

of the lack of high-speed broadband services. We now have a fantastic plan from Kevin Rudd, the Federal Labor leader, that will take our nation's telecommunications into the twenty-first century - which is where it should be - with high-speed Internet access.

TEACHERS - PREDICTED SHORTAGE OF 3 000 BY 2012

78. Mr G.M. CASTRILLI to the Minister for Education and Training:

Earlier this week, Mr Robert Lindsay, acting director general of human resources in the Department of Education and Training, presented a briefing at the district directors' meeting.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that, according to Mr Lindsay, by 2012 Western Australian schools will face a shortage of 3 000 teachers?
- (2) Can the minister also confirm that his department is estimating that over the next five years, almost 40 per cent of secondary school teachers will retire?
- (3) Why has the government attempted to hide from the public this unprecedented crisis in our education system?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the member for Bunbury for the question. It is true that Mr Lindsay, who is the director of workforce planning, or some such thing, in the Department of Education and Training, has made a presentation to officers in the department about future workforce planning issues. As part of that presentation, he provided a snapshot of where the teaching workforce could be placed in 2012. In that presentation he used figures from the national report that had been put out at the last meeting of education ministers, which indicated that across the country there is expected to be a shortfall - or there is predicted to be a potential shortfall if nothing is done - of 30 000 teachers in all the states and territories. He extrapolated from that that because this state comprises one-tenth of the nation's population, the potential shortfall in Western Australia will be 3 000 teachers by 2012. That is a potential shortfall of 3 000. It depends on what we do about it. This has been a predicated problem for decades. I remember that when I was at school, it was predicted that one day there would be a shortage of teachers. The most important thing is what a state government does about that. We have started to take action. We expect to roll out a series of reforms on this important issue later this year.

I conclude by saying that recruiting teachers for the workforce earlier is one of the initiatives that we can - I expect that we will - take to address the situation. We are now recruiting in other states and internationally to try to address the problem. We have approached the commonwealth about putting in place some relief from HECS in some of the subjects, particularly maths and science, for which we expect to have a shortfall of teachers. Those are the sorts of initiatives that are out there. As minister I will always support our teaching workforce. I will always back them and seek to improve their status and morale so that we can address this long-term problem.

EDUCATION - GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

79. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Education and Training:

Will the minister inform the house of the education priorities of the government, and is he aware of any other views?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for the question and for his obvious interest in education in his electorate. I visited Collie High School with the member for Collie-Wellington recently. There was his name on the dux board - dux of Collie Senior High School.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Is that right?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure should not believe everything she hears.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Speaker, perhaps I have invited these interjections.

Our priorities for education are quite simple. They are about standards and ensuring we have excellence in our school system. This year we released the literacy and numeracy report which was prepared by Professor Bill Loudon from the University of Western Australia. We will roll out a whole range of initiatives over time to improve literacy and numeracy in our schools. We have already started. During the Premier's time as Minister for Education and Training specific teachers were appointed who were dedicated to literacy and numeracy. We will address a range of other areas, including dedicating 50 per cent of time in primary schools to literacy and