matching the amount for, say, a public servant's car allowance. It seems to me that this is a policy which for some time has needed some sympathetic reexamination. Has that taken place and, if not, will the Minister give the issue some further thought?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Has the honourable member corresponded with me on that issue?

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Not recently.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** At all?

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I have corresponded with—

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The previous Minister?

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** Yes.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** And what did she say to you?

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** It was not a good answer. That is why I am raising it tonight.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The issue has not been raised with me before. If the honourable member would like to dust off the letter he sent to the previous Minister and her reply, I will be happy to look at it. I cannot give a commitment; I am not sure what the implications are likely to be, but I am prepared to look at it.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** The Salisbury Park Primary School has an impressive facility for disabled children. However, they are now reaching an age where they need secondary school facilities and some provision is planned to be made at Salisbury High School for those students to continue their education there. What is the progress of that; what moneys have been expended and may still have to be expended?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** My understanding is that we either spent the money last year or that it is part of the 1994-95 budget. I will double check that for the honourable member, but the information I have states that a very small allocation of \$3 000 was made last year, \$570 000 is planned for this year and \$67 000 is planned for next year. I will double check those figures to ensure that they are correct, but it would seem to indicate that the program was started in a small way last year but is intended to be substantially completed this year.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** I turn to page 112 of the Program Estimates, which contains a table detailing the Performance Indicator—Apparent Retention Rates. I presume that that refers to year 12 age cohort retention rates. Is that correct?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Yes.

**The Hon. Lynn Arnold:** That being the case, I notice that the general trend line is improving, except that in 1993 there was a fall away from the 1992 figure—from 87.6 per cent down to 80.5 per cent.

It is always difficult to provide a generic explanation for the individual motivations of large numbers of students. However, is there some explanation that might be given for that fall away? Could it be regarded as a one-off event, and will the 1994 figure be expected to see a continuing improvement?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I understand that that has been a national trend and that all States have seen a drop in 1993 compared to 1992, but no definitive work has been done. The best guesses, both in South Australia and elsewhere, are that it is in part labour market related, that students or young adults have found work part time or full time, but there is also a view in South Australia that there may well be some judgment by students about the relative difficulty of the South Australian Certificate of Education in that they have found year 11 a bit tougher going than they thought it might have been and they have decided to do something else rather than to stay on.

The other thing is that it was a very significant jump in 1992 from 76 to 87 per cent, and whether that was artificially high for some reason, I am not sure. If there is some labour market component, one would expect, with the economic recovery commencing (and hopefully continuing), that we may well not see too much of a fall away. I am advised that there was a drop in adult re-entry and a drop in year 13 students also in that year which, again, may well be labour market related. If people have jobs, they are not necessarily contemplating going back to secondary school to complete year 12 or 13. The point I was going to make is that, if the recovery continues, it may well be that we will see, at least in the short term, a strong rebound from that position. There may well be a plateau level of around 80 to 85 per cent.

South Australia is still the second highest, with the ACT being higher, but the ACT probably has a 110 per cent retention rate because it attracts people from elsewhere. I do not see a strong rebound from that position, but time will tell.

**The Hon. LYNN ARNOLD:** The Minister referred to a similar trend in other States and seemed to be referring to some figures on that. Would it be possible for a schedule of those figures to be incorporated in *Hansard*, to see exactly how the trend has been going in other States as well?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We would be happy to do so.

**Ms STEVENS:** My question relates to page 60, 'Personal services'. There has been considerable anger and frustration amongst school services officers regarding the

lack of progress with their award implementation and the lack of information from the department regarding the whole process. As of 1 July 1994, there were approximately 1 000 assessments still to be made. I received a letter from a group of school services officers from a primary school in my electorate, and I quote from that letter as follows:

As a group we are outraged at the award implementation process and the time it is taking to complete the exercise. One SSO at our work site was interviewed by a project officer in an 'information gathering session' in June 1993. At the time of writing this letter [23 September] there has been no result from that exercise. One other SSO at [this] school, whose 'information gathering session' was held on the same day, received the letter of outcome on the last day of term 1 this year. Previously a School Assistant grade 2, this person is now an SSO level 1. This is seen as a downgrading of her status. Admittedly, we are invited to appeal if not satisfied. The mind boggles when contemplating the time that would take. There are still SSOs at this work site who are waiting to be interviewed. At these sessions one is expected to present a job description and duty statement based on duties performed as at December 1992. Anyone with knowledge of the working of schools will concede that duties can change from one year to another, depending on the needs of the school. Consequently, already many of these duty statements are outdated.

We believe that School Services Officers are the backbone of many schools, are often the only constants in an ever mobile school community, are generally 100 per cent committed to their jobs and their schools and are amongst the hardest workers in the Education Department. . . Since the beginning of the restructuring process we believe we have been given the runaround by the department and both unions involved in negotiations. There have been claims and counterclaims as to which group was responsible for the endless holdups. We have been led to believe that the process was twice put on hold while other more pressing matters were dealt with, that is, the GME Act award employee issue and TSPs. What message is that sending out to us. . . We believe that this farcical situation should be given top priority so that the whole process can be concluded as quickly and competently as is possible.

What priority does the Government have in relation to sorting out this situation so that these people can get on with their lives?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will ask Mr Boaden to add some detail, but I am advised that the new Government has given absolute priority to trying to resolve what has been an extraordinarily long and cumbersome process arrived at between the previous Government and the unions involved in representing the SSOs. I am told that we currently have nine officers working full bore trying to handle this whole process of reclassifications. I am told that as at 8 August 1994 all 1 400 implementation interviews had been completed and 600 assessment decisions made. Of the 1 600 applications for reclassification, 200 reclassification interviews are still to be done and 300 submissions from applicants are outstanding. This issue was raised recently in the Parliament. The process was negotiated between the unions and the previous Government, and we are left to work through what is an extraordinarily difficult and cumbersome process.

All these 3 700 School Services Officers must be interviewed to work out exactly what their job descriptions are and a variety of other things, then classifications have to be made. There are protections there as part of the award provision for people, if they are reclassified, to protect their salaries, but the process that was arrived at is a process that we now have to live with. We are devoting considerable resources—nine staff working, as I said, full time and full bore on it—to try to resolve it as quickly as we can from the viewpoint of the staff involved. Priority has been given to it, and we understand the concerns of the staff involved. They are genuine, and I acknowledge and understand their

frustration, but Mr Boaden might be able to give you some indication.

**Mr Boaden:** The first round of translations, the process you have alluded to, will be completed by 30 September. That is, all people will be reclassified and notified of their reclassification, and the appeals process will then start. It is our estimation that, by bringing on 15 panels to do the actual appeals, we would hope to have them completed by 23 December this year. A very high priority has been given this particular process. The major problem we have had previously is to try to get some agreement with the unions about descriptions of jobs that will actually form a basis for those reclassifications, which they refer to as the PIDS, and that has taken literally months and months to negotiate. It was over 12 months actually to get those PIDS negotiated to form the basis for the classification.

**Ms STEVENS:** What extra resources will be available for schools undergoing restructuring, including closure and amalgamation?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We will look at each case as sensitively and flexibly as we can. There has been an understanding that when schools go through amalgamation the department provides at least for the short-term, and certainly for the first year, some ongoing assistance. Generally, the schools are staffed as separate schools for the first year, so we will look at it as sensibly and as flexibly as we can. In the case of the Elizabeth/Fremont merger, which will be of some interest to the member for Elizabeth, I understand that some negotiation is going on at the moment. We have not concluded a final view on that but, again, we will try to handle it as sensitively and flexibly and we can, given the needs of the schools involved.

**Ms STEVENS:** In the past there was also the existence of a restructuring fund from which extra staffing resources were taken for schools that were amalgamating. Does that fund exist now?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I do not know whether a fund existed. When I talk about sensitively and flexibly, looking at salaries, that is the sort of bucket of salaries that we are looking at. As I said, we have not concluded a view in relation to Elizabeth and Fremont. There have been some discussions ongoing there, and we will try to come to an early resolution of that. Just to confirm: there is a small bucket of salaries that we use for those sorts of restructuring arrangements.

**Ms STEVENS:** So the extra would come out of that bucket?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If we make that decision, yes.

**Ms STEVENS:** Can the Minister tell me what the estimated student number total is for the fully amalgamated schools of Elizabeth City and Fremont?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We might have to get that number for you. I have seen varying estimates, I must confess. Perhaps we can take that on notice. Some estimates have been just over 1 000 and some just under 1 000, depending on the assumptions that you make. This is for next year you are talking about?

**Ms STEVENS:** And certainly the year after when they are on the one site.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** One of the dilemmas that certainly I found in my experience in Opposition is that when you make decisions about amalgamation of schools and you assume people will go to a particular school, for a variety of reasons they sometimes do not go there. So if you make the judgment that you add the two together and they will all be

at one school, more often than not that does not turn out to be the case and some have made other decisions about where they will go. However, we will do our best guess estimates for the member and bring back a reply.

**Ms STEVENS:** We would certainly like to know the figure that resourcing in terms of facilities and planning is based on.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The Chief Executive Officer points out to me that if you add together the two sums at the moment it is about 1 100. As I indicated, there is always some leakage when there are amalgamations and it is a question of trying to estimate the extent of the leakage and, in part, that will depend on the ongoing attitude, as the member will know, of the Fremont community towards going across to Elizabeth City.

**Ms STEVENS:** There are currently four special interest music schools, Fremont, Woodville, Brighton and Marryatville. Earlier estimates signalled that these schools would need to justify the extra four salaries allocated to them, to provide a wide range of extra programs. Included in the salaries for all these schools is one substantive deputy principal, a coordinator and two teaching positions. Will the Minister rule out any decrease in the staffing allocation to these schools for 1995?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It was part of the budget announcement, ruling that out for 1995 and indicating that I intended to have a review of staffing of special interest schools.

**Ms STEVENS:** What functions or requirements for goods and services have been contracted out following the audit report and the Financial Statement, which both carry the theme that the Government should divest itself of those services that can best be performed by the private sector?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No decisions have been taken as yet in relation to outsourcing or contracting out in the Department for Education and Children's Services subsequent to the Audit Commission report.

**Ms STEVENS:** Has the Minister's department been complying with the commitment given on page 30 of the June Financial Statement to market testing, to identify and contract out functions that are more efficiently conducted on the open market and, if so, who is undertaking this market testing, how is it being done and who decides what functions will be outsourced?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am not familiar with that statement from the Financial Statement, but in relation to the whole question of outsourcing we will be considering one of the recommendations of the Audit Commission which was the outsourcing of the payroll section, for example, of the Department for Education and Children's Services; but no decision has been taken in that area. Information technology will, I presume, be at least in part potentially tied up with the recent announcements made by the Government in the last two or three days. We will just have to wait for that to settle down to see what the implications might be for Education and Children's Services. I indicated in response to questions earlier today that in some areas like speech pathology and assessment services we are looking at some alternative means of delivering those, which might include in a small way the delivery of services by contracting out to the private sector, but that is relatively small.

**Ms STEVENS:** I would like to ask a series of questions in relation to the early years strategy. I want to start with the extra speech pathology services that the Minister just referred to and also to the extra assessment services provided by

psychologists. Can the Minister detail the increases in the level and quality of those two services?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have answered that. I refer the member for Elizabeth to an answer I gave earlier to the member for Spence.

**Ms STEVENS:** I move further down to the reading recovery program. How will the 50 schools that will be given the grants of \$2 000 each to introduce the programs be identified? What will the \$2 000 cover? How will the schools manage the implementation of the reading recovery program, bearing in mind that it also requires a further staffing component?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As the member will know, we visited two of her schools which are at the forefront of the delivery of the reading recovery program. If I can answer the second part of the question first, one of them has been very innovative in the way it is carrying on the delivery of the reading recovery program and covering the recurrent costs in doing so of a good number of students at that particular school. So there will have to be a range of strategies. Clearly, I think the system has much to learn from one of the schools in particular in the member's electorate that is pretty far advanced in relation to reading recovery. In relation to the \$2 000, that is an issue that is subject to ongoing discussion with the department and with others. As I indicated to the member I think last week, there are some who are putting the view to me that maybe we should have a smaller number of schools with a larger sum of money, maybe 30 lots of \$3 000, or whatever. We are looking at that. That will be the subject of some discussion in the coming weeks with departmental officers and with others, and we will conclude the detail as to how we would see the program operating.

Certainly, once we conclude those discussions, participation would be on a voluntary basis. We do not want schools to undertake, and nor would it be sensible for schools to undertake, the reading recovery program if it was something with which they were not comfortable. Again, we would be looking for expressions of interests. Given the number of letters I have had from school councils over the years, I suspect it will be a question of selecting from amongst a number of schools rather than struggling to find some who want to participate.

**Ms STEVENS:** As the Minister would know, the schools with which we spoke last Friday mentioned that they needed at least a .4 staffing component to deliver the program. Both those schools took that component out of their tier 2 staffing for school card or social justice salary. How does the Minister see this program being staffed in schools that have no such staffing component or find it necessary to use that staffing component in a different way?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As the honourable member would know, we discussed that issue because those schools in particular that get the school card or social justice salary would be able to use their .3 or .4 staffing component, together with some other innovative techniques, to free up time to allow the continued provision of one-to-one, or in one of the schools one-to-six, reading recovery time. We are protecting that bucket of 70 social justice salaries. I do not know what the average is, but if it works out to .3s and .4s, clearly we are talking about a reasonable number of schools.

The dilemma will be as to how those schools that do not get tier 2 staffing will be able to continue to offer the program after we have trained the teacher. That will require further discussion with departmental officers and with others to see what sorts of techniques, methodologies or strategies those

schools can adopt to continue with the program once they have had a teacher trained.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Minister stated in his press release:

The Government is committed to making the early years of education the No. 1 priority.

Why is staffing for initiatives in this area not part of the mainstream allocation to all schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** In the end, the bottom line is that it is a question of resources. We have committed ourselves to at least \$10 million over the next four years. As I said earlier, we hope to do a little more later on if the economy turns around. That is the allocation. It is a significant additional commitment for this program at a time of reductions elsewhere. That justifies our claim that we see it as the No. 1 priority for the department. If we can find additional resources, we will do so, but at least in the interim we will have to work with what we have as cleverly as we can to get the maximum benefit for the children.

**Ms STEVENS:** The reading recovery program is only one literacy approach. There are a range of other approaches, some of which are operating within the department. What funding and resourcing is the Minister's Government giving to the other approaches?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Again, that will be the subject of some discussion in the next few weeks. As I indicated to the honourable member last week, we will be looking at funding a range of programs in this area, not just reading recovery. We then want to establish some sort of ongoing mechanism for evaluation of those programs over a fair length of time so that we can then make a judgment after, say, two or three years, as to what has been the most effective program in terms of improved student learning outcomes, so that we can indicate to schools, 'Here is a package of programs which has been most successful in improving student learning outcomes in the early years.' So, we will be looking at a range of other programs, including the funding of existing practices within some of our junior primary schools.

**Ms STEVENS:** Will the Minister provide specific details about the other programs to which he has just referred and say to what extent he is intending to fund them?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** No decisions have been taken as yet in relation to that. As soon as we make some decisions, I would be pleased to share them with the member for Elizabeth and schools as well.

**Ms STEVENS:** So, no decisions have been made in relation to the range of programs, the funding or both?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The funding is there; it is part of the \$2.7 million total for the early years strategy, and it is a component of that which we are talking about here. But we are still looking at the range of programs over and above reading recovery. One or two of our schools are looking at the Western Australia based First Steps program.

I understand that Ceduna wants to conduct a pilot program, using the First Steps program, based on what it sees as the successful experience of the Crossways Lutheran School in Ceduna. That may well be one that we would contemplate. We would look at a range of programs and see what we could do.

**Ms STEVENS:** The Minister talks about a major initiative for training and development for classroom teachers in identifying and helping students with learning difficulties. Can he expand upon this and tell us what the resourcing implications are?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** At this stage, I cannot offer much more than that which I indicated to the member last week when we discussed this issue. We see this as an important component of the early years strategy. In effect, it arms our classroom teachers with the additional skills to identify the students with learning difficulties but, more importantly, in a classroom of 25 to 30 students, to tackle that small number of students with learning difficulties. As the honourable member would know from some of the classroom teachers who have been through the reading recovery training development program, a number of those teachers said to us that they considered themselves good teachers but, having undergone the training and development in this specialised area, they believed that their skills in this area had increased immeasurably.

Those teachers told us how much more confident they felt in tackling these important issues in the classroom as well as in the special program. They also said that that had also flown across with a ripple like effect to other staff at the school who had not necessarily undergone the program but had picked up some of the techniques and methodologies that those teachers had developed. We see it as a significant component. Again, when we have concluded all the discussions on the early years strategy, we will release the details of the extent and the funding of that. That comes as part of the \$2.7 million early years strategy funding package that has been announced in the budget.

**Ms STEVENS:** What is the time line on that?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** We would want to finalise that within the next few weeks so that we could commence the program next year.

#### Membership:

Mr De Laine substituted for the Hon. Lynn Arnold.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I refer to the Program Estimates (page 102) and to the area of the socio-economically disadvantaged—classroom instruction. I note that in the period before the Minister became Minister, in the 1993-94 financial year, there was a drop in classroom instructional teachers from 41.4 full-time equivalents to 14.6 full-time equivalents. In view of the last Government's much touted hurrah about social justice, why would they have budgeted for 41.4 full-time equivalent instructional teachers in classrooms and produce only 14.6 by the end of that financial year?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I understand that it is in part an accounting adjustment. It is a change in Commonwealth funding from salaries to grants. We actually give grants to schools now rather than provide salaries. There are still roughly equivalent sums of money going to schools, but we provide the grant and not the salary to schools.

**Dr McPhail:** We supply an allocation of funds to the school as part of the Disadvantaged Schools Program. They then advise us what staff they want and describe the positions, and we fill the position for them. It is grant based, not salary based.

**Mr BRINDAL:** Is the cheque generated from the school or the department? If it is generated from the department, does the money transfer into the school account and back into the department? What is the accounting procedure for the money?

**Dr McPhail:** It is accounted for, and there is a physical exchange of cheques.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I understand that there has been a review of the Country Areas Program, that a working party was set up to describe the basis of the previous program and that

membership of that working party consisted of members who had previously been on working parties which had before this time fixed the program. I believe that some very influential members of your staff were involved in the very early days in fixing which schools should be in the Country Areas Program. Did the working party ever discover the files which were the basis for the previous decisions on which schools were declared? Which schools are currently declared? Can the Minister explain the variations which now occur and say why the previous list apparently was considered to have been non-cerebrally arrived at?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I acknowledge the honourable member's past and ongoing interest in the Country Areas Program. I understand his views in relation to the recent review of the program. We have found some files and information. I am not sure whether that is all the files and information to which the honourable member refers. I think the debate has moved on now to a question of the current review. Currently, a little over 100 schools are on the program. The new committee has recommended a continuation at the same level of money but roughly the same number of schools—a little over 100.

The dilemma is that it is recommending that up to 10 or 15 schools come out of the program and 10 to 15 schools go into the program. That is always a difficult issue for those schools which are going out of the program, but not quite so difficult for those that are going into it.

There has been strong opposition from Peterborough, and I can understand that. They see themselves as a disadvantaged community. They do not accept the view that that disadvantage is covered under the Disadvantaged Schools Program rather than the Country Areas Program. I have indicated publicly and in the Parliament that I am considering the recommendations of the review committee and hope to make a decision in the not too distant future.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I remind the Minister of an answer to one of the questions posed by the Opposition today to which the CSO said that there were a number of grants for multicultural purposes and for what I presume was a bilingual program at basically a preschool level within Aboriginal communities. In relation to the Pitjantjatjara lands, is it still a policy of your department to continue bilingual instruction and, if it is, to what year level? Is there printed matter in relation to this?

In previous years there has been some questioning in relation to this. At one stage the teachers in the Pitjantjatjara lands were very strongly in favour of bilingual programs. I believe that the debate moved on, and the community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands expressed the opinion that they did not want bilingual programs taught, certainly in primary and secondary schools. I am seeking clarification as to whether the CSO is doing this as an early childhood experience, how that factors into primary and post-primary education and whether a bilingual program is still conducted, especially in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands of the North-West.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** A similar question (not exactly the same) was asked earlier by the Leader of the Opposition, when there was a very interesting exchange between the Chief Executive Officer and the Leader of the Opposition. In the end, we undertook to provide further information to the Committee. I understand the sentiments that have been expressed by the honourable member, because those same sentiments have been expressed to me. It is an important policy issue that the Government and the department will need to address.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer again to the Fremont High School amalgamation and the \$3.25 million that has been allocated for the capital works involved in that project. As you know, this amalgamation came about as a result of long consultation in the Elizabeth-Munno Para area about secondary education. The recommendation that the Inbarendi Board made to you earlier this year was that Fremont High School should be relocated to the Elizabeth City site and rebuilt as an eight to 10 school. Your decision to amalgamate those two schools has changed from the board's recommendation.

I want to talk about the amount of money involved. Elizabeth City High School has been undergoing refurbishment; it has had its first stage and \$1.9 million still is to be spent for it to be completed. When discussions were occurring in relation to the possible costings on a relocated Fremont eight to 10, the figures that were being discussed last year were between \$4 million and \$5 million. That makes the figure somewhere between \$6 million and \$7 million all up. I understand that some reduction would be expected by amalgamating those two sites.

However, when it goes right down to \$3.25 million, the cut is of the order of \$2 million to \$3 million and it is quite significant. Out of the \$3.25 million, as I said before, \$1.9 million goes to Elizabeth city and the remainder is needed to build the specialist music centre, with the drama centre adjacent to it, and you have indicated the provision of a 200 seat audience space. There are also other things that will need to be provided on that site, in terms of classroom areas. There is great concern now that the total provision, after all this time, will be less than excellent in relation to the students in those schools. Does the Minister agree that this is a considerable cut of funds, and can he give any assurance at all about whether there would be any way that more funds could be available to provide the additional facilities that are required there?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The first point to make is that the advice provided to me is that the previous option that was being considered, and being recommended by some, to have two separate high schools on the one site, involved a considerable duplication of facilities and quite expensive facilities as well, such as laboratories. The estimate that has been given to me by the experts within the department is that the removal of the duplication of these facilities by amalgamating, rather than having two schools with two principals on the one site, has led to approximately \$2 million worth of savings by not, in effect, duplicating the facilities. A very significant sum is saved by making a policy decision, which I did, saying that it did not make sense to me to have two separate schools duplicating facilities on the same site with two principals. So, we made the policy decision that there would be one school with one principal sharing the same facilities and the estimate is that that will save \$2 million of taxpayers' money.

The other point that needs to be borne in mind when one compares the previous estimates is that the department was originally considering, and certainly some people in the local community were considering, that we might have to provide for 1 200 to 1 300 students on the amalgamated site. The most recent estimates that I have seen, once we settle down after the first year in particular, are for considerably fewer than that number. These estimates are always difficult and I am not, therefore, necessarily placing any great weight on any particular one, but some of the estimates go as low as 800 to 900, eventually settling down as a stable enrolment population on that site. If you are looking at the difference between

800 to 900 students and 1 200 odd students, you are talking about significant capital cost savings on any site. What I am saying to the member is that she needs to make a judgment. It is a difficult situation out there, but I would hope that, having considered it, the member would do what she could to allay the concerns of her constituents. We are not looking at something less than excellent; we are not short changing her constituents. We are looking at a sensible provision of quality educational facilities on top of the \$2 million to \$2.5 million that has recently been spent on the upgrade of Elizabeth city. As the member will know, they are excellent facilities that the previous Government upgraded. We will be looking at almost \$6 million then in a short space of time having been spent on that particular school in upgrading their facilities and providing the specialist music performance suite that the Fremont community has long wanted. There has been the \$2 million saving in reduction of duplication, and also the saving because the numbers out there look to be significantly fewer than was being predicted at the time of the \$4 million to \$5 million. At one stage they were talking about \$8 million for the separate Fremont school—that came back down to \$4 million to \$5 million—as well as the \$1.9 million for the Elizabeth city upgrade. It is an important issue and certainly the Government is not looking at short changing the constituents. We believe they will be provided with facilities virtually as good as any other school, other than a newly built school in the metropolitan area.

**Ms STEVENS:** I was contacted last night by the Chairperson of the Fremont High School Council, whom you know well, in relation to his concerns about this very issue. He made the point that there is \$1.35 million left out of \$3.25 million minus \$1.9 million. He said that Fremont had been informed that they would only get standard school music facilities. They are very concerned that, in fact, they will not get the same level of facilities that exist, for example, at Brighton High School and at Marryatville High School, two of the other special music schools. Can the Minister give any undertaking about the level of provision for the special music centre at the newly amalgamated Fremont and Elizabeth city in relation to those other two schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** You can tell Mr Colwyn Low that the Marryatville High School Council would be delighted at the prospect of getting a \$1 million plus facility because they believe they are a specialist music school and they do not have a specialist facility.

**Ms STEVENS:** Brighton High School?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I am not sure about Brighton High School, but certainly Marryatville High School. Mr Colwyn Low and others ought to have a look at some of the facilities that are provided at some of the other high schools. The sum of \$1.5 million is not a standard provision for a music drama suite in a high school—it is above standard provision. The ballpark figure we talk about is approximately \$700 000 for a music performance suite for a standard school. We have looked at one tonight in relation to Norwood-Morialta which is a bit higher but that is because of the particular site difficulties and the fact that they wanted to link that in with the existing buildings and that therefore costs a little more. The standard facility is approximately \$700 000. So, I am not sure whether Mr Colwyn Low would like to indicate to me who had indicated to him that he is only getting standard provision, then I will be prepared to follow that through. It was quite clear in the announcement what the sum of money was for this particular facility. Whether it is the best in the State and the nation, I do not know because I am not an

expert on all the provisions, but certainly it is better than some of the other schools.

**Ms STEVENS:** In relation to that, you mentioned \$700 000 as the standard provision. What they say, of course, is that they are a special music school, they need many more special instrument rooms plus there is the 200 seat space, plus there are the other facilities at the other amalgamated school that all need to come out of the \$1.35 million that is left. That is the issue and that is why in discussion with facilities officers, because there are other things to do at the school, that has come back a bit in relation to special music.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The advice I have is that the ballpark figure we are looking at is a little over \$1 million for the specialist music performance drama teaching facility, which includes some rooms for additional instruction in those areas. I can only repeat, it is almost 40 per cent higher than approximately the standard provision for other schools. If there is a particular problem that Mr Low has, he knows my number or he can write to me. I am happy to meet with him and talk through his particular concerns.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I would like to draw your attention to page 102 of the Estimates of Payments and Receipts, again the line dealing with services for remote and isolated children. I believe that the position of the principal of the open access college is coming up this year. The Minister will recall in previous years some questions were asked either in the House or Estimates because when the job was last advertised there was no special criteria with a knowledge of distance learning techniques or experience with children studying by distance learning techniques or by any requirement for open learning type experience. The Minister will recall a very valuable educator who is now serving I believe in New South Wales as a result of that process. What I seek on behalf of the ICPA, the Isolated Children's Parents Organisation, is an assurance from the Minister that if and when the position is advertised again the Minister will give due cognisance to the fact that there is a school that provides a very valuable service to remote and isolated children. One of the essential criteria should not be an ability to administer, but an ability to teach and teach children from difficult and exceptional circumstances. I would hope that one of the essential criteria would be something to do with knowledge of distance education and distance education techniques. I ask the Minister for clarification on that matter.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will take that question on notice and bring back a response. I understand the concerns the honourable member has outlined. The position will become vacant next year and I will certainly take advice from the department in relation to the job and person specifications for the position. I share the view that clearly some knowledge and experience of the area would be required. That, of course, would not preclude the current incumbent, as the member would acknowledge, who has spent some three or four years directing the open access college. I will take advice from the department and take the rest of the honourable member's question on notice.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I refer to the same line and seek clarification. Every year I have been interested in this and other lines such as the socio-economically disadvantaged. They list an employment average of full-time equivalents and, if we look at classroom instruction for schools under 'services for remote and isolated children', it lists 143.5 estimated and actual of 132.9 full-time equivalents. It has always intrigued me as to how that number is arrived at. Are they the numbers from the open access college combined with those especially

appointed as part of the country areas program or what other criteria is used? Schools in areas like the Pitjantjatjara lands, Coober Pedy, Cooke and Oak Valley are clearly remote and isolated schools, but I do not think that that number can in any way equate to the staffing of schools that are remote and isolated. How are those figures arrived at and what do they include? Is it the open access college or school of the air? Similarly, for the socio-economically disadvantaged. Where are the 41 employed, is it simply people employed through the priority projects program or those also employed through the social justice grants? What is the basis for the figures?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will ask Mr Boaden to respond.

**Mr Boaden:** To take the 140, the difference between full-time equivalents and actuals is the fact that we did most of the staffing on full-time equivalents. You could have 10 staff, equal to 7.8 full-time equivalents. The figure covers the School of the Air at Port Augusta and the open access college in total, which includes the teaching component for the open access college and the materials development component, because the college produces a lot of materials for isolated children programs also and for other students involved in the program. It is the total staffing figure that comes under the open access group?

**Mr BRINDAL:** So therefore it does not include the teaching staff in schools that are classified remote or isolated and does not include any special needs component staffing for a school because it is remote and isolated?

**Mr Boaden:** It includes a group of itinerant teachers who work from the School of the Air and therefore visit students in isolated communities. It does not include Aboriginal or remote schools that are separately staffed out of the normal teacher bucket.

**Mr BRINDAL:** And it would not therefore include the itinerant teachers who are probably still paid for by PCEP but staffed out of those schools. Tarcoola had a Host Schools Teacher.

**Mr Boaden:** That is correct and they come out of the country assistance program rather than out of the open access program.

**Mr BRINDAL:** I was looking at the full-time equivalent figures and, while there is an obvious reduction of approximately 400, it appears, if we look at page 101, services to children and students in multi-cultural education, services to Aboriginal children on the same page, and, on the next page, provision of support for children with special needs, services for remote and isolated, the figures respectively represent increases over last year's budgeted figures of 15.5, 80.2 and 172.7. That suggests that, while there has been some decrease in teaching across primary, secondary and general classroom instruction, there has been a real commitment by this Government into the social justice components of this budget, which traditionally have been identified by the former Government. Will the Minister confirm that he has a continuing and ongoing priority for areas of social justice within his department and that my mathematics is somewhere correct?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** It is a very insightful comment by the member for Unley. It is true that important programs like multicultural education, programs for Aboriginal children and a range of other programs for the remote and isolated have been protected as we have protected the special education bucket of salaries, the social justice schoolcard bucket of salaries and the open access bucket of salaries for students in country communities. Those important buckets of salaries have been protected to ensure the continuation of what we see as important programs.

**Ms STEVENS:** I refer to violence in schools. As we all would know, there has been a disturbing level of violence in our schools and in recent weeks and months there have been some disturbing examples that have been extremely traumatic.

*Mr Brindal interjecting:*

**Ms STEVENS:** No. It does not detract from the question. Violence exists within schools between students and from students towards staff. There is also the issue of violence that arises from members of the community coming onto school sites, either physical violence or abuse to both students and teachers. What strategies is the Government proposing to implement to combat increasing violence in schools?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I thank the member for her question and frank assessment. She would be well aware, as a former principal, of the problem of violence and behaviour problems in schools. We are not just talking about student to student or student to teacher but, sadly, as we have seen in recent weeks, outsiders coming onto school premises and causing particular problems. There are a range of strategies that are essentially short term. The long term work importantly needs to be done in the junior primary years in trying to develop sensible behaviour patterns amongst young boys and girls to try to convince them that the constant diet they get of violence, whether on television, in movies or in the community generally, is not the most productive way to resolve their problems.

As the honourable member would know, a range of strategies is being adopted in junior primary schools and in primary schools to try to develop that culture of thinking amongst our junior primary and primary age students. There is a lot of learned work going on in seminars all around the world at the moment about bullying and harassment and how we might best tackle that. A lot of work is being done, in the early years again, to try to resolve some of those issues.

Once we get into the secondary area we are essentially, but not completely, becoming reactive in trying to solve the problems. I made some earlier comments in relation to the behaviour management policy. It is one of the strategies that we believe importantly will serve to try to protect some teachers and students from the violent behaviour of other students.

Young people in particular know that if they push right to the limit, whether it be in the family situation or at school, something is meant to happen. There is meant to be a consequence for their actions, and if that consequence does not arrive they then know that they have either their parents or school leaders on toast in that they can then continue to push with impunity.

In the school case, one is meant to be excluded from the school for a period of up to 10 weeks to a learning centre, where one works in a small group with a specialist trying to modify one's behaviour for return to the school. If that does not happen then those young people know that it is on for young and old within the school environment. Those consequences for their actions are not forthcoming, so they will push and push.

The range of strategies that we announced earlier clearly will be very important in trying to tackle that issue. A review of our behaviour management policy is being undertaken. I am also told that there is an Institute of Teachers departmental violence in schools committee, which was initiated by SAIT in October 1992 and whose purpose is to ensure better protection for staff in schools. It has had a two-year and



chequered history. I am also told that the final meeting of the committee is meant to be today—14 September. The working parties will make recommendations to the Executive Director to pass onto the CEO.

The Executive Director of School Operation, Glensys Hancock, has said that she was not able to be at the meeting today because she was otherwise required here. If we had known that, I am sure that we could have got dispensation to send her to what was meant to be the final meeting. I am unsure what the committee is recommending; I have not seen the report yet and I await it with interest.

There is a range of short-term and medium-term strategies. However, the most productive area and some of the work that hopefully we can try to do is with the young children in junior primary and primary schools to try to change their attitude that violence is a way of solving their problems.

**Ms STEVENS:** I thank the Minister for that answer and I appreciate that that is his approach in tackling the long-term issues. However, it does not do much in terms of the problems that schools have in relation to outsiders coming onto campuses. That is something that people are facing more and more on a day-to-day basis. It seems to me that other strategies need to be put in place. Can the Minister comment?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** If the honourable member has some suggestions, I am willing to listen and more than prepared to talk to her about the issue. We had the recent incident at a western suburbs high school and for a week or two weeks we had a security guard patrolling those premises. However, I think that the notion that we can have permanent security staff patrolling our 200 secondary schools is foreign to the South Australian education school culture. The notion that we have 10ft high fences with barbed wire on the top and security gates is also foreign to the South Australian education culture.

It is an extraordinarily difficult task, in terms of what are relatively isolated incidents of outsiders coming in and perpetrating acts of violence on staff, to cover all those situations. If the honourable member has some suggestions that are relatively inexpensive, if I can put it that way—or ‘resource benign’, as the Chief Executive Officer suggests—then I am more than prepared to talk about them. It is a difficult issue. I am hoping that this two-year committee, which is having its final meeting today, will come up with much good work and many suggestions in relation to violence.

**Ms STEVENS:** As a result of the staff cuts introduced through this budget, what will be the effect of the increases in class sizes and the decrease in leadership positions (for example, the assistant principal positions, which carry the responsibility for student management, and coordinators who have a role in that, too) and the greater amount of yard duty that will need to be performed by teachers, because there are fewer of them on any particular site? What effect do you think this will have on the ability of schools to cope effectively with violent behaviour by students and outsiders?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** My initial advice is that there are only about four assistant principal positions that might be affected by the budget changes. I do not see that there will be widespread carnage of assistant principal positions as a result of the budget changes.

However, I acknowledge that there will be some extra challenges for some of our schools if they have three or four fewer teachers on the school premises in relation to patrolling grounds, yard duty and things like that. That is an issue that will need to be addressed by some school communities. Of

course, it is not necessarily an issue for all of them, as the honourable member will acknowledge. The department will do what it can to work with those school communities not only in the short term but also in the long-term in the general ways that I have mentioned.

Some of the initiatives that we have taken in the budget in relation to a 50 per cent increase in places in learning centres, annexes and alternative schools, for example, will do much more to assist schools in tackling this problem than what might be potentially a downside in some aspects of a reduction in numbers.

**Mr SCALZI:** While I acknowledge that the prime responsibility of the Education Department and a teacher, for that matter, is to ensure the safety of students and their well-being by providing a safe educational or learning environment for all, my concern is that this is not always the case, according to some teachers who have come to see me. They are concerned that that is not always reciprocated to teachers. What provisions are there for the protection of teachers from violence and harassment by either students or people coming from outside? As a teacher until recently, I know that it is a difficult occupation. It is a noble profession, but people in the community do not generally know the stress facing teachers. I would like to know what provisions the Education Department has for ensuring that teachers are also protected as part of that learning environment. Are their rights protected, and are they protected from harassment?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I can add a little to my previous response. However, in essence, the core of my response is that some of the announcements that we have made in the budget by providing an additional increase of some 50 per cent in places in learning centres, annexes and alternative schools will hopefully remove from the campus a small core of students who are potentially violent towards not only teachers but also other students. Hopefully their behaviour will be modified in those alternative arrangements. That is one way of dealing with the issue.

The second way is to provide easier access—and this is obviously only for a very small number of students—for principals at the local level to support their students by taking the decision that in certain specified circumstances, particularly violence of a significant nature against a teacher, students above the age of compulsion will be expelled from that school.

The decision would be taken quickly by the principal and would not be something that has to wind its way through the department for initial approval by a senior officer of the department or by the Minister. In certain specified circumstances, and I would envisage acts of extreme violence against teachers to be such a circumstance, if a student is over 15, that ought to be the end of that particular student from the school. Those are just two examples of ways we will seek to protect teachers from the violence of students, particularly now that, with students of 18 and 19, some of them are probably as old as some of the teachers and certainly much bigger. So, it is an important issue, and perhaps this Institute of Teachers and departmental working party, which was having its final meeting today, may well have some further useful suggestions, because its prime focus is the protection of staff from the violence of students, and we look forward to its recommendations with interest.

**Mr CLARKE:** I return to where I left off at six o'clock, at Oak Valley. The Education Department is responsible for that school and for the maintenance of the building. I recently visited that school with the House of Assembly committee on

the Aboriginal Lands Trust, and what I found there very much disturbed me. The two teachers who are there, who are a partnership, live in a caravan. The toilet facilities are absolutely appalling. It is the traditional long drop, which is completely full, and no new toilet facilities have been made available. There is no running water, although I appreciate the practical difficulties of getting running water in a remote location where the nearest bore is some 30 kilometres away, which is another issue that will need to be addressed with ATSC and the like.

Air-conditioners have been installed in the classrooms, but there is no electric power to run them, which I thought rather curious, although there is a facility for a generator alongside the ATCO hut to run the air-conditioning—except that that was knocked off some time ago and has not been replaced. The overall general facilities are absolutely appalling. The class size can range from as few as five around Christmas up to the 35 it was in the week prior to our committee's visiting the school. It is extremely difficult, as the Minister would be well aware, to get teachers to go to Oak Valley. They used to go there for eight days consecutively and then take four days off. They now do three days, return to Yalata and come back, and that is not a very good way of doing things as far as the students are concerned, because they are not getting enough concentrated learning in a given period of time.

As the teachers inform me, the reason for it is basically one of hygiene. If there is no running water, no showering or anything of that nature, with eight days on the trot without a bath or shower and with antiquated, horrendous toilet facilities, of course they cannot endure more than a few days at a time, particularly when we think of the summer months. That is a long-winded but necessary introduction to my question. Is the Minister aware of these appalling conditions at Oak Valley? If he is not, now that they have been brought to his attention, I hope that the Minister will be able to give an assurance that they will be addressed promptly and within this financial year.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will make some general comments and then ask the Chief Executive Officer—who tells me that he is one of the few humans alive who has visited the school twice, so can speak with some authority in relation to this area—to add any detail. This has not been a recent problem but a problem of many years standing. In relation to the guarantee or the commitment that the honourable member seeks, we will do as much as we can to resolve the issues. Whether we can deal with all of them in the 1994-95 year is a problem. I do not know how you get power or water to the site.

**Mr CLARKE:** A replacement generator.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Those sorts of issues will need to be tackled. I indicate some sympathy for the background to the question, and will ask Dr McPhail to give a more detailed response.

**Dr McPhail:** The Minister has effectively covered it but, as you say, it is quite an unusual and very difficult location for the provision of schooling, if for no other reason than that the Oak Valley community is not in any sense a fixed community and location; it tends to migrate around the Oak Valley area, depending on particular cultural needs, therefore the ability to get to the children and to get them involved in schooling remains a very difficult task. I share the Minister's sympathy. Since this has been brought to our attention, we have already begun discussions as to how we might provide reasonable accommodation on the site and provide the necessary basic services for that accommodation. At the same

time, of course, it will be a very, very expensive provision of education in relation to the number of students concerned. But I believe that the only way we can get teachers actually to go to that site will be to provide them with reasonable accommodation for the circumstances.

**Mr CLARKE:** As a supplementary question, I appreciate the Minister's comment that this is obviously not a new problem; it has been around for some time, although he is now in the Chair and I will blame him, which is I think eminently reasonable. His quip about the few humans alive who have visited Oak Valley is true, except for the fact that students and the teachers who teach there have to go there every day.

**Dr McPhail:** The Oak Valley community is a very proud group of Aborigines who are seeking to return to a more traditional lifestyle, and my visits there had nothing to do with schooling but had to do with national park ownership. It is a community that has not only decided to live in a traditional way but has decided to be extremely strong when it comes to matters such as alcohol and other issues, therefore it is a community for which I have a great admiration. You have probably already noticed that other facilities that have been provided for the Aboriginal community there, such as shelters, water tanks and so on, now seem to be a long way from where the community is living.

There is a tendency, often related to burial and death, for them to migrate around the general area, therefore it is very difficult to have services exactly beside the community where it happens to be located from time to time.

Our critical task will be to ensure that we can attract teachers to Oak Valley. Part of that will be through the provision of reasonable accommodation and services for them and, secondly, we may have to look at what other incentives might be required.

**Mr CLARKE:** What is the basis for determining the staffing of Aboriginal schools and has this formula changed since last year and, if so, why?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I think the member for Taylor asked that question earlier whilst you were away. We have indicated that there have been no significant changes but have undertaken to provide the Committee members with further information on that.

**Mr CLARKE:** I refer to councillors at Aboriginal schools. Despite the undeniable need to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal students and the huge complexities faced by staff and communities, Aboriginal schools do not receive a councillor as part of their entitlement. Why is this so?

**Mr Boaden:** The staffing for Aboriginal schools is basically made up of three components. A formula allocation is made, like any other school, but on a different ratio. There is also a tier-2 component that they get, a part of that being similar to normal schools. They also get a substantial additional allocation because they are Aboriginal schools to support the Aboriginal education programs. The principals have flexibility as to how they will use those salaries to best meet the needs of their students. One of the options that is available is for some counselling time to be used as part of that tier-3 allocation. So, although there are no specific councillors appointed, there are resources available for that service if the principals see that as a high priority.

**Dr McPhail:** But they are very generously staffed.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have a figure here: Aboriginal schools, tier-3, 21.2. So, there are 21.2 salaries provided to the Aboriginal schools in that tier-3 component that

Mr Boaden has indicated, and that is to be basically continued for next year.

**Mr CLARKE:** How will the basic skills tests improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal students? What resources will be appropriated to redress problems found and what other strategies to improve literacy will be applied for Aboriginal students?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will ask Mr Dellit to respond particularly in relation to how they might be applied. In relation to resources, I think the answer to that question, the previous question and a number of the earlier questions in relation to resourcing Aboriginal education indicates that there is a relatively generous provision of resources for Aboriginal schools and Aboriginal students right across the spectrum. So the resources are certainly there, in my judgment, to tackle not only that issue but a range of other issues as well within Aboriginal education. I will ask Mr Dellit if there is any specific provision for Aboriginal students. Mr Dellit can confirm this, but I think we did have one Aboriginal school that participated in the trial.

**Mr Dellit:** The Coordinator of Aboriginal Education also visited New South Wales with us to look at particular issues for Aboriginal students and, on the whole, Aboriginal communities are very supportive of the testing because it does several things for them. It makes explicit the sorts of skills that are required across the whole of the South Australian community, and also it provides some useful information on how Aboriginal students will perform. We can aggregate that information so that that can be compared for Aboriginal students in urban and rural areas and as a cohort against the total cohort.

There is an issue, however, in relation to the identification; and that is one of the examples that we have to work through with New South Wales. In New South Wales Aboriginal people all speak English, and one of the changes we have to make in the way that the data is collected on the individual students is to ensure that Aboriginal students can be identified both as Aboriginal students and also whether the language spoken at home is English or another language. We can then get some data for the first time on the impact of learning on groups of Aboriginal students, those who speak languages other than English at home and those who speak English. So we have quite a set of detailed and sophisticated data on the performance in the defined skills of the test.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** Mr Dellit reminds me of two discussions I had earlier this year with two leading Aboriginal educators in South Australia who were strong supporters of basic skills testing for their children. One of their arguments—and Mr Dellit has outlined the other one—is that they believe that much of what they are doing with Aboriginal education and Aboriginal education programs is proving successful. They want a range of outcome indicators to assist their lobbying case with the Commonwealth Government and with State Governments. They want to be able to say, 'Here is a program. We will evaluate it, and we will demonstrate that we are making improvements in a variety of areas.' They are talking about retention rates and attendance of programs, not just about measurements or outcome indicators such as literacy and numeracy testing. With regard to literacy and numeracy programs, they want to be able to argue to senior public servants, Ministers and the Government, 'Here you are, this is a good program because, with this range of outcome indicators, we are improving student learning outcomes. Therefore, we believe that these programs deserve continued funding.' Certainly, there is a range of reasons why

a number of leading Aboriginal educators in South Australia are strongly supportive of their people for the notion of basic skills testing.

**Mr De LAINE:** Following a recent incident at Woodville High School where a student was stabbed in an attack by three youths from outside the school, a security patrol was established at the school—and I realise that this was the incident to which the Minister referred in answer to the question by member for Elizabeth. Has a decision been made to withdraw the guards?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The guard is to be withdrawn at the end of this week. The guard was there for a short term. As I indicated to the member for Elizabeth, clearly we cannot provide security guards on a full-time basis. If there is some indication of ongoing concern about outsiders coming in again, where a security guard might be important, we will consider looking at that. The Principal of the school raised a number of options with me which she is pursuing with the local council in relation to road closures. She also intends to pursue with the department the matter of fencing and some other issues. So, we will continue to look at some of those options. She is concerned about that back route through the school, and she would like to see that road blocked off, as I understand it. That is obviously not something over which the department has control: it is, I understand, something for John Dyer, as the local Mayor, and the council, and indeed other agencies, to pursue.

As the local member, Mr De Laine may have a view. It may well be that some residents and constituents are not very happy about that prospect. I am not sure about that, but I know that will be an issue that the school will try to pursue.

**Mr De LAINE:** Bearing in mind the fairly unique situation, the fact that unfortunately some racist elements have been reported in that area and the large community of different ethnic groups in the area, has a complete assessment been done for not only the short term but also the long term taking all these things into account?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** My understanding is that a number of these issues are being addressed, and some of the department's officers are working with the school to try to tackle the issues as best we can. Of course, the Principal is very experienced, and we should be the last people in the world to want to tell the Principal how she should handle the situation at Woodville High School. I think the member would know that.

However, we are more than prepared to work with the principal and the local school community as best we can in tackling some of the issues. If it is determined eventually that that is a significant and ongoing problem, clearly the school will need to develop strategies to try to lessen the tensions that might exist within certain groups in the school. That will not be achieved over night. It is an issue that will need to be worked away at, and long-term strategies will need to be evolved for it. We will do what we can to assist the principal and the school community.

**Mr De LAINE:** I refer to the Port Adelaide Girls High School, which will be adversely affected by the announced changes to the School Card system because over 70 per cent are School Card holders. That is one of the smallest School Card holder schools in my electorate; some other schools go as high as 92 per cent. The school does an excellent job in providing a single sex environment for girls and young women in the western districts and caters for every group mentioned in the Social Justice Action Plan. In line with your stated commitment to the education of women and girls, will

you give an assurance that this excellent school will, first, continue to operate and, secondly, will continue to be able to provide single sex education.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I have taken no decision to change the current arrangements at the Port Adelaide Girls High School. We are committed to the continuing provision of single sex girls' options in high schools, and we are also looking at the option of an all girls' primary school as another option. There is the question of enrolment decline at the Port Adelaide Girls High School. I do not know what the peak was, but it is down to 164 students now. Some very difficult issues will have to be addressed at that school in relation to fairness to the students at Year 11 and 12. If the intention of the school is to prepare young women to maximise their opportunities for the future, what curriculum offerings can a school of 164 students offer to its Year 11 and 12 students?

We have made no decision to change it, but clearly some issues will need to be resolved. The department will have to look at that over the coming year. There will be no change for 1995, but together with the local community we will have to see what is best for the girls and young women at that school. However, you should bear in mind that we are committed to the continued provision of single sex education for girls as best we can.

**Mr De LAINE:** Some of the reasons for the declining enrolments are issues that can be resolved by you as Minister and by the department, and they go back to the previous Government. I will not deal with them in this forum but I will contact you at a later date and discuss them.

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I welcome the opportunity to discuss those issues with the honourable member. As I said earlier, I acknowledge his preparedness to discuss frankly the concerns at Alberton, and I will be prepared to discuss the issues at Port Adelaide.

**Mr De LAINE:** I refer to the School Dental Scheme although I realise that it is a health matter. This excellent world-class scheme is too important to be abolished or cut back. Is the scheme wholly funded by the Minister for Health or is some funding provided by the Education Department?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** My understanding is that it is wholly funded by the Health Commission and Minister for Health. Whilst we could have an interesting discussion about it, it is really not a subject for this Estimates Committee.

**Mr De LAINE:** If that is the case, and I think you are right, because of the importance of this scheme, is the Minister prepared to pick up the tab on the Education Department budget to continue the scheme?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** The short answer to that is 'No.' We have difficulty enough in meeting all the expectations of the Education Department. A number of other areas, and one of the areas we have not really traversed today at all, is where increasingly the Department for Education and Children's Services is picking up responsibilities which more appropriately belong with other agencies, such as Child, Adolescent and Family Health Services, the Health Commission and a variety of others. We continue in a number of areas to go above and beyond what is the true role of the Department for Education and Children's Services, but we do that in the interests of the children and young adults concerned.

**Mr BRINDAL:** In relation to the general provision for primary and secondary schools, page 101, I take you back to the long series of questions that both sides of the House subjected you to on school card. Everyone on the Committee would agree that school card is an important social justice issue that is coming at great expense to the Education

Department. Following on from what you said, one of the things that has bemused me is that school card is a social justice issue, yet it is debited to the Minister of Education's line at great expense. I am not in any way suggesting further cut backs in school cards, but I ask the Minister merely, has he considered that as a social justice issue it is probably more appropriately debited to the Minister for Family and Community Services and that would release education dollars. Would he consider that and would he consider making such representations, as appropriate, hopefully to free up some education dollars, while at the same time providing the same issue to the amount of social justice from another perhaps more appropriate agency of Government and providing the department with more money in the process?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** As we are in the closing stage of the Estimates Committee debate, I will confess that that particular proposition has more than once crossed my mind. I have to respond in two ways: one as Minister; and one as Minister representing the whole of Government approach. Certainly, if you look at it from the Education Department's viewpoint a range of offerings that we currently pay for at considerable expense to the education budget, more properly ought to be the responsibility of other Government agencies, such as the Child, Adolescent and Family Health Services and the Health Commission. The school card provision is a perfect example of such a funding line, but there are others as well. For example, the transport concessions that we offer at considerable expense—\$10 million to \$15 million—is a significant cost to the budget. That is speaking as Minister for Education and Children's Services. If I can put on my hat for the last 50 seconds as a member of the leadership group of the Government and the whole of Government hat, if one was to transfer the funding responsibility to another agency, it would not free up additional resources for education because the funding line would necessarily go across to Family and Community Services or some other agency. So, from a whole of Government viewpoint, it would not necessarily free up the additional resources that I would love to see for Education and Children's Services. But, in other areas, in relation to inter-agency work we are really wanting to see the Health Commission and the Department for Family and Community Services pick up some responsibilities for some of the unmet needs that exist out there in relation to students with disabilities and also some students with significant behavioural problems.

**Mr CLARKE:** I do not expect the Minister to answer these questions as it has been a very long day. I will just read them out and he can take them on notice.

Has the department or Cabinet made a family impact statement with respect to the introduction of the education budget for 1994-95 or are atrocities only to be taken into account after 1 November this year? Secondly, as the Labor Party seems to be the only Party concerned for the country people, I want to raise the issue of rural student accommodation. What progress has been made by the department with respect to establishing a rural action plan? That was to be developed in time for 1994-95 and was the subject of a discussion at the last Estimates Committee hearing back in 1993.

Finally, I have the following questions with respect to various boards, committees and councils. For what boards, committees and councils does the Minister have responsibility within his department or agency? Who are the members of each committee, board or council? When does the term of office of each member expire? What is the remuneration of

the members? Who appoints the members and on whose recommendation or nomination is the appointment made? What is the role and function of each committee, board or council? I am sure the Minister will recall these questions.

With respect to contract employees, how many officers are now on contract of service rather than permanent employment and on what levels are they serving, that is, at EL1 or EL2, and so on? Who, if any, of these officers are subject to performance reviews? How is performance measured, who measures it, who reviews it and what are the consequences of failure to perform? Are any performance bonuses paid and, if so, what are they and how are they measured? Finally, how many performance indicators have been established for agencies controlled by the Minister, what are those indicators,

how are they measured and who measures them? How often has the Minister been involved in a review of performance indicators, and what has been the result of any performance reviews that have been undertaken?

**The Hon. R.I. Lucas:** I will take those questions on notice.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the votes completed. I thank the Minister and his staff for their attendance at this Committee hearing and thank the staff of the Chamber and *Hansard*.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 10.4 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Thursday 15 September at 11 a.m.