



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND
YOUTH AFFAIRS**

(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2008-09)

Members:

**MS A BRESNAN (The Chair)
MR J HANSON (The Deputy Chair)
MS M PORTER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2009

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr S Lilburn (Ph: 6205 0199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Committee Office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

APPEARANCES

Canberra Institute of Technology	82
Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services	54
University of Canberra	82

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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 2.05 pm.

Appearances:

Burch, Ms Joy, Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Women

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Hehir, Mr Martin, Chief Executive

Mitchell, Ms Megan, Executive Director, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Duggan, Mr Frank, Senior Director, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Pappas, Ms Helen, Senior Manager, Early Intervention and Prevention, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Reid, Mr Michael, Director, Youth, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Collett, Mr David, Director, Asset Management

THE CHAIR: Welcome, everyone, to this annual reports hearing. I draw your attention to the privilege statement which is on the table in front of you. Before we start, minister, thank you for coming again today. I invite you to make an opening statement before we go to questions.

Ms Burch: I would like to thank the committee for an opportunity to talk on the achievements of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support. It has been a significant achievement this year, underpinned by a robust reform agenda designed to drive service improvements to our clients.

The implementation of the Children and Young People Act 2008 was a major assignment for the department during the year. The new act has introduced significant reforms to the law relating to children and young people in the territory, particularly in the areas of care and protection, youth justice and the regulation of childcare services. The new legislation supports a differential response approach which Care and Protection introduced in 2007-08. This approach provides opportunities for early engagement with children and families and aims to decrease the likelihood of families requiring statutory intervention.

At any one time, Care and Protection work with around 1,400 families and children, both in statutory and in non-statutory capacities. Care and Protection has also introduced a demand management strategy to identify and manage workload pressures. A dedicated response team was established to follow up matters requiring assessment or appraisal, cases requiring allocation and to monitor interventions.

2008-09 also saw further gains in relation to achieving permanent and stable homes for children in foster care. As of 15 November, 29 children and young people have become the subject of enduring parental responsibility orders which provide permanent placements for children in care and there are another 13 children currently being assessed for permanent placements.

The commissioning of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre progressed on schedule, with construction being completed in August 2008 and the transition of all young people from Quamby to Bimberi was completed by December 2008. Bimberi represents the first human rights compliant youth justice facility in the country. Both its design and operational models are leading edge, with a focus on individual case management education, personal development and transition to community life.

Following the 2005 overseas recruitment program in the United Kingdom, another highly successful overseas recruitment campaign was undertaken in 2008. The arrival of these staff into our department has meant that Care and Protection now has a near full complement of staff.

Collaborative work continues to be a major focus of the office. Achieving successful outcomes for children and young people is dependent on building effective relationships with community and government services. An example of this is integrated service delivery to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people project, which is an initiative across three government agencies: my department, Health and Education. It is squarely and absolutely child and family focused and adopts an approach that builds on the strength of families. There are currently 21 families being supported through that project.

Following the success of the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, the growing healthy families project has been replicated at the centre in Tuggeranong, in partnership with the Smith Family.

In 2008, the ACT formed a partnership with the commonwealth to develop a new child and family centre in west Belconnen and this exciting development will continue to grow the government's investment in early intervention and prevention.

The ACT's out-of-home care framework 2009-12 was developed from extensive consultation and research and provides a planned approach to building capacity and sustainability in the out-of-home service system for the next three years and beyond. The framework is being supported by a significant boost to out-of-home care funding in the last ACT budget of \$11 million over four years and this funding recognises both the increased demand for out-of-home care and the increasing complexity of client needs.

That is a short statement. Thank you, chair. I again thank the committee for the opportunity for my officers and me to appear before you today and explore this very important, complex area of the department.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I will start with the first question. It is in relation to page 46, output class 2, early intervention. It states that the funding period for the family support program ends in June 2010. I am wondering what are the plans for the program beyond that period. It also states that there is going to be consultation on the program and the funding. I am wondering when that is due to start and who will be involved in the consultation.

Mr Duggan: We are in the process now of working both within the family support program and the youth services program where we have decided, in consultation with

both of those main providers, to actually examine how there is better integration between both programs. As you can imagine, there is such a transient usage between folks. They are either teenagers or young adults. Some will have children and also be part of a wider family system.

What we have been doing with both of those peak bodies is starting to examine whether there is more convergence between helping the programs get better aligned. We have started discussions with both of the sectors co-jointly. There has been a significantly positive response. We had a joint meeting with both the family support agencies and youth support agencies in September. Out of that we developed written information about how we could better align both programs.

We are presently developing a discussion paper which will go out to all the agencies in December, canvassing the issues that all the agencies brought to that first discussion, plus the most recent research, and actually combining both programs. Once the agencies have received that, we have workshops lined up for January, February and March where we will fully discuss the proposals contained in the discussion paper.

After that, we will then try to develop a service delivery platform which meets the needs of both young people and families and vulnerable Canberrans. We will then relaunch another discussion paper, pulling it all together. From that, we will develop a framework for comment and then we will consider future procurement for both the family support program and youth services program simultaneously.

THE CHAIR: Obviously the consultation period involves that. Is that going to affect the funding from June onwards?

Mr Duggan: If the funding is a factor then we will extend the funding until the actual project is finalised.

THE CHAIR: So that will happen?

Mr Duggan: Yes, most certainly.

THE CHAIR: And that has been factored into the budget process?

Mr Duggan: Yes. We will almost certainly roll it over until we are ready to actually go into procurement.

Ms Mitchell: Could I add to that? The envelope of total money remains the same and it continues with its recurrent funding; so it is a matter of the process and the time it takes to get there.

MR HANSON: Last year, you will recall we had some extensive discussions about the staff that was recruited from overseas, specifically the UK, for child care and protection services. From recollection, 35 was the number that we had recruited. How is that program going? Of those 35, how many are still employed within the service?

Mr Hehir: Off the top of my head, I am going to say 36 rather than 35. The last of

those workers arrived in the last two months. All of the workers are still here. In fact, I did the orientation session for the last worker when she arrived—that was good to see, and she was very quickly into the program in the department—and made sure they did an orientation around all the services we provide. It is going quite well. The workers themselves are settled. One or two people clearly felt the transition across half the world and took some time to really feel at home and comfortable. I had a conversation with one of those workers the other day and she said she is really enjoying herself here now. I might ask Frank and Megan to talk about how they are going in the workplace, but certainly the feedback I have got has been very positive.

Ms Mitchell: The feedback from the community sector, in particular, is very positive in terms of their skill base and knowledge. Obviously, they have all undergone or are going to undergo training and development, including in relation to the peculiarities of Australia and the ACT service system. That is a bit of a learning curve for them. But generally the feedback has been fantastic from the community sector that works with us in partnership around these folk. I know that Mr Duggan has put in place a buddy system to help the smooth transition. You might like to comment about that, Frank.

Mr Duggan: As both Martin and Megan have said, the only issue that we ever face is just the folks feeling a bit of homesickness, given it is a transition from one culture to another. However, in commenting on that, we already have a number of people who have been with us for over a year, so we are seeing the first anniversary of those staff. We have a significant anniversary coming up in January of another five or six. So we have now achieved over a year. They have all been retained, which is significant, given other jurisdictions who have also attempted to do this but have not had anywhere near the success that the ACT has. And we still have about 45 per cent of staff recruited in the previous recruitment campaign in 2004. So it has been a significant positive achievement by the department.

MR HANSON: Have we still got vacancies?

Mr Hehir: Earlier in the year we were fully staffed for the first time that anybody in child protection services can recall. I think we might be one or two down at the moment. It is an area where there is always natural attrition. Staff leave all departments at some time. At the moment our churn in child protection, or the office broadly, is about 10 per cent. That is quite low. That is low in public service standards, let alone in quite a difficult service delivery area. Frank might be able to give you the exact figure but I would say that at the moment we are two to three down.

MR HANSON: That is all right. Do you have intentions of doing more recruitment drives in the UK or are we recruiting locally now? How is that progressing?

Mr Hehir: We are recruiting locally and we always have recruited locally. It was just a case of trying to get quite a large backlog of spots—

MR HANSON: So, moving forward, that was a stopgap measure—

Mr Hehir: Absolutely.

MR HANSON: and we would be recruiting now locally?

Mr Hehir: Largely, we are recruiting now. We are still getting contacts from our visit. We have friends and colleagues of staff who were brought over who are in contact with us, saying, “We have heard such positive things. Can you let us know when you are advertising?” So that is a really positive sign from our perspective. I cannot guarantee we will recruit only Australians but—

MR HANSON: Sure, but there is no specific drive planned.

Mr Hehir: There is nothing at this point that would indicate that we need to do this. Our vacancy levels are well within normal operational parameters.

MR HANSON: In terms of the cultural fit, I got some anecdotal feedback from one organisation that suggested that the culture was a bit different in the way that the service was being provided; that it was not very much an Australian fit. That was an Indigenous organisation. That was one instance, and I am not trying to suggest that that is always the case. The welfare of the actual staff is an issue, of course, but also how that is working on the ground with the clients.

Mr Duggan: As part of the interview process over in Britain, effectively we asked questions about the Indigenous culture. We were very specific about that, to see whether the candidate had done a reasonable amount of research. The research they had undertaken was quite significant and we were very pleased that they understood the issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our communities. Subsequently, when they did come, as part of their induction we offered two full days of cultural awareness, training in Aboriginality. That was conducted by a local Aboriginal person. So they fully undertook the two days of study of Aboriginal society and the issues impacting on Aboriginal people. Effectively, that group would like more, which we felt was very significant. The UK recruits very much wanted to get more information on that. As part of the further training, we are considering with the Institute of Child Protection Studies running a whole policy contextual course for folks that would like to attend it, and that will pick up again on Aboriginal issues.

Culturally, it is a very different perspective. Most of these folks that we have employed have significant experience working with ethnic communities in Britain. In fact, one of them was able to cite that they had registered 98 different ethnicities in the council they were working with in the British environment, given the London experience. I know that their absolute figure about learning about Aboriginality is very high and we will continue to work on those issues.

Mr Hehir: I suppose, in short, there may well have been an initial lack of experience, but that often happens when you are recruiting. What we did look at, quite consciously, was whether people were prepared to do the research and do the work to become culturally competent, and certainly the answers we got in the interview process, from those we selected, were very good in terms of their knowledge of working across many different cultures and their willingness to find out and learn. That was one of the key factors we did look at.

MR HANSON: Thanks.

MS PORTER: My first question is around the successful partnership that has been established with the Australian government to build the third child and family centre that you mentioned, minister, in your opening remarks, in west Belconnen. I was wondering if you could update us on how that is progressing and what the focus of the centre will be.

Ms Burch: Thank you, Ms Porter. Indeed, there is a strong and a good partnership with the commonwealth around the west Belconnen—

MS PORTER: It is on page 40, for officials who want to find the actual page.

Ms Burch: Through that partnership there will be over \$8 million invested in the ACT over five years for a child and family centre. That will include some capital funding of a bit over \$4 million for a centre and indicative operational costs of a bit over \$3 million. The deployment of other personal partnerships that are existing in that area will be facilitated through that centre.

The focus on the centre is to really work across the community in partnership with existing agencies. It is not around reinventing the wheel; it is around building on the strengths that we have there. But there will be a particular focus on engaging with and building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and developing programs as identified by the community. So it is a strong community-based partnership approach.

We are well advanced on the design work but there are other officials that could possibly give you the nuts and bolts of where we are in the design. Certainly, Ngunnawal elders and the community have been involved with the design concept and will continue to be involved over the construction times as well.

MS PORTER: I would be really interested to hear how it is going.

Mr Collett: We have worked closely with Helen Pappas and her team to ensure that the design of the third child and family centre in west Belconnen builds on the experience, the work and the successful design ideas that were introduced first of all in Gungahlin and subsequently in Tuggeranong. The plans have been prepared in close consultation not only with the community but also with Helen Pappas's group. The designs have been completed. A development application has been lodged with planning and land management. We have called tenders for the works and the tenders have closed, and closed comfortably under the budget provision that was identified by the earlier speaker.

MS PORTER: That is pleasing, isn't it? Can I continue with this line of questioning. You mentioned before, minister, again when you were giving your opening remarks, the focus of the integrated services for Indigenous young people, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It does make mention of that with regard to the third family centre. It also makes mention of that as a future direction on page 44 of the report. I was wondering if you could explain to the committee a little bit more about that particular direction that you mentioned briefly in your introductory remarks.

Ms Burch: Absolutely. Working around service provision for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people is the focus of this government and this department and it is something that we take an interest in and work proactively on. Since 2004 we have had an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services unit established within the department. That runs a number of services and programs but also makes sure that the department has a response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a focus.

The integrated program that you spoke about is not as old as 2004; it was established in 2008 and it is a joint funding between ACT Health and education so it is around a government partnership responding to those needs. It provides wraparound services to meet individual needs, so it is not a one size fits all. It is around working with individual families and members of that family together; a focus of service provisions across those government agencies to make sure that the necessary supports are there. At the moment the program is supporting 101 individuals from 20, 21 vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Some of the other programs include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship and foster group service, which has been operating since 2004. We have also got the Narrabundah House Indigenous Supported Accommodation Service. Throughout the report, because it is such a plank of our department's response, every program area across the department has a response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We are happy to talk about that if that is what you would like.

Ms Mitchell: It just might be worth while Helen coming up to talk about the growth of Indigenous programs out of the child and family centres and the kind of discussion she has been having with the community and the Indigenous elected body about the kind of programs that have been successful to date and are likely to be replicated if the community want and need them in the west Belconnen centre.

Ms Pappas: The growing healthy families project is fundamentally a project that is driven by the local Indigenous community. The programs that are developed are a result of what the community tell us they need. We have engaged with a range of families and they have elected to work in a particular way. They wanted a women's group, so we have run two women's retreats. We taken those mums and parents away and they have told us their hopes and dreams for their children and what they want a service like ours to run and develop for them. We have also connected with the men in that community. They wanted to take on a real mentoring role for their boys and girls.

The solid young fellas program, which is a program that is led by the dads, engages very closely with their children. I do not know if you heard that yesterday afternoon the solid young fellas group had a touch football match with the AFP and won, which was great. The kids wanted a really close connection with and to understand better the police and their role and the role of community safety. So we have facilitated the partnership between the AFP and that local community at the request of the community.

The Tuggeranong team have taken a course of healthy dads, healthy kids. The families were telling us they wanted to better understand the implications of health on their wellbeing and the impact that parents have in teaching their children about nutrition and healthy living. Last week we completed a six-week course which taught the kids about cooking and nutrition. It is a partnership with SmartStart. They came

out and did some drill work with the kids. They had the kids tested so we could get a gauge of where they were at the beginning of the program and where they were at the end. The dads participated. The local GP at the Tuggeranong health centre undertook some free medical appointments with the kids and the dads to make sure they were okay to do this work. It was an incredibly successful experience. Last week, when we had the celebration, the kids were saying to us, “This can’t be it. What’s next?” We are meeting with the families next week to find out from them what is next—what is it that they want us to do next?

Ms Burch: Can I just add that it was a privilege to go to the bush retreat, meet with the women and actually hear their stories and how we are listening to them and responding quite directly to their needs. I had the pleasure of joining Robert de Castella when we gave out some certificates to the healthy dads, healthy kids. Talking to the fathers afterwards we heard about the difference that program had made over a period of six weeks, how it had alerted them and introduced them to a way of thinking about other services that will put them in incredibly good stead for the years to come.

MS PORTER: You spoke about the partnership between education and this area. I would imagine Housing is another department that would have a lot of work in this area as well.

Ms Burch: Housing does a lot of work in supporting Indigenous families, absolutely.

MR COE: Minister, would you please let me know what you feel is the future of a parole framework for youth offenders?

Ms Burch: A parole framework?

MR COE: A parole framework.

Ms Burch: Of the department on that?

MR COE: Or your own view on that—the future of some sort of parole framework.

Mr Duggan: I might ask Mr Reid to pop up and talk about that.

MR COE: You are more than welcome to throw in your own views, Joy.

Ms Burch: Thank you, Mr Coe; I am sure I will when I want to.

MR COE: Thank you. I look forward to it.

Mr Reid: I understand that when we looked at the review of the legislation, attention might have been placed towards a parole framework. I think a decision was made not to pursue that at that time under that review. At the moment we are liaising with the Department of Justice and Community Safety regarding bail conditions, including scoping youth justice issues into some of the bail issues that are being raised at the moment.

Ms Mitchell: Could I just add to that? The new act provides the capacity for

sentencing across custody, detention and the community. In that sense, that is the framework within which we are working so that we can encourage the supervised re-entry of a young person back into the community under particular conditions.

MR COE: But you do not have that flexibility to respond to circumstances post-sentencing and after they have served some time, perhaps in Bimberi—is that correct?

Ms Burch: It was a clear policy decision not to do that.

Mr Hehir: There was a clear decision not to do it. The result of that is that the responsibility for determining any detention period and any consequent orders after the detention period is with the children's magistrate. It is really up to the children's magistrate to make that call in terms of how long he or she believes the child should be in detention and what is an appropriate set of orders after that. Any breach of those orders is something that we can take back to the magistrate in terms of any consequences that may need to arise from any breaches. Again, it puts the responsibility where I believe it rests, which is the children's magistrate making decisions based on the actual facts of the case at the time it is presented. Any decisions around any subsequent breaches of community-based orders are, again, with the magistrate.

MR COE: Minister, through your advisers, are you saying that there are no plans whatsoever to issue some parole act for youth offenders?

Ms Burch: No.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: On this subject—I am glad Mr Coe raised it. This was a matter of considerable comment at the time of the implementation of the new Children and Young People Act. I have never had a satisfactory explanation—Mr Reid touched on it—so can someone give me an explanation as to the motivations for this conscious policy away from a parole-type system for young offenders?

Mr Hehir: I am probably going to have to ask to get back to you on that because I was not involved in the development of the act at the time. Can we take it on notice to respond to that? I can talk about what I feel at the moment, but I cannot tell as per your question.

MRS DUNNE: The trouble with what you feel, Mr Hehir, is that it is actually not policy. Policy is driven by ministers. I would like some understanding of what drove the policy to where it is and what might drive the policy in the future. It might be better for the minister to take that on notice.

Ms Burch: I am happy to take that on notice and get back to you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter, did you have a follow-up on this?

MS HUNTER: I had one about juvenile justice and also Bimberi. I was wondering

how many young people had been strip-searched during the year. I believe that, under the act, records are kept. Those records can be checked by the official visitor. I was wondering about the number of strip searches and I was also wondering about the number of young people who were restrained. How is that going at the moment? I note on page 68 of the annual report the third paragraph down talks about extensive training and orientation of new and existing operational staff occurring in 2008. It talks about de-escalation and the use of force-type training. How is that going? Has that led to a decrease in restraints? How many young people weekly would need to be restrained?

Mr Reid: I do not have the exact figures on me at the moment in terms of restraint and use of force. What I can say is that there is extensive training for the youth detention officers in the use of force and also in de-escalation processes. At the moment we rely on New South Wales, by their good graces, to provide us with highly specialised trainers. We had one of their trainers down here a couple of weeks ago. Currently we have a new orientation of youth workers as well. Their training is not just in the use of force; it is in de-escalation processes and pro-social modelling for young people in terms of modelling positive behaviour. Use of force is a last resort. There are considerable reporting requirements around that. There is a register which is viewed by official visitors and the like, and the Public Advocate.

MS HUNTER: So you are confident that the training is proving to be quite useful for staff in de-escalating. Has that led to a decrease in the sorts of situations that may lead to restraining a young person?

Mr Reid: As I said, I do not have exact figures. I suppose we are looking at a transition between Quamby and Bimberi, and different legislation as well. I do not know how comparable some of those figures might be anyway. What I can say is there are category 1 and category 2 incidents around their severity. A category 1 incident is a serious incident, a major breach of security which affects the safety and wellbeing of a young person or another person within the centre. It can also impact on the security and safety and good order of the centre. Since Bimberi has been operational, we have had only one category 1 incident. I referred that to the May committee at that time. It was about two young people. I can say we have had only one of those in 12 months.

MS HUNTER: And how many in the other category?

Mr Reid: I could not tell you.

Mr Hehir: We can certainly take that on notice.

MS HUNTER: Thank you. I had a follow-up question. Obviously the department has a good relationship with the Institute of Child Protection Studies as far as carrying out research and so forth is concerned. Some time ago some research was undertaken around transitioning young people out of Quamby. I believe that was due to be completed during this financial year. Where is that up to and what is happening with the progress of that report?

Ms Mitchell: That has been completed. I believe that it will be released pretty soon. It

is just a matter of finalising and tidying things up. The research is about kids who have left Quamby. It is not necessarily the same population that we have now. In answer to the other question, the last time I looked there were about 13 kids in there. What is really interesting about that research is that it shows how significant the case workers and the workers are at the youth centre in these young people's lives, much more so than you would have thought. They are kind of constant, stable people in their lives who they keep connecting with and into the future.

MS HUNTER: Where does that go? It gets released publicly. Is there is a government response? What is the process there? Are you already incorporating some of that work into—

Ms Mitchell: We commissioned it. If there are recommendations, and I am not sure that—

MS HUNTER: But as far as actually taking on some of those recommendations?

Ms Mitchell: Yes. We would usually respond—the department would respond.

Ms Burch: We commissioned it for our own internal purposes and around improving and readjusting where we need to.

MS HUNTER: It is not just that a department can commission a report. It does not always have to take on board what a report says.

Ms Mitchell: We take that very seriously. As you can imagine, some of the strategic recommendations relate to things like transition planning—once you have been in Bimberi and go back into the community. Because we have seen the draft of this report, we are already implementing a number of those things, because it is exactly where we want to go to.

MS PORTER: Madam Chair, my supplementary is directly on this subject.

THE CHAIR: It is on Bimberi?

MS PORTER: Yes, it is on the particular subject.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, did you have a question on Bimberi specifically?

MR HANSON: Someone asked how many are there and I think it got answered. I have Bimberi ones as well.

MS PORTER: Mine is directly about this area of transition.

THE CHAIR: How about you go first, Ms Porter, and then we will go to Mr Hanson.

Mr Hehir: Can I add to the answer that Ms Mitchell gave in terms of 13? It is important to remember that they are not all committals. It is a mix of both committals and remandees. It is important just to remember that.

MR HANSON: Can you clarify how many are Indigenous? Is it possible to clarify how many are Indigenous?

Ms Mitchell: Over half.

MS PORTER: Given that the centre, as you said, has been operational now for about 12 months, what programs and systems have been put in place to develop the skills of the young people in custody so that they can transition back into the community? As we have been discussing, that is extremely important. There is mention of various things on page 67 and I would like a bit of information on how these young people are assisted.

Ms Burch: I can speak generally and then I am happy to go to the detail. As I think I mentioned, Bimberi is a leading youth detention centre. It is cutting edge; it is underpinned by human rights principles. Bimberi is around a partnership between government and community providers, around a range of services in Bimberi, to provide the young folk there with the skills to have them successfully transition back into community life.

There is a case management approach. Every child in there has a worker that accesses the programs within Bimberi and on transitioning out of there. There are strong educational programs. The Murrumbidgee education and training centre is operating in there through the Department of Education and Training. It also has strong links with CIT. There is vocational education and there is a part-time mental worker there. There are rehabilitation and recreation programs.

I have been out there. It is a fantastic facility. There are pools and there is the healthy dads, healthy kids program. I met with the Aboriginal liaison officer who is also the horticultural worker out there. He was telling me how the young people are growing the garden and are having that experience. There is a nice mix of recreation, sport and education. Gardening is a good positive thing in some of these environments. Can we turn to the details of some of the other programs?

Mr Reid: Certainly some of the details in case management are around case managers who assess and evaluate the needs of the young people in the centre. From those assessments they develop case plans regarding those young people. They implement some therapeutic programs such as CHART, changing habits and reaching targets. It is a cognitively based program aimed at addressing criminogenic issues in young people. As the minister said, they develop transition plans but also other plans in line with education.

Within education there are individual learning plans developed around educational needs of the young people. There are various courses that education officers offer such as access 10, a sub-access 10 or learning options, and numeracy and literacy courses. Mathletics is a computer-based mathematics course.

They have an Indigenous liaison officer within education as well. The other thing that we provide, certainly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, is additional tutoring when numeracy and literacy issues have been noted. All young people in there at the moment, except for one, are involved in the horticulture

program, both the theory and the practical aspects of horticulture.

We have the metalwork course as well. In addition, we have a sport and rec officer. The sport and rec officer does a needs assessment, again on health needs of the young people. He actually tailors an individual program for those young people, does the health stress tests, where they do quite a bit of running in the gym. He develops programs for them as well.

In terms of, I suppose, Bimberi not being an island unto itself and maybe answering some of those questions about transitioning there, we have got a number of other departments involved that come in regularly, especially non-government partners. We have RecLink who attend every week and do some sport activities with the young people. Again, I think it is a good opportunity for the young people to liaise with PCYC police and form relationships with them. We have Canberra Men's Centre who attend. Caloola attend, normally weekly, to look at employment services.

Mr Hehir: That is right. There is something that I think is worth while talking about here in terms of the educational programs and the transitional programs out of Bimberi. While there is a lot of work being undertaken in the area, it is still quite a difficult process. One of the key things is that they are quite short term. The point I made earlier about the difference between the remandees and the committals is actually quite a significant issue for us in terms of how we manage the young people.

Many of the young people are in there for very brief periods of time and probably not even long enough to start getting a base line on their reading skills. With some of the young people who have been committed, we have got quite a good time frame to work with them and start working on their skills and looking at their transition.

A lot of the young people in there are in there very briefly and it is quite difficult to start that planning process with them. That is not to say we do not try to do that. But one of the key things always in terms of working with these young people is stabilising them in the first place. With relatively high levels of remandees, it is quite a task in terms of working with that. That is a discussion we are having with education right now in terms of how we work with highly transitional young people, many of whom are disengaged from the education system.

THE CHAIR: I have a question in relation to that. One of the things that are actually noted in the official visitor's report, on page 234, as being key concerns is that there is a lack of coordinated, cross-agency, post-release programs. Is that something that obviously the official visitor has highlighted? I appreciate that the people have different terms, which does sometimes affect lots of programs. If that is something which has been acknowledged by the official visitor as being a concern, is it something which you are acting on and looking to address?

Mr Hehir: It absolutely is one of the things that we are looking at. One of the issues that we have had previously is that a lot of the young people in Bimberi, and previously Quamby, were not compulsory school-age young people; and as we go, for the next two years, they will be.

MS HUNTER: I was about to ask about the interaction with earn and learn and how

that is going to go.

Mr Hehir: In the future we will have strong capacity to work with education but, because we require young people to participate in programs while they are in Bimberi and the only programs we offer are educational programs, they are effectively tied back into an education system. That is quite a deliberate strategy on our part. While you can see it is quite heavily vocation based, it is still looking at the basics of numeracy and literacy as core building blocks for young people. In terms of having an effective partnership in terms of leaving, it has been quite hard to engage education when these young people have often not been engaged in education prior to going into Quamby and Bimberi.

We are in quite detailed conversations with the department of education about how earn and learn is implemented, how we make better connections for the young people and transition them effectively back into retaining the experience of education. We are also in contact with other people who try to reconnect young people to education, including Gugan Gulwan—they are regular visitors out there—which is particularly important given the high numbers of Indigenous young people that we have.

It is a very clear focus. But as I said before, the quite high level of short-term, highly transitional remandees makes it quite difficult to get that engagement and, to be frank, you need voluntary engagement of the young people for this to work well. We can ask the court to make orders but effective engagement is best done where they engage voluntarily and enthusiastically. We are trying to do that and that is certainly work that we are doing with the longer term committals. It is what we try to do with the shorter term remandees but it is quite difficult to get that engagement early in the process.

THE CHAIR: If that is the role of the community organisations that come in, it would have some impact. The remandees might be more likely to want to engage with Gugan Gulwan, the Men's Health Centre or something because they can relate to them in perhaps a different way.

Ms Mitchell: Absolutely. In addition to the work that we are doing on the transitions, in and out, and in engaging those community partners and families in that—obviously that is a big issue too—we want to bring the work that Mr Duggan mentioned previously, re-examining the youth support program and the family support program, into this sphere as well so that we are utilising all the resources in the sector to focus on these at-risk young people. I think there are a lot of threads here that we are trying to bring together to actually monitor and keep a track of in trying to support these young people through life, through very difficult periods.

The other project that I mention in this sphere is a project that we are working on with education, with a cluster of schools in the north of Canberra called the G8 cluster, which is a fancy name for the Ginninderra schools, and that is about jointly working around at-risk kids, kids at risk of disengaging from the education system. Some of those kids might end up in our system as well; so we are all cognisant that we need to get in early and maintain a commitment to these kids jointly.

MRS DUNNE: We have talked about the population. What I want to know is: what is

the average stay of a remandee or someone who is committed?

Mr Hehir: We can get you those figures. Off the top of my head, I am going to say the average stay of a remandee is just under two weeks. But we will get you the detail of that break-up. Even that two weeks, when they are right on that average, is quite a difficult period to try to engage someone who is de-escalating and has not been subject to a lot of discipline.

MR HANSON: If you do not want to track recidivism rates, is it because it is too early?

Mr Hehir: Recidivism rates are subject to quite a formal definition. Recidivism is a formal classification and has particular benchmarks within it. Michael, you will have to correct me here but three months to two years are the time frames they look at for recidivism.

Mr Reid: Two years.

Mr Hehir: Two years. While we have been there for nearly 12 months, we would be unlikely to get it. It is also important to remember that recidivism applies only to people who actually have received a conviction. A large number of the young people, even if they are remanded, will not receive a conviction or a committal. Therefore it is a bit—

MS HUNTER: But you would not be just basing these rates on Bimberi?

Mr Hehir: No. We can give you recidivism rates. In fact, they are reported in the annual report, page—

MR HANSON: To be honest, I am thinking about when we are going to be able to compare what we were doing at Quamby and what we are doing at Bimberi to see whether this is successful.

Mr Hehir: I think we are looking at two to three years to start seeing the early stuff coming in. And even then I think there is going to be some question, in a sense, of how many of the young people had established their behaviours prior to Bimberi. Notwithstanding that, we are still trying to work with those young people and change their behaviours. But there will be some young people who have been quite deep into their offending behaviours even if they have been to Bimberi.

MRS DUNNE: Can I go back to my question. I have got roughly two weeks for people on remand. For people who have been sentenced, what is the average?

Mr Hehir: I am not sure whether we—

Ms Mitchell: We have only got one or two.

Mr Hehir: We have got two at the moment.

Ms Mitchell: One is a longer term one and one is a shorter term one; so it is—

Mr Hehir: Yes, we can pull a longer term average. I am not sure that you get much value from the current two.

MRS DUNNE: That is what I want. It is the longer term we are interested in.

Mr Hehir: We should be able to get that from our records.

Ms Mitchell: Yes, I could get that.

MS HUNTER: Tell us the interaction on the housing too. Obviously there were some places that were funded so that there would be some transitioning housing out. How is that going? Is it enough? Do most young people need that service or are they going back home? Where are they exiting to?

Mr Hehir: There is a specific program, which we did talk about briefly on Wednesday, working with young people leaving both the custodial setting and the youth setting. Yes, there is a need for it. It is a bit of an up and down need. In terms of how it is working, I would have to say it is mixed at the moment. We are talking with the provider about how we can improve that. Certainly if the young person does not have a lot of support and re-engages with their—

MS HUNTER: Former friends, whatever.

Mr Hehir: Their current friends.

MS HUNTER: Their current friends, yes.

Mr Hehir: They can get themselves into a reasonable amount of—

Ms Mitchell: Trouble.

Mr Hehir: Trouble. But it is a real mix for us as to how much they are being preyed on by their former colleagues and how we support them. I think it is really important for us to get that right. We are talking to the provider about what we do and how we work with them around that service. We still think it is a really important service but we do need to have a think about how we work with the providers of that particular service and how they can support the young person, particularly those at a high risk of being preyed on. There are a couple of young people we would put in that category. So it is still an important service for us and sometimes it works really well. At other times it has not worked well at all and we will need to work on it with those ones.

MS HUNTER: Do many of those young people go back home?

Mr Hehir: One or two.

MS HUNTER: I am trying to get some sense of it because it is all about their after care and how that goes.

Mr Hehir: One or two of them have, to my knowledge, but generally when we seek

that sort of placement it is because the home environment is not normally very conducive to staying out of trouble. It does not happen very often. The reality is that the need for that is just about the nature of that home environment. There have been one or two occasions, though, where parents have said, “Okay, we can step back in,” where the young person has gone back home.

MR HANSON: Minister, can you outline what services are being delivered in the child and family centres that are already established in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin?

Ms Burch: A range of services are being delivered. I have visited both. Can I say it is not just government services; it is partnership services as well. When I was in Gungahlin just recently, the Smith Family were there and there was a good conversation—

MR HANSON: I appreciate that there are multiple service providers. I just want to get a view of what those services are.

Ms Mitchell: I will pass to Helen in a minute. There is a range of maternal and child health services, targeted and play groups, parenting programs, and some of the kinds of programs that Helen talked about before. I will ask Helen to outline exactly what the range is and how frequently they are provided.

Ms Pappas: Both centres have maternal child health clinics that run every day. So that is where new parents can come and get their children weighed, measured and immunised and have connections with the nurses. That partnership works really well. We see quite a lot of families referred to the centre through that partnership. Quite often, families go and see their nurses as they are trusted people in the community and then they start to talk about other issues in their family.

We have an intake worker who is based at the centre from nine to five and who is available for anybody who wants to walk in off the street. The nurses, after their appointment, can walk families very gently down to the intake worker and sit with them while they are exploring these other issues. Families do not really need to know that one is Health and one is DHCS. It is actually a very seamless experience for the family. There are no referral forms or barriers that are in the way. It is literally a matter of walking down the corridor to the intake worker.

We have the midwives—the midwifery clinic. Women who have not had children or are about to have children are also brought into the centre. Again, there is that same connection in that some of these women are experiencing some difficulties at home and the same process can occur.

Relationships Australia provide family counselling for parents of young children, or children generally. So the referral process happens with all of the partners. There are not any formal documents or formal processes. It is literally a matter of walking down the hallway. Relationships Australia come to each centre once a week—I think it is once a week—and those appointments are made by booking. People who want to access Relationships Australia either ring their Deakin office or ring the child and family centres directly. They are put on a system and then we check in with them the day before to make sure they are still coming to their appointment and encourage

them to come to their appointment.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has an outreach worker at the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, and we are starting to see some of the older kids who have some emerging mental health issues coming through to the centre. That worker is there once a fortnight, from memory. The Smith Family have a regular presence at the centre. They offer learning for life scholarships for the families that come through our doors, particularly those who are vulnerable and more disadvantaged, to encourage those families to keep their kids going to school and to support them to do that financially.

Mr Hehir: We have talked previously about a number of other services. There is the parents as teachers program, which is run out of the schools as communities programs. Helen can talk about the detail of these.

MR HANSON: In terms of the funding for these programs, is it done on an annual basis? Are there contracts? I am referring particularly to the ones not run by the department.

Ms Pappas: The arrangement is based on the fact that this is a really good way of working. It is a seamless way of working. Each department brings their resources into the centre. So there are no contracts or exchange of money or anything like that. This is a community centre, essentially, and if there is a service out there that wants to come and work with us and that is going to add value to children and families in the community then we will work with them to—

MR HANSON: Have the two existing centres got the capacity at the moment in terms of physical space?

Ms Pappas: It fluctuates. We try to be as flexible as we can. Where there is a particular identified need and the centre needs to be used for a certain reason then we will make that happen.

MR HANSON: But have we been knocking back other service providers that want to use the facilities or have we been limiting the number of people who can access those services because of capacity issues?

Ms Pappas: Certainly, we have not limited the services that are offered from the centre. I am not aware of anybody being knocked back in terms of accessing the centre. There are difficulties around some playgroups who might want to use the centre in the morning. Of course, mornings are the best time of day to engage with children and families. The centres have a certain amount of rooms that are available. They are available every day for the whole day but playgroups and those types of programs are best run in the morning because kids are more settled and parents are more focused.

Ms Mitchell: The centres' usage by local families has increased significantly over the last few years. Some of the things that they do to deal with that are that they will put on a number of group programs or they will do different things to try and accommodate all the different needs of the families. Things like the parents as

teachers program also go out into people's homes. So everything is not delivered from the centre; there is a lot of outreach as well. Folk from the centre will go to other agencies and work with them to, say, run a targeted playgroup. So there are all sorts of different models to allow access into the community and the community to access the services.

MR HANSON: It might be very useful for the committee to pay a visit. I have not been to either of them.

Ms Mitchell: I think it would be really—

MR HANSON: And I would be—

Ms Burch: They are fantastic. I would welcome—

THE CHAIR: It is something that we can arrange at some stage.

Ms Burch: the committee to go and visit one, absolutely.

MR HANSON: Could we do that? Then we would not have to ask these same questions.

MS HUNTER: On that question of playgroups, it is something that came up in the parliamentary agreement between the Greens and the government around finding accommodation. Is there some sort of list kept which can be fed up the line to identify that we do not quite have enough spaces or places and that that may be something that needs attention?

Mr Hehir: Yes. We work very closely with the Playgroups Association. In the work that we are doing around the community facilities and halls, we have been making sure that those facilities will be available for playgroups to utilise. We keep in contact with education as well in terms of their current use of facilities and their planned use of facilities so that we can keep working with the Playgroups Association, who are in contact with all of their members, about what their needs are.

The important thing to remember, of course, about playgroups is their diversity of approaches. They can be operating from someone's lounge room, close to the local park, where they will go and play in the park or they can be in a hall or in an old preschool that is not being utilised. There are a number of different places that they utilise. We are trying to be flexible in how we can provide space in the work that we are doing and also work with the Playgroups Association about future planning. Megan might have more detail.

Ms Mitchell: The Playgroups Association is our important source of intelligence. We do not license playgroups; they are organic and they just grow up in the community. If there is an issue, we rely on them. We do have close conversations with them on a regular basis. We are aware of where, say, the preschools are needing to utilise their space for more preschool. So we are doing as much forward planning as we can in concert with the Playgroups Association.

MS PORTER: One of the programs you have not mentioned yet, which is on page 41, is working with fathers. In particular, the one mentioned in the second paragraph on page 41, in the second column, talks about working with fathers regarding out of normal hours appointments—after-hours appointments and various other programs to encourage dads to become involved. Could we have a little bit more information about that. It sounds like a very innovative program. Is that common across the two we have now and will it be something we would be looking at for the centre at west Belconnen?

Ms Pappas: Certainly, over the last 12 months, we have tried to focus very strongly on dads in their role as parents and valuing that role. We have created quite a few opportunities. At Tuggeranong, we run a monthly paint and play on a Saturday morning which has seen, over the last six months or so, an increase in dads attending. We run our triple P parenting program in the evenings. The last one that was run had 10 dads, which was really unprecedented for us, attending. We find that, when we get the dads in, they are really ambivalent and say that their wife, partner or girlfriend has made them come along and then, by the end of their session, they are saying—

MR HANSON: Sounds so familiar!

Ms Pappas: This is what they are saying to us.

MRS DUNNE: We can get you the information, Jeremy!

MR HANSON: I might not need to visit the centre; my wife will be soon!

Ms Pappas: They are saying to us that they are pushed to be there, but by the end of the session they are saying, “This is fantastic. Why aren’t there more dads here?” We have not yet cracked how we get more dads there but we are going to continue to pursue it.

We have also augmented the parents as teachers program. It is a three-year home visiting program. We run it as group programs as well, for those who do not need the three-year home visiting. But we also now run a dads, children and play course, which is only for dads. Again, they come, they bring their babies with them and they are given information about their zero to eight-month-old, what they should be expecting that child to be doing, how they should interact and the importance of their role in the parenting of their child. So we run it according to the ages of the children, and the dads have loved it.

The Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, as I said earlier, has created the men’s group, who are leading a lot of the work around the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community at Gungahlin and west Belconnen. This weekend they are going away on a cultural camp where they are going to do things like talk about health and wellbeing, cultural things, and family and community connectedness. These are the types of things that dads bring and the value that they bring to these children. We are going to keep working on that. We will keep working out of hours and on weekends to try to make these experiences positive for dads and to get them there.

MS PORTER: You mentioned before that the community organisations come in and

work together with the child and family centres. Of course, the Uniting Church at Kippax has already got the dads playgroup and the grandparents playgroup. I presume that would fit in very well with the work that you will continue to do out at west Belconnen, in conjunction with the Uniting Church at Kippax.

Ms Burch: The centres are centres of excellence in their own right, but when they work in with other community partnerships, that is when we really get that buy-in across a whole range of other service providers. It becomes seriously that one entry point with no wrong door environment, which is important for families. They will come in for one thing and they are actually seeking support in other areas, and these centres facilitate that.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, do you have a question?

MRS DUNNE: I want to change the subject. I do have lots of questions but before I move on to something else, is there anything else on the child and family centres?

THE CHAIR: Do you have a follow-up?

MR HANSON: No, I am looking forward to being sent there!

MRS DUNNE: The parenting programs for dads? Good on you! Minister, over the last little while, there have been a number of reports about childcare centres needing to obtain exemptions because they do not have enough staff of an appropriate sort. Could someone give the committee a rundown on how many exemptions there are currently? Also, minister, what are we going to be doing to try and avoid the necessity of ongoing exemptions?

Ms Burch: Thank you, and I will go to—

Ms Mitchell: I will start. Do you have the exact numbers?

Ms Pappas: I think I do.

MRS DUNNE: There are numbers in there. I wanted it to be a bit more prospective because it seems to be an ongoing problem. Where are we up to now?

Ms Mitchell: The legislation provides for exemptions to be made in certain circumstances. Those exemptions are to childcare standards; they are all notified. The childcare standards cover things as various as child-to-staff ratios, qualifications, physical environment, hygiene—a whole range of things. So one thing is to note that the exemptions actually cover a range of issues.

For instance, we might issue an exemption, if there is refurbishing going on, to the environmental standard for a particular square metreage per child. If somebody goes on maternity leave and they cannot replace the person with someone with the qualification levels that they need, we might provide an exemption for a period of time while that is remedied. We might provide an exemption because somebody has enrolled to study in a course and has not got the qualification yet.

But all of the exemptions are conditional on having a plan to remedy it. One of the problems with the notification on the register of exemptions is that it is cumulative and a lot of those are not now in force anymore. I note that finding and retaining qualified people in the childcare sector is a challenge across Australia. In order to have quality care for children, it is something that all states and territories are pursuing. It is something that we need to work on more and more, to ensure that we do have qualified staff.

Ms Pappas: Since May 2009, 49 temporary standard exemptions have been issued. Twenty-three of these have been repealed. As of lunch-time yesterday, that was the case. So 26 of the temporary standard exemptions are in place and 21 of those 26 relate to staffing issues—issues such as a qualified person going on maternity leave and not being able to backfill the position. Five of those 21 are to cover for a qualified person on extended leave. That could be maternity leave or sick leave. Twelve are required for a second qualified position to be filled by an unqualified staff member. So that is to ensure that the ratio of children to staff is maintained.

Two of those temporary standard exemptions relate to a room where there is a qualified person that works part time—somebody who is working three days a week and they need somebody in for the other two days a week. One of them is for a group leader being under the age of 21. That is in relation to school-age care. One is to allow for one person to supervise a before-school care program for six children where the standard says there needs to be two. There are six children and one person, and the service has asked for an exemption for that. So that is the 21.

MRS DUNNE: That one, for instance—is that an ongoing exemption or what is being done about that?

Ms Pappas: No, the exemptions are time limited. I am not sure of the status of that one and how far along the track it is in terms of its time.

Ms Mitchell: They are all temporary and they will all have to have plans for the issues to be addressed over a period of time.

MRS DUNNE: Therefore they can be for quite different lengths of time?

Ms Pappas: It is for—

Mr Hehir: Isn't there a maximum?

Ms Pappas: There is a maximum of up to 12 months but they are issued for six months. But they can be issued for shorter periods of time as well.

MRS DUNNE: How many have been issued for longer than six months or even longer than 12 months—or have they been renewed?

Ms Pappas: There have been two extended—two of the 21.

MRS DUNNE: From six months to some other time or from—

Ms Pappas: That is right.

MRS DUNNE: How many beyond 12 months?

Ms Pappas: None beyond 12.

Ms Mitchell: There are not any beyond 12.

MRS DUNNE: Is that just a hard-and-fast rule?

Ms Mitchell: It is, yes, at the moment.

MRS DUNNE: You just run out of time?

Ms Mitchell: Yes. Generally, we find the providers very willing to work with us and to put in place other mechanisms and to recruit new staff. It is about working with us and having a plan to get the staff or to backfill the staff. We work very closely with them. The children's unit meets very regularly with the providers who have issues around meeting the standards.

MRS DUNNE: Are you receiving advice from centres that with the new ratios that are coming in—are they coming in January, the commonwealth imposed ratios?

Ms Mitchell: The Council of Australian Governments are going to consider a future framework for regulation and standards for childcare and preschools next Monday. They have not made a decision about that.

MRS DUNNE: There was some change to ratios that were mooted for next year but they actually have not been ticked off?

Ms Mitchell: No, and they will not come in for a few years.

MRS DUNNE: I see.

Ms Mitchell: It is 2012. Depending on what is agreed, there are different time frames for different ratios and different qualification regimes. It is quite a complex issue. Once COAG agrees, that will all become public information.

MS HUNTER: So what is the role of the office? Your role, under the act, is to monitor—

Ms Mitchell: License.

MS HUNTER: license, ensure that people are abiding by that. Obviously, the training of childcare workers and so forth is over in Education. What are those links? How are you working around this, because the chances are that those ratios will mean that we need more carers in the industry. What work is going on there across government?

Mr Hehir: There is quite a bit of work. The first thing is that the Australian government has previously announced no fees for the childcare diploma. It is not just

CIT; there are registered training organisations out there that also provide those diplomas. The advice we have from that is that overall we are seeing an increase in the number of people compared to previous years.

MS HUNTER: Is that completions or is that an increase in the number of people?

Mr Hehir: That is increase in people participating. I do not think they have reached the completion stage yet. I think we have still got a while to go. Because that started early in the year, they will not have completed yet so we will not see that yet.

Ms Mitchell: And there are university places as well for early childhood teachers, HECS-free university places.

Mr Hehir: It is difficult to predict but no-one is indicating a concern with the quality of people coming in to work in the area.

MS HUNTER: It is about the workforce and maintaining it, because a lot of people are going into, say, the CIT course but then are switching over to do early childhood education at the university. It is going to need a lot of attention around how you continue to build that workforce.

Mr Hehir: It absolutely will and in a sense you can understand why some of the service providers get a little bit frustrated when the diploma people decide they would not mind a full degree. But it is also good in terms of the degree qualifications that we are going to need as well. Seeing an increase in that pathway is actually a positive in terms of the standards that are being mooted for consideration by the Council of Australian Governments. So, in a sense, that is quite positive. The overall increase in numbers is, I think, a good thing. Even if we do see an increased flow through to the degree qualification, we still should see an increase in the diploma level of people coming through.

As Megan said earlier, this is a national issue. This is not something that is unique to the ACT. Retaining people in the childcare industry is quite difficult. I remember many years ago when I left the childcare industry it was about pay and conditions. You can earn good money in the Australian public service without doing the same hours and work, so it is quite a difficult issue to keep people there. Certainly, that is an issue that we will keep exploring. We also have a children's services forum where we have all of the government partners around a table. We have the community sector providers represented. We have the commercial sector providers represented. We have the very large commercial organisational providers represented—

Ms Mitchell: Academic institutions.

Mr Hehir: We have academics, so we have the universities represented. This is a significant focus of their work and their discussion about how we actually do that. Recently, the CIT attended a careers day and had a brochure which they were handing out to people to try to attract them into the childcare industry, and they felt that went quite well. So we are looking at options and we are looking at how we let people know about it as a career choice.

Ms Mitchell: Without pre-empting the decision of the Council of Australian Governments, the whole workforce issue is certainly something that is on their agenda and will be something that there will be research on, continuing monitoring of and review points to see how we travel as a nation and in individual jurisdictions—and, also, what are the right mechanisms to try and attract and retain and build qualifications in that sector. That is certainly on the cards.

MS HUNTER: And maybe even looking at pay rates?

Ms Mitchell: I cannot pre-empt the decisions of government but, yes, obviously—and with the modelling that the commonwealth have done in terms of workforce they are pretty confident that they will get the increases in the qualified workforce that are needed over the period.

MRS DUNNE: On that question, you said before, Ms Mitchell, that a lot of them were related to exemptions for staffing issues. But there are other issues in relation to cleanliness, occupational health and safety, square metreage per child—those sorts of things. Could the committee get a rundown on what the other sorts of exemptions were and for how long they were in place?

Ms Mitchell: Certainly. There is a public register of all of these, so we can give you that.

MRS DUNNE: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Are there any further questions on this?

MRS DUNNE: Not on this.

THE CHAIR: We are running out of time.

MRS DUNNE: I thought we were here all afternoon. I was going slowly because I thought everyone was here all afternoon. I will ask them on notice.

THE CHAIR: My question is in relation to pages 126 and 127 of volume 2 about the targeted intervention program. The number of children accessing and receiving the targeted intervention through the adolescent day unit was less than the target. Can we have a bit more information about that? Given that we have got this new “earn or learn” policy coming through, it is going to be fairly important to make sure these sorts of programs are hitting the target group because it is going to impact on what happens to them later.

Ms Burch: On where they go.

MS HUNTER: I would certainly add to that youth connections as another one that will be pulled in with this “earn or learn”, and how that will work.

MRS DUNNE: Can I flag some things that I would anticipate people will take on notice? I would like to explore—and it was something that I probably should have explored as well when you were here, minister, the other day in your capacity as

minister for housing—the children who are known to the chief executive: how many of those would be homeless in their own right or how many of them would have homeless families?

THE CHAIR: Perhaps if we go to the first question—

MRS DUNNE: Sorry.

MRS DUNNE: I thought you were taking it on notice.

THE CHAIR: That could go on notice.

Ms Burch: Going back to Ms Bresnan’s question—

MRS DUNNE: I do apologise.

MR HANSON: I know that the minister does not normally answer any questions we ask, but we have to at least give her—

THE CHAIR: Why don’t we let the minister answer?

Ms Burch: Mr Hanson, so ungracious! Mr Hehir will answer, and then Mr Reid.

Mr Hehir: As the note on that measure identifies, we are seeing an increase in complexity of the young people accessing those services. Given that complexity, we are having to spend more time working with them. That clearly impacts on the throughput, which impacts on the total numbers that we are going to see in any particular year.

This is an area, again, about which we are in close conversation with the department of education. I always remain concerned where young people get excluded from their school setting. I know that Dr Watterston is very keen that schools work with young people, even those with quite complex behaviours, in a way that encourages them to remain part of their school community.

We are working very closely with them. That is certainly something we are very conscious about as we move to the “earn or learn” policy—the need to find effective strategies to work with some people who are quite disengaged. And they are disengaged for a number of reasons. They might have mental health issues so that they find it very difficult to work in a normal classroom setting. Their behavioural aspects might make it very difficult for teachers to work with them in a normal classroom setting.

It is something we are quite conscious of. We are working very closely with Education on these students in particular. I have a particular interest in that, given that there are a number of these young people who are in my care. I am very determined that those young people get the best opportunity for education that we can give them. Certainly, that has been well received by the department of education. They are equally passionate about these young people. I might ask Michael to talk about some of the details.

Mr Reid: In relation to that output figure, there seems to have been a data error and we have asked for an amendment on that. We had a restructure and schools as communities came under a different reporting line. The figure of 421 is for schools as communities, and what has not been included there are the figures for ADU and youth connections, which are a further 98 kids, so that output measure should really read 519, which is slightly below.

MS HUNTER: I have one last question on the youth services program. You mention in here that the contracts are due for renewal and only go to 30 June. You mentioned the review. You mentioned in your opening statement, I believe, a statement around—the minister may have said it—looking at the youth support program and family support program. How is that going? What is the process here? Also, how is that going as it is interacting with the IR review or the review that was also going on—I am trying to think of the consultants that were engaged.

Mr Duggan: Ms Hunter, I did answer this question at the start about the two reviews running in parallel to each other, the consultation that was taken and the process that we have engaged. As you know, we have got the Institute of Child Protection Studies doing a review of youth services, in the line of what works in the provision of youth services. At this end of the discussion people are looking at both programs involving Canberrans and whether it is a feasible integration. We do have written information to say that a discussion paper had gone out in December and then workshops will commence in forums in January, February and March.

MS HUNTER: Are you confident there will be enough time to then negotiate or are you going to roll over—

Mr Duggan: No. Because it is a set, fixed amount in both service areas, we will roll it over as we need to, if we go out to procurement later in the year. But we will give firm and early notice to the providers that we will roll over. I think it is \$5.2 million in one program area and \$3.2 million in the other program area, but that is a set fee and we will continue to roll this over until we finalise the project.

Mr Hehir: Chair, we have got some answers to previous questions, if you would like to hear them.

THE CHAIR: Great, thank you.

Mr Hehir: For 2007-08, the median remand length was six days—just under one week. For 2007-08, the median sentence—and we will give a median rather than an average; if you want us to we can come back with that—is 95 days, noting that there were only five committals in that period. In terms of Bimberi, we have had 115 category 2 incidents. That is not all use of force; that can include prohibited items. One of the favourites is they like to smoke when they are not allowed to. So we confiscate—

MS HUNTER: Is there a number for the restraints?

Mr Hehir: I do not have that but we can get it.

Ms Mitchell: We would have to go back to find out that detail. Mostly, from what I can recall, there is a mixture of altercations between the lads, and finding things on them which they have smuggled or secreted away.

MR HANSON: Are drugs category 1 or category 2?

Ms Mitchell: There have been no incidents of drugs.

Mr Hehir: From memory, drugs are category 1.

Ms Mitchell: I think that would be right, yes. It is more lighters and cigarette papers.

Mr Hehir: We can check that but my memory is they are category 1.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We are out of time.

MS HUNTER: With the IR review one, can I have some information back on that? You do not need to do it now.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time, unfortunately. Thank you very much, and thank you, minister, for appearing here today.

Ms Burch: Thank you, and we will take the questions on notice. Can I take the opportunity to thank the departmental officials for their fantastic work over a year that did not have me involved in it, so it was a good year, perhaps!

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will resume at 4 o'clock.

Meeting adjourned from 3.33 to 4.03 pm.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Minister for Gaming and Racing

Canberra Institute of Technology

Adrian, Dr Colin, Chief Executive

Kowald, Mr Peter, Deputy Chief Executive, Operations

O'Hara, Ms Kaye, Deputy Chief Executive, Academic

Cover, Ms Leanne, Executive Director, Corporate Governance, Organisational Capability

Kay, Mr Shane, Director, Central Support Centre

University of Canberra

Parker, Professor Stephen, Vice Chancellor

THE CHAIR: Welcome everyone to the annual reports hearing this afternoon. As Ms Porter has just reminded me, this will be Dr Colin Adrian's final appearance before annual reports. I would just like to say thankyou for all the work you have done.

Mr Barr: So we can take that as a promise there will not be any recalls then?

THE CHAIR: We will just see how we go. Thank you, minister, also for coming here today. Before we start with questions, I draw your attention to the privilege statement in front of you. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Very briefly, as I do every year with CIT to ensure the committee is aware, CIT reports on a calendar year basis rather than a financial year basis, so we are casting our minds back to the year 2008. When reflecting on that year, it is worth acknowledging that the institute marked its 80th year of delivery of vocational education and training in 2008. It was awarded the training excellence gold under the Australian qualifications training framework excellence criteria. CIT student Rachael Keiley won the Australian apprentice of the year award. CIT was a national finalist for the large registered training organisation of the year award and CIT was in the first year of operation of its new organisational structure in 2008. That is reported on in some detail, I think at page 116. There is a very pleasant photo that accompanies that particular organisation.

MR HANSON: What a surprise to see a photo of Andrew Barr! You knew that page. It is well thumbed, isn't it, minister?

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, let Mr Barr continue.

Mr Barr: That outlines the new organisational structure. Having said that and having been teased already by committee members, I will conclude my statements there and look forward to taking questions.

MR HANSON: What other pages have got photos of you, minister?

THE CHAIR: It was not all committee members; it was just the deputy chair.

Mr Barr: Yes, indeed. I am sorry, Madam Chair. It is an important distinction.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The first question I have is about schooling and higher education. Obviously there is a bit of a discussion about it on page 11 of the annual report, around the earn and learn policy, which we have heard a bit about through children and youth. I am wondering how the amendments to the Education Act and the requirements that accompany those, particularly for the 15 to 17-year age group, will impact—if it will impact—on CIT and what they do, and what preparations have been made to deal with it.

Mr Barr: Clearly, the government sees CIT as playing a major role, or continuing to play a major role, in working with young people. The majority of the institute's enrolments would be for people over the age of 17, but quite a large number of people who are enrolled at the institute are under 17 years of age. One would anticipate an expansion of those enrolments in the years ahead.

As I think we mentioned in the department of education annual report hearing the other day, the CIT Vocational College, for example, is taking a leading role through programs like access 10 and access 12 to provide an alternative education setting pathway for students. The data I have seen on enrolments show that there are more than 100 people under the age of 17 who are enrolled in specific programs there.

One would anticipate in the future that there will be some increased enrolments through that program. Of course, one of the bigger picture reforms that the government will be looking at in the changing higher education landscape as we move towards 2012 will be what greater role the institute can play in working with our senior secondary colleges for the delivery of vocational education and training programs. That clearly is an area where we would like to see strengthened partnerships and the CIT taking a greater role. Having said that, I will now pass to Dr Adrian to make some further observations.

Dr Adrian: I guess if we go back a couple of years, in 2007 the minister launched the vocational college. The vocational college caters to students of all ages and offers a variety of programs, including English language programs, migrant programs and so on. In relation to the learn or earn legislation, it is particularly pertinent to us because, as the minister indicated, we have students—a few as young as 15—doing access 10 programs enrolled at the institute, and we have had for a number of years. We make it well known that those programs are available at the institute.

In addition to that, students can come at different ages, including 16 and 17-year-olds, to do their year 11 and 12 programs. Some take a tertiary stream and come to the institute as an alternative way of completing their year 12 to get an entrance option into university. Something that we want to perhaps encourage more in the future is that when they come to the institute to do year 12 as part of that year 12 they do a vocational series of options. For example, you could complete your year 12 and at the same time do a certificate III as part of an apprenticeship or as part of an individual cert III program. The advantage of that is that the individual gets their year 12 certificate, but by getting the vocational training it opens up other career pathways

that might be more suitable for their interests, skills and so forth.

We have been integrally involved in the discussions with the departments of education and disability, housing and community services and the other agencies as part of understanding the new legislation. Kaye O'Hara could talk more about it. She is involved with the implementation committee that will be looking at the important steps for implementing that legislation into next year. We would see the institute as having a strong role in that. I think the options available at the institute are very important for those students where the traditional school setting is not the right option.

THE CHAIR: You anticipate there will be increased enrolments and you are talking to the education department about that. What impact is that going to have on the resourcing capacity of CIT? Is that something that will have to be increased?

Dr Adrian: Yes. We made decisions when we set up the vocational college to put certain money towards the college and then in last year's budget—

Mr Barr: Last year's budget.

Dr Adrian: there was additional funding to the vocational college for its operations, particularly youth support work, because a lot of the students in the vocational college, particularly the younger ones, need individual learning plans and individual support. The approach we will adopt is that, as the picture unfolds during 2010-11 and so on, we will have a close look at what the demand is, as we do with all of our programs. There are a number of possibilities. We can shift resources within the institute, and we do that on a regular basis, depending on where demands for particular training are occurring.

If there was a significant increase in funding that we did not believe we had the capacity to handle ourselves, as part of the normal budget processes we would go to government and approach them about some additional resources specifically for that or just increasing our overall hours and then putting those hours in the vocational college. At the moment we are feeling very comfortable about what we are delivering, our capacity to handle what has been an increased enrolment pattern in the vocational college, but we will monitor that closely during the course of next year and the year beyond.

MR HANSON: The foreign students that you have enrolled—can you tell me how many you have, where they are predominantly coming from, which courses they are predominantly enrolled in and how that profile has changed, and if it is going to be increasing or decreasing next year?

Dr Adrian: We source international students from approximately 80 countries. The number of countries we source them from has been growing. It has been a deliberate policy of the institute to source students from a variety of countries to minimise our exposure. They are also spread across most of the teaching areas of the institute. The biggest area of interest is obviously English language training, but many of them will do English language training in conjunction with a vocational course. The major areas for international students in terms of courses are in tourism and hotel management, hairdressing, cookery—those areas. We get large numbers in the business area and, in

addition to that, in our creative industries area we get a number of international students. We get them across most areas of the institute. I could go through the fine detail of that.

MR HANSON: No, I just want to get a sense of it, I suppose.

Dr Adrian: That is the sort of picture.

MR HANSON: Do you have a total number?

Dr Adrian: I have the November 2009 figure. In terms of international student enrolments, it is 2,290. We will go over 2,300, that sort of number, of enrolments. That is a 41 per cent increase on last year. We have more than doubled the number of international students in the past three years. In terms of the patterns, the increasing numbers have definitely been from the Asian markets—China, Taipei, Hong Kong, Vietnam, in addition to India, Philippines, Malaysia. As I say, we get students drawn from 80-odd countries. The company conducts regular trips overseas and we operate through agents in countries overseas. We have just conducted a major visit to northern Europe and Russia. All the signs from that market are that there is a strong interest and potential for students to come from there.

In terms of next year, we have not finalised our figures. The company does a lot of the projections on that and we had a company board meeting last night. We are looking at an increase next year of about 10 per cent. That said, in the international market there are issues, as I am sure you are aware—nationally and internationally—in relation to students in Australia. To date, we have had no negative effects from any of those issues. In fact, if anything, we are seeing a small flow of students from other states and territories into the ACT.

MR HANSON: People having problems in Melbourne, for instance—is that a problem being experienced—

Dr Adrian: We have had inquiries from students in that situation. We are very cautious about how we handle those inquiries because obviously we have to look at the basis on which they are made, where they are studying, how they have paid for their studies and how they have been sponsored. We examine those on a case by case basis, but we are getting interest from interstate.

MR HANSON: In terms of the strategic direction over the next five or 10 years, do you see that as a steady growth path, that 10 per cent, or do you see it plateauing or increasing? What is the limit?

Dr Adrian: In theory, there is no limit. The practice within the institute has been to have diversified enrolments from different countries to, as I say, minimise exposure and to source students with interest in different courses, again to minimise exposure. We also monitor it in terms of the total enrolments of the institute. There is not any specific number that we set, but this year we will reach about 35,000 student enrolments. If you look at that figure of 2,300, it is still a reasonably small proportion of our overall student enrolments. If, say, the worst circumstance occurred and there was a major collapse in international student numbers, it would have an impact on the

institute, but it would be relatively small compared with some other institutions, particularly some private providers.

I would envisage, all going well, some continued growth. It is important to the institute. With the exception of CIT Solutions, it is now the biggest area of contestable funding, because they are full fee paying, for the institute. Whether it can keep going at 10, 20, 30 or 40 per cent I guess is going to depend on a variety of factors in terms of international economic conditions, competitiveness and all those things.

MR HANSON: This might be one that you cannot answer, but have we measured the economic impact on the Canberra community? Obviously the fees are quite easy to measure but what about the broad impact on our economy?

Dr Adrian: As far as I know, there is not a piece of work done—

Mr Barr: CIT specific, is there? There certainly is for education.

MR HANSON: I am trying to get a view of—

MR BARR: The ABS, I think, has. I think, outside of government services, education is the next biggest net exporter for the ACT. That encompasses—

MR HANSON: I just wondered what that figure was. We obviously do not have a great deal of influence on what a lot of the ANU does and so on.

Dr Adrian: I have not got a multiplier figure.

Mr Barr: The ABS would produce that data.

MR HANSON: I just wondered whether you knew what that meant in terms of stimulation to our economy.

Dr Adrian: No. It would be substantial. Our revenue from international students is getting up to \$8 million or \$9 million. It will go close to \$10 million. That is just direct revenue from their fees, let alone the multiplier effects. And normal multipliers are three, four or fivefold.

MS PORTER: Before, when you were answering, I think it was, the first question that Ms Bresnan asked in relation to the vocational college and what was happening in that area, you mentioned some relationships with young people going on to university, perhaps after coming in and doing their year 12 and then going on to university.

On page 31 it talks about CIT collaborating with higher education institutions. It talks about the ANU, the Catholic University, the University of Canberra and Charles Sturt. It talks about our anticipating further higher education and cross-sectoral priorities emerging from the federal government's response to the recommendations from the Bradley review on inter-higher education. I was wondering whether we could have from you, minister, an explanation of how this collaboration will support students post the Bradley environment.

Mr Barr: Thanks for that, Ms Porter. As I think I have stressed to this committee before, when deregulation hits in 2012, the higher education landscape in this country changes absolutely. And it will be a dramatic change that will have impacts, potentially positive and negative, on each of the institutions that currently operate within the ACT. I think it presents a range of opportunities for collaborative work amongst the ACT higher education institutions to seek to bring more students to Canberra.

The strategic position that the government is adopting is that we do not want to see our institutions effectively competing against each other for the limited ACT market. We want them to focus on working together to bring more students to Canberra. In very simple economic terms, each year 4,500 to 5,000 year 12 students graduate across the territory and effectively become available for the range of higher education providers. A certain proportion of those clearly pursue study at tertiary institutions outside the ACT. That further diminishes the available pool of students.

It is fundamental to the territory's long-term economic future but also that of each of the institutions that they have a very strong external focus—external domestically but also external internationally. And those partnerships will be critical. You see a really good collaborative effort through things like the tertiary open day that the institutions jointly hold each year. You see work in international markets. Next year, for example, the world expo is in Shanghai. Clearly, Australia will have a pavilion and the ACT will have a presence within that. Education will be one of our top two or three areas of interest in terms of seeking new business for the territory.

CIT, as Colin has just indicated, has been playing an increasingly strong role, not only in attracting students to the institute itself but also in working with other education institutions to create that pathway. Once you have got a student to the ACT, the opportunities for that student to then continue study at another ACT institution are very strong. It is getting someone here in the first place that is the great challenge.

I think that future is bright for our institutions as long as we maintain an external focus. A very clear message the business community have sent as well is that, if we are going to be using education to drive further economic growth in the city, then we must be externally focused. That is how the government is framing policy in the areas in which we can influence outcomes in the deregulated higher education market.

We have got to recognise also that there are limits to how governments can ultimately determine all of those outcomes, with those new policy settings that will be in place. It is going to provide some interesting challenges for CIT. As the cap on HECS-funded places in universities is removed, universities will be able to offer HECS-funded places in some areas that CIT might currently be offering similar course offerings in. When you look to the future, you have got to be aware of those challenges as well.

CIT has a very special place in the totality of our higher education institutions and clearly has the greatest amount of ACT government influence. We are the single largest funder, whereas the other universities are more autonomous, I suppose.

That is the breadth of policy issues that we are facing this quarter but, as I say, I think the important thing is maintaining that external focus, providing the institutions with

the degree of autonomy they need to pursue student enrolments in the competitive environment and enabling the greatest amount of flexibility.

The total institute revenue is heading towards a fifty-fifty split between what is government-funded profile training and what is generated through user choice, through productivity places, through international student fees, through CIT Solutions, through all of those other sources. That is the area that is growing the fastest. Clearly it will into the future, because that is where a lot of the federal government funding is going. It is going into contestable areas where education institutions are competing for that funding or it is attached directly to students through user choice. They are then given that funding, it goes with them and they take it to the institution that they want to take it to, to access those training opportunities.

That is probably the broad brush. I do not know whether Colin wants to add anything.

Dr Adrian: Perhaps a couple of comments. I think it is important, in the context of Bradley, that Bradley focused on the higher education sector and the linkages between other areas of tertiary education, that sector if you like, and higher ed. Clearly, it is one of the important pathways. It is demonstrated in our relationships with a number of the institutions that you referred to. TAFEs, including ours, can be important pathways into higher education.

You see it with local students but you also see it with international students and regional students. For example, an international student might come and study in a college in the ACT. They might come and do a VET course. Many might get credit and then go on to university. That is quite common. And we certainly see further opportunities for those pathways. That would be one part of contributing to the national goals of increasing higher ed numbers from 32 per cent of the population to 40 per cent. That is one of the targets.

I think it is also important to appreciate, though, that the national targets are not just about high ed targets; there are important targets in the diploma and advanced diploma certificate courses as well. And if you had, for example, 40 per cent of your population with degrees, it still leaves 60 per cent of the population. It is pretty sobering when you think that about 40 per cent of even young people today that are 24 do not have a post school qualification.

From my perspective, it is just as big a task, if not a bigger task, to, in fact, look at how you get those young people to have a cert III, a cert IV diploma, advanced diploma. In the vocational area, you would want close to 100 per cent of them to have some form of post school qualification relevant to industry, and that applies just as much to local students and regional students. But there is also an increasing demand among students internationally and interstate for that level of training.

We have got myriad examples. In one fantastic arrangement we have with the University of Canberra and the AFP, we jointly do training of local students, regional students and now national police force training in forensic studies where the University of Canberra has specialist skills in the laboratory area and we have specialist skills in on-the-ground scientific forensic training. We deliver that training jointly through those three parties, not only nationally but to the Malaysian police

force, the Thai police force and recently the Iraqi police force on a fully commercial basis.

As the minister indicated, that is part of taking some skills, collective skills we have, and expertise and using that to export those skills and generate export income for the territory. There would be many other examples of opportunities for us, UC, in some cases private providers, ANU and so on to work jointly and in many cases with partnering institutions such as the AFP where we have expertise in the territory.

MS PORTER: Are the student hubs and the website that you talk about on page 25, minister, being accessed also by all of those other people like the regional and international students as well as our local people? Do they fit into that whole suite of things?

Mr Barr: They were certainly a very important innovation to ensure that CIT were able to work effectively with all of the students that they enrolled. If we were to have a frank assessment a couple of years ago about areas the institute needed to improve in, those were areas that were identified as having direct student services harboured on each of the campuses and as an important area to invest in. That is why it was given priority across the institute and in the different campuses, to enable a higher level of student support, pastoral care, welfare et cetera, together with advice on study, enrolments and all of the rest. But that level of support is critical when you are talking about even 25,000 and 30,000 enrolments at the institute. That is a lot of students whose interests need to be appropriately serviced.

Dr Adrian: You can go to any of our campuses—you can go to Reid, the Woden campus, the Fyshwick campus, Bruce which used to be Weston but obviously in the new year will be Bruce, the Tuggeranong Learning Centre and soon the new Gungahlin Learning Centre—physically and find out all the information, as the minister said, and look to enrol and apply. You can come in through our phone service. It is all interlinked. It is all part of the student service hubs. Each student service hub operates on exactly the same system. You could find out the same information about Bruce as you could about Reid. You can come in on our website. There is the same information and service provided however you want to come into the system.

That applies to local students, national students and even international students. We do provide specific services, though, to international students because of the obligations under the federal legislation. But essentially there is a one-stop shop for students, whether they are looking to enrol or find out information, or clients. It might not just be students; it could be parents or industry clients. They can come in through those one-stop shops 24 hours a day.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to take you to page 124, minister, but before we do I would note the very emotional farewell that was held for the chief executive, Dr Adrian, last week at the CIT. We obviously wish Dr Adrian all the best in his new endeavours. With the arrival of a replacement CEO, he or she will be the third CEO that will have been in charge in your term as minister for education. I hope it is not an indication of the way that you work the senior members of your department, Mr Barr.

Mr Barr: I think the outgoing CEO in 2006 had announced his retirement or his

moving on, his departure, prior to my becoming minister. As I indicated in my speech the other night, in the second day as a minister I got to farewell a man I had never met. I think I will pass on that rather objectionable question, I suppose.

Dr Adrian: I have thoroughly enjoyed working in the job and thoroughly enjoyed working for the minister, with the government and with all members of the Assembly. I have had a good relationship in all ways and thoroughly enjoyed it and am looking forward to a practical retirement.

MR DOSZPOT: That is good to hear. All the best.

Dr Adrian: Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: The question related to the educational qualifications for teaching mentioned on page 124 and following pages. There is mention of a nationally accredited program for teaching staff, to ensure that professional standard is upheld. How do you define “professional standard”?

Dr Adrian: There are particular qualifications that are clearly different for vocational teaching rather than, for example, school teaching or university teaching. But perhaps I should ask Kaye O’Hara who is our deputy chief executive, academic, to talk a little about qualifications

Ms O’Hara: We are governed by the Australian qualifications training framework criteria which lay out minimal qualifications required for each of the program training packages that come in under that framework. The certificate IV in training and assessment is that qualification as well as an industry qualification. So we have a qualifications policy for all CIT staff.

Remember that at CIT we are involved in access education, higher education, vocational education and, therefore, our requirements come through our different accreditation requirements. Certainly it is part of our higher education accreditation. In those cases, people require higher education qualifications in their field of expertise and then what we add upon that are some teacher education standards and qualifications.

We have a statement of professional standards at each of the teaching levels. We cover access education—that is like our year 12 program—by ESSS standards. The access education is covered through our duty statements and position profiles in terms of the appropriate qualifications.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the auditing process for these teacher qualifications and professional standards, and how are these reported?

Ms O’Hara: We are audited under all of our external audits. So our annual AQTF audit looks at our record keeping. At the moment, that is very much done at a centre base because of the diversity of programs and standards. We do an annual report for our higher education accreditation. It is all externally audited as part of our registration in all of those areas. We do from time to time do internal audits to check that those records are being kept.

MR DOSZPOT: I have one other question on that. Is there a code of conduct or a code of professional standards in operation at the CIT?

Ms O'Hara: I think we are covered by the ACT public sector code of practice and professional standards and CIT policies on particular applications with students.

MR DOSZPOT: But the codes of ethics and standards relate to public service positions. Would teaching positions have a different code of practice?

Dr Adrian: I might ask, if it is all right, Leanne Cover, to talk a little bit about it.

Ms Cover: As Kaye said, we have the policies in place there. We have, at the moment, Developing Us, a professional framework which we are launching in 2010. We are taking staff through various examples and case studies to help explore the Public Sector Management Act, which is the code which we are bound by. So it is actually contextualising it to a vocational education and training teaching environment which is suiting CIT's environment.

MR DOSZPOT: That is the aim for 2010, did you say?

Ms Cover: 2010.

MR DOSZPOT: Beginning, end?

Ms Cover: Beginning. We have Developing Us, an all-staff development day, on 28 January 2010, and it will be rolled out across that full staff professional development day.

MS HUNTER: I have a follow-up on that. I wonder how many of the staff at CIT are full time. Could I get it across the board—full time, part time and so forth? Has there been a change or is there a view from the minister that we should be moving to more full-time or permanent part-time positions rather than casual teaching positions?

Mr Barr: The full staff profile is on pages 118 to 123.

MS HUNTER: But what is your view about moving to more permanent full-time and permanent part-time positions rather than casual?

Mr Barr: Those staffing matters are matters for the institute. The government would not be directing policy one way or the other, other than through our EBAs. The EBA before the current one did reduce the number of casual positions as part of an overall package of reform. That said, I recognise a need for flexibility; so there is no way that there will be no casual employment. We recognise the flexibility needed within part-time employment.

Subject to significant changes in student demand, one would imagine that the current arrangements would be maintained. Certainly, the government will not be directing, outside EBA negotiations, any dramatic changes in that mix. Dr Adrian might want to comment a little more on the reason for it.

MS HUNTER: I guess, Dr Adrian, I am connecting it back to the last answer on things like codes of practice, standards and all those things. When you have a permanent workforce it can be an easier thing to be rolling that out and keeping it going than if you have a lot of casuals coming through the system. I am asking in that context too.

Dr Adrian: Sure. If you have a look at the figures, we have a very strong permanent workforce. If you look at the teaching totals, you will see the large numbers of permanent teaching staff that are full time. I suspect we will see a trend over time where a number of them will in fact look for part-time options. And we are certainly seeing that amongst—if you look at our age profile—both the administrative side and the teaching side. I think individuals would be looking for options. They might be in the permanent workforce at the moment, teaching, but want to look at part-time options, to keep teaching. But they do not necessarily want to teach full time. That is one trend.

We do have, as you mentioned, temporary staff and casual staff arrangements. I think they are very important to the institute, in the sense of changing patterns of demand. Often, also, those staff can have particular expertise in terms of their industry connections and industry experience. Many of them would in fact be working in industry in parallel with doing casual teaching at the institute.

I think the other aspect to be considered is that some of the training that we deliver, particularly in a contestable context, might be contextualised in a particular way. It might be training delivered to a particular company for a particular period of time in a particular area of expertise. Sometimes you can have that expertise on board, amongst your permanent staff, but not always. You do need to have that flexibility as demand changes and as the nature of different delivery changes over time. But I would envisage—I am obviously not going to be there—that we would want to maintain a strong permanent workforce.

I agree with your comments about how important for stability is their background and knowledge, the professional expertise that they build up over time and the contribution they make to the organisation. So I would not envisage any substantial shift, if you like, in permanent-temporary ratios but they might change in small ways over time. Certainly in some areas of delivery you do use more casual staff than in other areas, when they are in those project contestable market areas.

MS HUNTER: I have a question on contestability. You did mention earlier that there is going to be 50 per cent government funding and you have set up 50 per cent from other sources. We are going into a different environment with a lot of contestability. The CIT has been making a lot of good inroads particular into green training, sustainability and so forth. Is that what the institute will continue to do, to look at where they can stand out from the rest of the market? Do you intend to really strengthen those sustainable areas within the institute? What other ones might you look at? You mentioned forensics before.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time. We are waiting for the University of Canberra to come and see us. We might have to take that on notice, if that is okay.

MS HUNTER: Could that be taken on notice?

Dr Adrian: Sure.

MR DOSZPOT: I did have a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time, unfortunately. We do have the University of Canberra waiting for us.

MR DOSZPOT: We will not have the opportunity to talk to Dr Adrian; that is all.

THE CHAIR: I do know that but we do have the University of Canberra waiting for us. We are on limited time and we do have the minister for a limited time as well. I am sorry but we will have to end here.

Thank you very much for coming. Thank you, Dr Adrian. I am sorry to interrupt you but we are out of time.

MR HANSON: We really enjoyed our tour earlier this year as well. That was a great opportunity. I was really impressed with what you guys are doing there. Keep up the good work.

THE CHAIR: And good luck, Dr Adrian.

Dr Adrian: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Short adjournment

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Professor Parker, to this hearing on annual reports by the education committee. There is a privilege statement in front of you. I draw your attention to that so that you are aware of it. We have got limited time but do you want to make an opening statement, minister?

Mr Barr: Not really, Madam Chair. This is somewhat unusual as it is the first time that the university has appeared in this context.

THE CHAIR: I believe so.

Mr Barr: My role as minister is somewhat limited in relation to the university. Professor Parker might like to make an opening statement.

Prof Parker: Thank you. I am very pleased to be here. I think I have met most of you before. Although we are not under the annual reports act, under our own act we do provide an annual report to the ACT Legislative Assembly. I am very happy to be here to try to help you with any answers that you may require.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Parker. My initial question is in relation to page 18 of your annual report—the diversity and structural adjustment fund. Can you give us a bit more of an update on progress with the projects that have been funded under

that \$1.6 million allocation from the federal government, noting the \$830,000 and \$800,000 described there?

Prof Parker: In relation to the first of those two projects, work integrated learning, we have used some of the money to bring in an international expert with a great track record in building in work experience in higher education programs. We have had a report and expert advice from her.

We are allocating sums of money to different faculties to introduce, expand or improve the practical components of their degrees, whether they are practicums, internships, clinical placements and so forth. We seek to position ourselves as a university which emphasises applied learning and hitting the ground at least jogging if not exactly running. That would be the kind of university that we aspire to be.

In relation to the entry to the pathways program, we are making links with at least six cities and towns in regional New South Wales. We are having forums and meetings with local communities. We are asking them how we can help improve access to higher education—obviously access to higher education with us but not in a way that takes talent away from those local communities.

There are a range of possibilities that we are looking at, including doing the first year of our programs but based, for example, at our local TAFE campus, doing it online, having winter-term intensives in Canberra and so forth. We do seek to expand our enrolments through regional New South Wales but it is a delicate balance that we are striking. This grant is paying for a project officer and for the expenses of investigating all of that.

MS PORTER: I think this builds on from what you were saying. My areas of interest are perhaps several but on page 17, right down at the bottom, it talks about new course architecture and building industry linkages. Is this part of what you have just been talking about? Could you expand a little on how that works to assist students?

Prof Parker: To take one step backwards, when I arrived, which was in March 2007, I asked for a complete review of our courses and disciplines, the curriculum content, how we go about them, where we are positioning ourselves. And one dimension of this was to increase our work integrated learning, which is the question I have just addressed. But another is to have a more flexible architecture of our courses. Students might want to go into an associate degree, either exit there or go on and do a third year and graduate with a bachelor degree. So flexibility of choice and pathways within the university as well as flexibility into the university are part of what we are trying to do.

Also with the associate degree there is quite a vocational practical element to that. For example, we had looked to introduce associate degrees which are the para or sub-professional version of a professional degree. Whereas we might have a Bachelor of Education to train a teacher, we might have an associate degree in education to train a teacher's assistant. They are meant to be nested together.

MS PORTER: And that would be across a number of different disciplines?

Prof Parker: Over time it will be. At the moment we are focusing on just these studies, people working in corrections and the court system and so on, in health and in education. But there is no impediment to a faculty putting forward an associate degree.

MR DOSZPOT: On page 13 of your annual report, you note some strategies that have either been completed or commenced in 2008. Can you give us an update on where you are with some of them?

Prof Parker: I can. You will see from the terminology the steps there. Our strategic plan has 39 steps in it. It is a five-year strategic plan due to expire at the end of 2012. We are picking out certain of those steps to give extra priority to. Pretty well all of the steps that are listed here have now been completed.

I should have pointed out that we work on a calendar year; so this annual report is more out of date perhaps than some that you would see. In fact, I have got data coming in which is more recent than what you have in here. So we have made substantial progress on, if not completed, all of those that you see in front of you.

MR DOSZPOT: On page 22, you mention increasing student numbers for both domestic and international students. I guess the same thing will apply there because there will be increases to that as well, I should imagine.

Prof Parker: We are looking at huge growth in the university at the moment. Our total student load increased by about 15 per cent during 2009 and our projection is that it will grow again by over 20 per cent next year. This is driven mainly, almost entirely, by larger first years. It is terrific news for us, although it puts us into certain capacity issues. I have figures today from UAC, the University Admissions Centre, as of Monday showing that our first preferences have increased by 11.8 per cent on the same day last year. So we are in a growth and popularity phase, which is very good news for the university and I think for the ACT.

MR DOSZPOT: And your next report will be due out when?

Prof Parker: We finalise it in about February and it goes to the minister in April. The financial statements, I think, go in March and the annual report follows in April. That would be for the calendar year 2009.

MS HUNTER: I want to ask about the sustainability courses that you have put in place at the university and get some understanding of the level of interest there has been in those courses. When I was visiting you during the year, there was talk about looking at a chair for sustainability and looking at how the subjects could be acquired across the disciplines and faculties. Could I have a bit of an update on how that is going?

Prof Parker: As a general proposition, we are taking environmental sustainability really seriously in the university. You might know that we have an Institute of Applied Ecology, which is certainly national class if not world class in its research, particularly on water. We are seeking to give an opportunity to every student at the university to do some course work on sustainability issues, either as a minor or as a major. That was only approved last year and most students are not at the stage where

they could go into the minor or the major; so it is too early for me to tell what the uptake will be. A proxy for it would be the demand for our Bachelor of Environmental Science. The numbers are up to some extent through UAC for that.

I have to say that it is a paradox. Young people may be passionate about the environment but they do not necessarily want to study it at university. It may be that we should be moving into postgraduate courses for people already with a degree but wishing now to focus on some aspect of, say, the implications of climate change for their profession. As I say, it is a paradox that young people are very passionate about the environment but do not necessarily apply to study it as a bachelor degree.

THE CHAIR: Again on page 17 I am quite interested in the gap plus program, which you mention and which gives students credit for experience gained while in the gap year. Can you talk about that a bit more? I am particularly interested in what activities are counted in that, how it is assessed and what credit is given.

Prof Parker: We regard this as quite an innovation. The phenomenon of gap years after year 12 is a mixed blessing for universities. In many ways, we would rather they started at university and then went overseas as part of their degree, on exchange, than go and spend 12 months before they come to us. I must say it confounds our planning when we have a student accepting and then seeking to defer. And it changes from year to year.

We thought that we should introduce something which provides a bit of structure to the gap year. So they enrol in a unit via the Faculty of Education. That faculty is used to having students do projects, fill in reflective logs and diaries and so on. They may go and do voluntary work; they may go and work overseas. They should keep a diary and they should write a project on it, what they have learned from it, when they come back. They get some credit points towards their degree.

That gives them an incentive to come back to us, rather than go to another university, because they have got the credit here. It also gets them into the habit of reflective practice. So whatever our graduates do in later life, we want them to reflect on it. It starts even in the gap year.

THE CHAIR: And is it across the board in your courses that this is offered?

Prof Parker: Any student who is accepting a place at an undergraduate program at the university could then defer and go into our gap plus and have some credit points for what they do.

THE CHAIR: And do you apply it right across the uni as a standard type of assessment about what projects or what volunteer work is appropriate for particular courses?

Prof Parker: Yes. It is a typical application of the project component of a course, but we do not know in advance what the topic would be. That has to be negotiated with our faculty of education. It is rigorous and the work that they submit is assessed and subject to moderation in the normal way.

THE CHAIR: It has to have relevance to whatever course they do?

Prof Parker: Yes, it does.

MS PORTER: Page 19 talks about various ways of working with people with different cultural needs, such as Muslim students and Indigenous students. You talked about the number of people who are coming from other countries to study at the university. How important is this work in terms of helping the students to maintain their studies, remain with you and settle into university life and supporting them through that period?

Prof Parker: It is absolutely vital. Our student composition is changing. It is becoming more diverse and, in some respects, less ready for tertiary education. It is a deliberate part of our national agenda to improve access to education. We are seeking a more diverse base than, say, the Canberra population has typically thrown up for the university in previous years. But we have to do this conscientiously. Any student that comes into the university has to have a good prospect of success. We have been improving the various support networks that we have. We have a range of programs.

Obviously, if a student is a member of a particular group, has a disability, then we have a disability service that can help to support them. We have a Ngunnawal centre to support Indigenous students. As part of our admissions staff, we have an Indigenous officer there. We are seeking to expand our low SES composition—the proportion of students from low socioeconomic background. We have been improving our student residences, which is quite an important part of ensuring that students have a good start. If they can live on campus in a supported environment, that helps them.

We have introduced a pair assisted learning program, so older students will buddy or mentor new students coming in. In the case of international students, we have introduced a personal adviser scheme. Any international student coming to an undergraduate degree has an academic staff member assigned to them who stays with them throughout their whole degree as a friend, a mentor, whether or not they ever teach that student.

That is the new environment—that higher education has to be open to a more diverse group of people but has to be able to support them. The data seems to show that if a student gets through the first year and is supported then it almost equalises their life chances. They should have the same success and retention rate from year 1 onwards. The focus has got to be on good orientation, transition and first-year support.

MR DOSZPOT: Prof Parker, I was very impressed with the meeting that we had some months back and I thank you once again for your time.

Prof Parker: Thank you for coming.

MR DOSZPOT: I continue to be impressed with the interaction that you have with the government and the community at large. One area of particular interest to me is not directly mentioned here, apart from the broad heading of community involvement. It is the proposed interaction with Kaleen high school. I was out at Kaleen high school yesterday and I was very impressed—

MS PORTER: It was yesterday, wasn't it?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, it was yesterday.

MS PORTER: Yes, we were both there.

MR DOSZPOT: It was very encouraging to hear some of the plans that the principal of the school has for interaction with you. Obviously this will be in your next report. Are you able to elaborate on any of those points?

Prof Parker: Yes, I can; I am happy to. We are still at the community consultation stage with this relationship. There is, as I think you have picked up, a lot of excitement in the community about a stronger link with the university. On the university's side, we are very happy about it. Predominantly, it is the faculty of education. It goes back to the work-based learning kind of theme in a way. Our teacher trainees can get to know a school really well and spend more time in a school to improve their training.

But it is not just teacher education. We have a faculty of health and we have a strong specialism in sport, ICT and so on. We think we could help strengthen academically some aspects of that school. I would like to raise the tertiary aspirations of young people going to Kaleen high school. It is part of the modern agenda. Tertiary is assumed, but universities have to reach out and raise the aspirations of all students. The principal is very enthusiastic, as you have picked up, and we look forward to this relationship.

MR DOSZPOT: Likewise. Thank you.

MS HUNTER: I have a question about one of your new courses, the Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning that you are doing in partnership with the ACT government. How is that going and what sorts of things does it include?

Prof Parker: The ACT government generously funded a chair in urban planning, which is now filled by Professor Barbara Norman, who does actually have an ACT past but came to us most recently from RMIT and the centre for global cities, I believe. She has got a strong background in sustainability and urban planning.

We introduced the bachelor of urban planning this year but most of the units were generic governance units, so the real planning units start in 2010 following her arrival. The emphasis in this course is on government, governance, economics, policy and sustainability, rather than some courses which emphasise aesthetics and architecture and so on. That was the desire of the ACT government and it fits with our strategic position.

It is a surprise that the ACT has not had an accredited bachelor's degree in urban planning, being a highly planned city. So it is an example of our courses and discipline review: we spotted a niche. The demand is quite good not only from the ACT but from the regions and we know that regional local authorities are crying out for planners, so—

Mr Barr: I might add, as Minister for Planning and minister for education, that this was a particular course that we were very pleased to be able to partner with the university on. We look forward to providing many job opportunities for graduates from the said course.

MS HUNTER: Because, as you say, there is a bit of a shortage across Australia of urban planners.

Prof Parker: Yes. As with all of these things, we have to interest young people in doing them. There is a chronic shortage in IT as well but it does not mean that they want to study it.

MR DOSZPOT: If you mentioned the earning opportunities in urban planning, I think that would motivate quite a few people.

Mr Barr: If you wanted to work for ACTPLA—not as consultants.

THE CHAIR: We have talked about some government funding that has been provided. I have also noted on page 22 that there is \$275,000 for the Donald Horne Institute. Could you give me a bit more information about what that is providing to the community and what role it is taking?

Prof Parker: Yes, I am very happy to do that. In the past the University of Canberra did offer courses in conservation and cultural heritage. It exited from those courses, to some controversy, and when I arrived it was one of the first things that I was lobbied about. We looked into it and we think that the nation's capital, being the home of most of the national cultural institutions and collecting houses, ought to have degree programs in this area, and there is a chronic skill shortage in the museums, the libraries, the galleries and so forth. So we were meeting a need there.

Donald Horne was a chancellor of the University of Canberra. He is the author of *The Lucky Country* and many other works, so it was appropriate to name it after him. The ACT government helped get the institute founded, which would also help us go back into cultural heritage and conservation courses. The premises that we have fitted out are being opened next week by the Chief Minister.

MS PORTER: Page 17 talks about a lot of new courses and you have already mentioned three of them—information studies, urban and regional planning, and cultural heritage. I was wondering if you could tell us how the other ones are going and what stage they are at? Having a background in midwifery, I am particularly interested in the midwifery one, but if there are other ones that you would like to highlight for us I would be really happy to hear about them.

Prof Parker: The Bachelor of Social Studies and Justice Studies has a lot of demand, mainly from people already working in judicial administration, corrections and so forth, especially the online version of that. That really fills a need and is going to go well. The Bachelor of Midwifery has started; there is good demand there and that will be a strength. Communication and media studies is underway and has strong demand. Civil and mechanical engineering—we are still circling this one. It is a big investment

to go into new aspects of engineering. We have been talking to ActewAGL and to our range of stakeholders, so we have not commenced that yet. The next stage is a business plan, to make sure we know what we are doing.

Canberra does not have an undergraduate program in civil engineering, despite the amount of construction work here and the chronic shortages. Similarly, in mechanical engineering, with defence materiel and so forth, we have real shortages of mechanical engineers. So the demand is out there from the employers, but whether it all adds up is something that we are looking into.

Water management is underway, jointly with the ANU. Information studies is happening. Exercise physiology was held over and I believe it starts next year. International revenue administration is underway through our Centre for Customs and Excise Studies and the master's in GIS is also underway. So we have done, we think, quite well to introduce our curriculum reforms in a short period of time.

MR DOSZPOT: Prof Parker, page 25 refers to knowledge transfer and CIT in particular. Your report mentions *Beyond articulation* which “built on long-term collaboration between CIT and the university” and “the project fostered improved teaching and learning arrangements”. Could some of these learning arrangements, collaboration with CIT, include an adoption or a better understanding of a code of conduct or a code of professional standards for the university staff that you could share with CIT?

Prof Parker: We certainly do have the relevant norms. I cannot say whether they have anything to offer to CIT, but we have a code of professional practice and we also have codes related to specific kinds of academic activity such as research conduct, and then we have a series of policies on behaviour such as bullying or harassment and so forth. So we think we have got a comprehensive suite of codes and policies regulating behaviour and conduct.

MR DOSZPOT: Could that fall under that *Beyond articulation*—

Prof Parker: Quite easily. More generally about CIT, we have probably 160 agreed pathways. So a student taking a course at CIT can go onto a website—it is a joint website—and they can see what credit they would get for that CIT course against a range of UC courses. We think it is the most advanced collaboration in the country. More latterly, we have been looking at reverse articulation so that graduates with bachelor degrees might want to actually go to CIT—conceivably to learn how to do something, for example.

MS PORTER: That is a very open-ended sort of opportunity. Such as?

Prof Parker: I think it is important. I think it should go both ways. Also the embedding idea—that as part of a bachelor's degree many people should do embedded cert III, cert IV as part of their program. It happens a little bit in early childhood education and there is real potential in the health area to do that. We have a good relationship with CIT and I think it can go further.

MR DOSZPOT: Two members of my family are alumni of your university so I am

aware of some of the benefits that people can get from the university and obviously the interaction with CIT is also very creditable. Thank you.

Prof Parker: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: At the risk of a rebellion from members, we are actually out of time. Thank you very much, Professor Parker, for appearing here today.

Prof Parker: You are very welcome.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, for your time.

Prof Parker: Might I just leave a complimentary history of the university to celebrate our 40th anniversary?

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr Barr: You are competing with tourism!

Prof Parker: I'm sorry. I do not know whether this is a breach of parliamentary privilege or protocol, but—

Mr Barr: It is tremendous and it sets a new benchmark for other organisations that have appeared before.

The committee adjourned at 5.15 pm.