

children to board do not want their children leaving for school a year earlier than they would have in the past, for obvious reasons.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I make the final point that the average starting age of students has increased by six months. Many year 7 students are therefore 13 by the time they have finished. I think a lot of parents would be supportive of a middle-school arrangement. I can understand what the minister is saying if it is the same classrooms and campus for students going to year 12 in a middle-school arrangement, which I think it is the case with Ballajura, for example. I understand that there is quite a bit of support for it.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there a question there, member?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I ask for a response to that comment.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know that I can say any more than I have said. Some schools have worked well; others have not. Some communities have supported middle schools and some have not. It has not been strongly supported in Eaton. We have made our decision and I do not intend to go back on it. I certainly do not intend to find \$835 million. If I had \$835 million to spend on education, we could spend it on many other things that would have greater educational outcomes than that.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am not suggesting that necessarily, but it may be a different matter for new schools on greenfield sites, so to speak. I encourage the minister to at least keep an open mind on that.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I refer to works in progress on page 921 and the reference to Newton Moore Senior High School with a budget of \$9.5 million, which has been allocated since 2004-05. As the minister knows, the project control group has met about 14 times in 12 months since November 2005 and has been working with architects. The group was asked last year to scale back the project by \$1.5 million. Since tenders have come in, it has been asked to scale back by another \$1.4 million or \$1.5 million, so that is about a \$3 million deficit for the basic requirements that the control group has identified. Will the minister seek to secure that additional \$3 million ASAP so that the basic needs that the project control group has identified can be finished? Can the minister secure that funding now because the tenders are good for only two months?

[2.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for his question. I anticipated the member for Bunbury asking that question. To put some context around that question, as the member is aware, we are spending more than \$90 million on schools in his electorate, or closely located to his electorate, including Bunbury Senior High School, which will receive \$1.5 million; Newton Moore Senior High School, \$9.5 million, as indicated; Dalyellup Secondary College, \$25 million; and Manea College, \$17 million. I announced a new school at Kingston a few weeks ago, which is in close proximity to the member's electorate, that was built at a cost of about \$10 million. There is a range of other schools throughout the greater Bunbury area, including, as the member is aware, a \$4.5 million upgrade to TAFE.

I visited the Newton Moore Senior High School, maybe two weeks ago, and there is no doubt that it needs an upgrade. I had a wander around and looked at the state of the existing facilities. We have allocated \$9.5 million to that upgrade. From memory, the upgrade of that school includes a library, upgrades to some of the classrooms, additional toilet and change room facilities and a range of other improvements. We allocated an amount of money to do some core things, which will be delivered. Naturally some people would like to achieve more. Therefore, some groups are holding out hope that additional improvements will take place in the school, and the result is a blow-out in costs. My understanding is that it is a \$1.5 million blow-out in costs, but the member is saying that it is \$3 million. In any event, \$9.5 million is a lot of money. We will make sure that we can get the best we can for that \$9.5 million. I do not intend to allocate additional money to that school. All around the member sit colleagues who would like money spent on schools in their electorates. There is only so much money to go around. From memory, there is \$295 million in the capital works budget this year. Every time I take money from a project to put into the Newton Moore school, it is money that comes off another project. I know the school wants more, but it will get the core of what it has been allocated and whatever else we can do on top of that.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The only two schools in my electorate to which the minister referred are the Newton Moore Senior High School and Bunbury Senior High School. The minister is aware that the schools facilities audit recommended major upgrades at Newton Moore. I visited the school in winter and found water leaking from the ceilings and running down the walls near power points and collecting on the floor that was being used by children. It was a disgrace. It was a danger. I witnessed mould on the ceilings, rundown toilets and outdated facilities. The minister has been to that school and, obviously, identified the problems. The project control group said it needs the money that has been allocated to provide the basic requirements. The minister's response that additional money will not be allocated was obviously a definite answer. If the project control group has to take \$1.5 million off its budget, new drawings will need to be prepared and it will delay the project again. In addition, there will be a cost blow-out. Therefore, it will be a catch-22 situation. Is the minister aware of that

situation? It will happen and there will be a further downgrading of facilities. Will the minister give me a similar answer for Bunbury Senior High School for which \$1.5 million has been sitting in the budget for three years and has not been increased? The minister should bear in mind that the budget indicates that by 30 June this year, \$7.961 million should have been spent on Newton Moore and \$496 000 on Bunbury Senior High School.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to Mr Parr in a minute to answer the member's specific question about the repair of leaks that result in water running down walls and mouldy ceilings. The member said that two of the schools I mentioned are in his electorate. That may be correct but other schools are being constructed around the member's electorate that children from his electorate will attend. We have to live within our means. I realise that people would like more, but we have a limited amount of money within which we have to operate. Frankly, in relation to education facilities, the greater Bunbury area is probably getting more attention than any other part of the state.

In response to the member's point about Bunbury Senior High School, I advise that it is a fact that there have been some delays in building projects. The member alluded to the fact that some delays are taking place. I get frustrated by that as well. The reason for the delays involve factors that are beyond our control. The member for Cottesloe will tell the member that the capital works division of the department is very experienced and is very good at creating facilities at new schools. However, they live in an environment of an overheated building market, particularly in Bunbury. The building environment is incredibly heated in that part of the world and that has delayed other projects. Certainly the construction of the Manea Senior Secondary College and Dalyellup Secondary College was delayed largely because of that. Sometimes it is because of other issues. The topography of the land at Manea may have had something to do with it. With Dalyellup, the acquisition of land might have created a problem. A commitment was made and land had to be acquired and that was not easy.

As the member's question was about issues of safety, I will defer to Mr Parr who might have the answer.

Mr M.J. Parr: The building condition assessment process that assesses the building condition of all school premises was completed in mid-2006. The assessment provided data from all schools and will form the basis of the maintenance program going forward. Newton Moore's maintenance needs will be considered.

The budget includes an allocation of \$1.5 million for Bunbury Senior High School. In addition, an amount of \$350 000 from the previous year was initially earmarked to upgrade the library resource centre before a decision was made to build a new library resource centre. The available funding for that school is \$1.85 million. Some of the delay has been caused by negotiation with the City of Bunbury in respect of the land across the road from the school on which this facility will be constructed.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The minister raised the point about Manea College. The allocation for that college started at \$14 million and went to \$17 million in the 2006-07 financial year. It is reported now that the amount is \$27.5 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Where was that reported?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It was reported in the press. I will provide the minister with a copy later. I think it reflects the minister's comments. I cannot see where the additional \$10.4 million is allocated in this budget. That is in response to the minister's answer. Further to the other issue -

The CHAIRMAN: We will deal with that one first, member.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to Mr Parr.

Mr M.J. Parr: At the time of the initial announcement of Manea college, the proposition was to build on the South West Regional College of TAFE site, which would have been a cheaper solution. There were difficulties associated with finding an appropriate location on that site. Ultimately, a decision was made to locate on Edith Cowan University site. The negotiations with the Edith Cowan University have been very profitable in that regard. The topography of that site is challenging and the design solution is quite complex. As a result of that and general cost escalation in the building industry, the estimated total cost has increased substantially.

[2.30 pm]

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The reported total cost is 27.5 million. Where in the budget can I find the extra \$10.4 million to cover that cost?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to Mr Parr on that question.

Mr M.J. Parr: It is proposed that Treasury meet with the Department of Education and Training to address the matter of cost escalation across the program later this year as part of the mid-year review of the program.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Is the cost of the project now \$27.5 million, as reported? Also, did the department purchase that land from Edith Cowan University; and, if so, is that cost included in that amount?

Mr M.J. Parr: There is no cost as far as the land is concerned. The land was not purchased from Edith Cowan University.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: That is right. The land was given to the department gratis. It was endowment land that the council had given to the university. Is it correct that the total cost of the project is now \$27.5 million? I missed that answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The land has been allocated by Edith Cowan University. As the member would be aware, the site in question is on a hillside. It is a challenging, but interesting, site. I have released some plans for the building project. Those plans show that it will be an outstanding, interesting and quality set of buildings. Cost escalation - which is the matter the member is referring to - is something that we will look at in due course. I am unaware of that figure of \$27.5 million. However, I would not be surprised if the costs of this project are going up. It is the same for every project in this state. Any person who is building a house will tell the member that the cost is going up.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I have a further question. Hopefully, this is the last one.

The CHAIRMAN: It will need to be, member, because other members are on the list who have not asked even one question yet.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I think the figure of \$27.5 million that was reported in the press was attributed to the minister. I may be wrong. I will get a copy of that for the minister, just to make sure. The minister obviously intends to stick to his answer that he will not be applying cost escalation to other projects in my electorate, even though he is doing that for Manea College.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The difference between the Manea College project and Newton Moore is that we will be building a completely new school from scratch. As the member would be aware, the site in question is hilly, with some trees, and quite high bush, scrub and grass. Manea is a new college that will be built from scratch. It will be a high quality school. It is a natural outcome for this project, which was commenced some years ago now, that the costs have gone up. We will ensure that a high quality school is built on that site. In order to do that, some cost escalation will need to be met. The difference between that project and Newton Moore is that Newton Moore is an existing school.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It is 45 years old!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, with some facilities that will require improvement. We have committed to do certain things, and we will do those things. People are saying that they would like us to do more than we have committed to do. We will do what we have committed to do, and as much in addition to that as possible, within the budget.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: The fourth dot point on page 912 refers to staffing in schools, and the problems that the department is experiencing with teacher shortages. An answer to a question on notice tells me that there were 222 vacancies at noon on 30 January. How many vacancies are there today? What is the minister's expectation for noon on 30 January next year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is correct. At the start of this year, three days before the beginning of the first semester, I was advised that there were 264 vacancies. That fell to the figure the member has just mentioned of 222, because naturally hundreds of people were coming into the market, perhaps because they had decided they wanted to go back to work, or because they had come back from overseas, or whatever. That figure also falls, naturally. It has fallen now to a shortage across the state of 28.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: What is the minister's expectation for the same time next year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is difficult to predict. A number of predictions have been made. A prediction was made in the press some time ago that by 2012, there would be a shortage in this state of 3 000 teachers.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am asking about 2008.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot predict exactly what the shortage will be next year. We are doing everything we can to improve the situation. It is not unusual to have a shortage. As the member would be aware, and as the member for Cottesloe would also be aware, in 1999, I think it was, there was a shortage of 72 teachers at various points throughout that year. The figure goes up and down. That is a natural progression. In an area in which we have 21 000 employees, the equilibrium that we would hope to reach between supply and demand is not always there. We try to get there, but it is not always possible. Sometimes, we have an excess of teachers. Sometimes, we have too few teachers. We have 28 too few at the moment.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: It has been put to me by a fairly senior member of staff in one of the high schools in the northern suburbs, who happens to be a constituent of mine, that on 1 July, a lot of people will decide to retire early because of the new superannuation laws. Does the minister have an opinion on that, or any evidence that that might be the case?