



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2010-2011](#))

**Members:**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2011**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Mr A Snedden (Ph: 6205 0199)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

## APPEARANCES

<b>ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Canberra Institute of Technology .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Education and Training Directorate.....</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Privilege statement**

The Committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

Witnesses must tell the truth: giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter, and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly.

While the Committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

*Amended 9 August 2011*

**The committee met at 9.32 am.**

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Education and Training and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority  
Guy, Mr Gary, Chief Executive Officer

Canberra Institute of Technology  
Marron, Mr Adrian, Chief Executive  
Dodd, Ms Jenny, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Education Services  
Kowald, Mr Peter, Deputy Chief Executive, Operations

Education and Training Directorate  
Watterston, Dr Jim, Director-General  
Stewart, Ms Tracy, Director, Planning and Performance  
Huard, Ms Anne, School Network Leader, North/Gungahlin School Network  
Wynants, Mr John, Executive Officer, Schools Capital Works  
Whybrow, Mr Mark, Executive Director, Corporate Services  
Huxley, Mr Mark, Manager, Information and Knowledge Services  
Wilks, Ms Trish, Director, Learning and Teaching  
Cover, Ms Leanne, Executive Director, Tertiary and International Education  
Gniel, Mr Stephen, Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Support  
Kyburz, Mr Steve, School Network Leader, South Weston School Network  
Ellis, Ms Anne, Chief Executive Officer, Teacher Quality Institute  
Bromhead, Mr David, Principal, Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre  
Bateman, Mr Michael, Director, Human Resources  
Sharma, Ms Sushila, Director, Finance and Corporate Support

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, minister. Welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs inquiry into annual and financial reports for the year 2010-11. I would like to welcome Mr Guy. We will deal first with the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, then we will go to CIT and then to the education directorate. We will spend the rest of the time on the directorate.

You are probably both very familiar with the privilege statement that is in front of you. I just want to make sure that you are, and draw your attention to that. Before we go to questions, Mr Barr, do you want to make a statement about the training fund authority?

**Mr Barr:** No, I am fine.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Guy, I invite you to make an opening statement and then members may have questions.

**Mr Guy:** The authority had a very successful year in 2010-11. Our income was the highest we have ever come across, which was \$5.3 million. That takes place having regard to a lot of the work that is going on across the ACT. We do not expect that to continue. We think it will turn down a little bit in the years to come, depending on a few big jobs that are available. It may stay around the same. But it was a successful year.

We have put a lot of money into the training of existing workers—not as much as we put in last year, about \$100,000 less than we put in last year. The reason is that the industry was extremely busy. We had a very wet period in September, October and November, and that held up a lot of the industry for a while. So when they got back on track again, they did not have time to train. But the money is there and it is available this year if anybody wishes to train.

With the entry level training for apprentices, we were down by \$77,000. But that was just a matter of the numbers being down a little bit. The group training companies were a little bit hesitant at the start of the year regarding the numbers they took on and they did not take on as many as they thought they would take on. So that was a little bit down, by just on \$77,000. But other than that, everything was very successful.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question following on from your opening statement. As you said, the training positions obviously are quite dependent on what is happening in the building industry overall.

**Mr Guy:** Yes. Employers or applicants have to apply to us for funding. We do not go out and tell people. They all know that funding is available and they have to apply. So when they apply, we then provide the funding for them. So we can only accept what comes through the door, as far as applications go. They were just down a little bit this year, not by a lot.

**THE CHAIR:** As you said, the slight reduction in numbers this year was due to factors that were impacting on the building industry?

**Mr Guy:** The fact that they thought there was not going to be a lot of work taking place. The group training companies take a huge gamble. They take a person on for four years, so they have to be very careful about the numbers that they employ. They cannot take on a lot of apprentices at one time and then, three years later, if there is no work on, they have to then terminate those contracts or whatever the case may be. They have an indication that work over the next few years may be a little slower, so they have adjusted their figures accordingly.

**DR BOURKE:** Has there been any change in trends over the last couple of years with trades and apprentices?

**Mr Guy:** Tradesmen?

**DR BOURKE:** No, the trades—different apprenticeships, in numbers, perhaps.

**Mr Guy:** The most popular trades are the electrical, plumbing and carpentry trades. The painters, plasterers, wall and floor tilers, roof tilers, the steel fixing and the

concreters are a little bit slower. But a group training company and RTO next year are going to get into the training of concreters and steel fixers, which will be new to the ACT. They are coming to us for some funding for that, so we will fund some of that. The numbers are pretty good. Overall, we hold up pretty well.

I attended a meeting in Brisbane last week to discuss the other funds around Australia and we were probably one of the best funds going at the moment, through the numbers we put in, for the size we are and our income. Western Australia was down, Queensland was down. With Tasmania, which is similar to us, their income was only about \$3 million. But we fund a lot of entry level stuff compared to the other states. We look after the apprentices and the employers of the apprentices as much as we possibly can. It is the future of our industry.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter, do you have a question?

**MS HUNTER:** I think it was pretty much covered by the answer to Dr Bourke's question—the concern that there might be a downward trend in the number of apprentices that are being taken on and whether you see it as a trend or whether you are not too concerned at this point.

**Mr Guy:** I am not concerned at this particular point in time, no. We believe the numbers will be okay and will stack up for what we require in the ACT.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I note that comparatively the expenses for 2011 are down significantly. That is due to, I guess, the fact that there are not as many apprenticeships. Is there a correlation there?

**Mr Guy:** Our office expenses?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Guy:** No, it is just a matter of us budgeting a little better, working a little harder and trying to save as much as we possibly can.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I was just wondering if there were any other internal factors involved.

**Mr Guy:** No, not really. We are only a three-person office and we try to run it as sleekly as we possibly can. I think it was down by about \$15,000.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Well done.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson, do you have any questions?

**MR HANSON:** No, I think that everything has been answered.

**THE CHAIR:** There being no further questions, thank you, Mr Guy. It was a very brief, painless appearance.

**MR HANSON:** It is a new record, isn't it? We realised in an internal meeting the

other day that sometimes we were asking the same questions and getting the same answers each year, so we thought we would not go through that process again.

**THE CHAIR:** But you will get to appear again at some other point and we will have some new questions for you. Thank you, Mr Guy.

We will now go to CIT. We have a different lot of officials at the table, so I will quickly go through this. You are probably all very aware of the privilege statement. I am sure you are all familiar with that. I draw your attention to that, to make sure that you are aware of that. Obviously these hearings are being broadcast and they are public hearings, just so that you are aware of that fact as well. Before we go to questions, minister, do you want to make a statement in relation to CIT?

**Mr Barr:** No, I am comfortable.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Marron?

**Mr Marron:** Yes. It is always good to be here.

**THE CHAIR:** That is good to hear.

**Mr Barr:** I could not possibly have said that!

**Mr Marron:** Well, the question was posed outside: where would you rather be on a wet day—outside walking the streets of Canberra or in here with the estimates? Of course it is walking the streets of Canberra!

The annual report for 2010 is a fairly complex one. I am sure you have had a good look at it. 2010 was in many ways a good year and in some ways a difficult year for CIT. We did face the downturn in international students and we did satisfy the demand that rolled up at the door, which meant a bit of over-delivery in that respect. The downturn in international students put pressure on the budget.

I know that we are focusing on the annual report for 2010, but I would like to comment that in 2011 we are ahead of our budget. We have managed, and are managing, to deliver to our contracted target. Despite all the other things that are happening this year, we expect to land, at the end of this year, in a good budget position, having delivered our commitment to the territory. I might leave it there so that you can ask questions. I am sure there will be one or two.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Marron. I will go first off to the issue that you raised in your opening statement about international students and the pressure, as you said, that that put on the budget. Has there been any recovery in terms of enrolments from overseas? As you said, in looking ahead for the next financial year, is there going to be an improvement in that respect?

**Mr Marron:** The last time that we took the census, which was 30 September this year, in terms of student enrolments, which is one way of counting—how many programs people are enrolled in—it is 1,666, which translates to about 1,075 bodies, because some people enrol in more than one program. That is about 16.4 per cent down on last

year. What I would say is that if you compare that across the VET sector in Australia, that is probably on the good side of the downturn in the sense that many other places have experienced much more severe downturns than that.

We still have the same sort of spread. We have 80 countries represented in the international student market. There are shifts in demand in regard to where international students are actually going. But we are pretty heartened by the fact that it was 16.4 per cent. We had budgeted for around a 30 per cent downturn. In fact, revitalising the marketing campaign and how we target our students in our recruitment seems to have paid off.

We also made a strategic decision about English language, which is often a feeder. Market rates prevail in English language teaching and certainly our pricing needed to be amended. The market just was not coming at our pricing. That has proved to be quite successful for us, because if we get students in to do English language training, they then continue through into the other programs. But there is no room for complacency. Generally there is a slight upturn in the market, but some of those fundamentals in the market are still there—the high dollar and those other aspects.

The other area that gives us some confidence is that the interest for this year—that is, the inquiry for next year and the year after—which is of course a very important barometer, is looking pretty positive. It is possibly not back to where we were a couple of years ago, but it is certainly within this range and we hope to improve next year.

There is a follow-through, because most students do not do one-year programs; they are here for a couple of years. So if you have a bad year one year, you get the tail end of that next year. So that is this year, because the bad year was last year. So next year is kind of a touchstone year, because we will not have so many carrying forward from the really bad year. So that should give us a new benchmark base.

We have also expanded a little bit into opportunities that Austrade have been promoting, which is transnational delivery and finding overseas partners and perhaps having more activity that is connected with overseas partners, so the delivery is in overseas locations.

**THE CHAIR:** In terms of the ACT compared to other jurisdictions, are we doing relatively well?

**Mr Marron:** We are doing relatively well. The VET sector has been hit much harder than the higher education sector. Partly that is to do with immigration and visa rules. I know that Minister Barr continually takes up some of these matters with the commonwealth at COAG meetings. There has been the Knight review. We were a bit disappointed with some of the outcomes of the Knight review, “we” being TAFE generally and the sector.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Chair, I have a supplementary, if that is okay.

**THE CHAIR:** I will just see if Mr Hanson has anything on it.

**MR HANSON:** Yes, I have a question. You said that the downturn had been consistent across all nationality groups coming in.

**Mr Marron:** Sorry, I did not mean that. I meant that we see that people are making changes in response to where demand and supply fluctuate in different disciplines. In tourism and hospitality, for example, you get a bit of a downturn at the moment, whereas in perhaps health and allied health—nursing, those sorts of areas—you get a bit of an upturn. But we have got a good spread. There are international students in all our centres apart from Fyshwick, which is the trade training centre.

**MR HANSON:** Have you noticed any national trends? There might be a bigger hit from Indian students than Chinese students or this and not that. Is it a national thing or is it, as you have said, more related to the subjects that are undertaken?

**Mr Marron:** The number of Indian students has decreased. It has not decreased as much as we anticipated, but people have made different choices perhaps and go into different programs. There has been a small downturn in the Chinese take-up. Apart from that, it has been pretty steady across the individuals from the 80 countries that we host.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, you were waiting to ask a question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Lovely to see you here, Mr Marron; I am sure you would not be anywhere else. My question is related to what Mr Hanson was asking. I am trying to dig down a bit deeper on the impact of international student drop-off and the national make-up on that. Is that standard throughout Australia or do some of the international students prefer to go towards one particular state? There has been some negative publicity in some of the other states with certain national groupings. Is there an opportunity for CIT to take advantage of that?

**Mr Marron:** I think there is, Mr Doszpot. Just before I answer, could I just provide an update. Peter has just given me the figures for October; I was referring to the figures for September. In our international enrolments for October, the downturn has moved from 16.4 to 11.7, so that trend, as indicated, is coming through.

There are opportunities. In the VET sector, there is no doubt that a lot of the international student build-up was in Victoria and New South Wales, particularly Victoria, where they had a deregulated market and there were a lot of private providers. Perhaps the number overwhelmed the regulator's ability and so some not so good things happened. That has had a flow-on effect across Australia. But I think that there has been more to it. I think the visa issues are very important in all of this. The high dollar does not help but, pushed, I would say that the change in the visa rules for VET students has been the critical thing. The rest of these things are cyclical; they happen. Exchange rates will fluctuate.

Does that give us an opportunity in Canberra? I think it does. I think that Canberra is seen by our students as a safe place. We know this because we did an i-graduate survey in 2009 or 2010. The i-graduate survey was done across the country. There is another one coming this year, so we will have that verified. Our students were very explicit about security, quality and appreciation of the teaching and the course that

they did. So we know that that is important and we know that in some other jurisdictions it has not been. It is the point where the price point matters—what premium people are prepared to pay for those sorts of things. We are probably not the cheapest place to come—we know we are not the cheapest place to come—but we position ourselves as the place that has those things that people value.

The whole essence here for sustainable markets is about the student experience. The student experience has to be a good one. It has to be good on a couple of levels. It has to be good in social terms; it has to be good in educational gain terms; and perhaps it also has to be good in economic terms for them. So it is getting that mix. Part of our refocusing has been to focus on just those things. The opportunity is continuing and we are going to work very hard at it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** If the CIT had more autonomy, would you be able to respond to these market opportunities better?

**Mr Marron:** I think so. With a degree more autonomy—it is not that we are inhibited necessarily in terms of international activity; it is all the back stuff, the support stuff, that makes us more lithe, perhaps, and able to make quicker choices. I would not overplay it, but I think it would support us.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Mr Marron, I notice that you list the \$9.3 million sustainable skills hub as a capital works highlight. I understand that the building was jointly funded by the federal and ACT governments. What kind of training is undertaken in this building? Can you elaborate on that. And has the building proved to be effective and relevant for students?

**Mr Marron:** The building is a great building. As many of you know, it was arguably the first six-star education building in the country. It operates at two levels, that building. First, it has got lecture rooms, computer rooms and lots of the things that you would expect to see, so it is multipurpose in its use.

But the building is a living learning tool. If you have had the opportunity to go to the building, you would have seen that everything is visible; all the solar installations, the way that the building is warmed and cooled and the mechanics of operating the building are all open. So our apprentices and designers, people who are doing building design and whatnot, can go in and use the building as a living experiment. If you go down the stairs, you will see how the building is cooled with the natural rock formations and whatnot. It works on both those levels.

A third area for that building this year has been the amount of people who have come to have a look through it—groups who have come to have a look through it. It has been an award winning building. People come from interstate and around Canberra to have a look at it. We think it is working very well for us, but it was built with the future in mind and it will be even more valuable as some of the practices in the trade areas and design areas start to become standard.

**THE CHAIR:** Anything further, Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** No; I am satisfied with that.

**THE CHAIR:** I will go to Ms Hunter and then I will come back to you, Mr Hanson.

**MS HUNTER:** I have a quick follow-up one on the visa issue. Mr Marron, you said the minister needed to take up some issues. Minister, where is that up to? I know that there has been a call from other premiers around looking at this issue and improving it. What is the latest on that?

**Mr Barr:** I provided an update to this on a very welcome question from the government backbench on this matter in the last sittings, where I did—

**MS HUNTER:** Has it moved since then?

**Mr Barr:** The ministerial council meeting is later this month. It is ultimately a COAG decision. The ministerial council can seek to make a recommendation. It largely relates to the recommendations within the Knight report around the different treatment of institutions even though they may be offering degrees at the same point on the Australian qualifications framework. There has been a distinction drawn in the Knight report between universities, effectively self-accrediting institutions, and the VET sector. That is the point that we are seeking to see the commonwealth shift their current policy position on. I understand that a number of other jurisdictions and first ministers will be raising this when COAG next meets as well.

**MS HUNTER:** Mr Marron, I want to raise the issue about the role that CIT is playing in ensuring that young people in the ACT who now, as part of the youth commitment, need to stay on in education and training—how that is working. I notice from your annual report that there are partnerships with ACT schools and colleges, and you seem to have a few new courses and programs. Could you just talk a bit more around the role that CIT is playing in all of this?

**Mr Marron:** I might lead in and then pass to the deputy chief executive responsible for that area so that we can get some more precise detail. We have a number of relationships with schools, but we have also got a number of relationships with individuals who are in that year 10 to year 12 cohort who are not at school. We offer alternative year 10 and year 12 qualifications to young people who, for one reason or another, find it difficult in the traditional school environment. We have arrangements with schools in the training of teachers and in advising on VET in schools. We do that across the school community, not just the public schools; we have got relationships with the Catholic schools as well. I might ask Jenny to give a couple of examples to illustrate the point.

**Ms Dodd:** The relationship we have got with schools and with youth is really quite diverse. I might highlight a few of those programs to give you a bit of an insight. The first is around the smarter schools program. We are very active in working with the four socioeconomic schools that were identified. In the last week, we had 50 year 5 students at CIT; this week we have got another 50 going to Bruce from a different

school. Last week was Florey; this week is Charnwood. Those kids spent time with some of our teachers in some of our facilities, having a look at what those sorts of career options are about. That program is being driven out by our two careers counsellors, who are very active working in that area. It has been very effective in terms of opening up CIT to a younger age group.

However, we have also had a focus—we are just about to finish what we call our central programs—where we have had kids in year 9, predominantly, and year 10 who engage in doing some courses at CIT. They do those over a six to eight-week period. It is not always the same model, but they tend to come one afternoon a week for about six or eight weeks. They do some competencies with us, and in many cases they actually complete the competencies—not always, but that is part of the process of actually getting some form of accredited training. That is a diverse program across that particular age group.

When we move into the colleges, we are also working quite extensively with the colleges in terms of supporting the new initiatives around the trade training centres. We are actively having discussions on how we can support that. We work with a range of colleges that may well use us where they are not scoped to deliver or may use our facilities. It just depends on the relationship. The new Gungahlin college, with CIT embedded in that, is not directly just supporting Gungahlin; it is supporting the wider community out there in terms of the facilities.

In terms of Bimberi, we are talking to Bimberi all the time as part of our offer. We have got a new idea for Bimberi for 2012 which we are just about to put to them this week, around what we might do there in terms of being able to support the challenging component of what they have to deliver. And the very important component of what we do as well in terms of some of our courses—we have MOUs with a couple of the colleges where some of the courses are delivered in the college. We auspice the training; they are linked very closely to CIT and we control the outcomes. For example, in the 2010 experience, we did some work in the resources industry with a couple of the colleges. That was not just about disadvantaged youth; that was about picking out some of the capable kids who might be looking at resources as a career pathway. So it is quite diverse.

Another thing that is important to note in this is that the CIT vocational college is a school, if you like, and a very powerful school, for the kids who have not been able to get through the schooling system in a more traditional way.

That is a bit of a snapshot of quite a lot of diverse work.

**MS HUNTER:** With the Bimberi proposal that you are going to be putting forward, will that be a combination of delivery inside Bimberi and a connection for when those young people come out, to ensure that they have that education and training pathway?

**Ms Dodd:** I was out at Bimberi last week, and in an ideal world that would be perfect. But the constraints around Bimberi are very strong in what kids can and cannot do.

**MS HUNTER:** I am thinking about once they are released.

**Ms Dodd:** Of course; they can come forward on a pathway. One of the challenges at Bimberi is—for example, at the moment I think there are 22 kids at Bimberi, and only six of those kids would be low risk enough to do some of the hands-on stuff that we would do. That means that any program we design for that group is different from what we would do in other contexts. We are relooking at how we are doing some of that stuff.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Marron, some incidents have been raised in the media about bullying at CIT. I believe you said in the media that you are not aware of any of those cases or any allegations that have been made. Have you investigated that to try and clarify what the issue is?

**Mr Marron:** The newspaper article I am assuming you are referring to was on 17 September. It named two people and some other people were referred to who were not named. The incidents that they were referring to were in 2009. We have looked back and the processes in 2009 were that there was an internal complaint by one of those people who was named. The outcome of the investigation was that the allegation at the time lacked substance. That was the only internal complaint that CIT had, and in those instances those individuals then went to Comcare and through the Comcare process which then follows on.

**MR HANSON:** I refer to the article of 17 September, because you were quoted in the paper. It may be an incorrect quote, but it says:

He—

that is referring to you—

is not aware of any culture of bullying and harassment ... “Nobody has made a formal complaint to us and we don’t have any formal complaints on record.”

**Mr Marron:** That was the case at that time, yes.

**MR HANSON:** But you are saying that there was a complaint made?

**Mr Marron:** There was an internal complaint that was made in 2009, yes. In that context, I thought that she was referring to the time that I had been there.

**MR HANSON:** Right, so it was referring to a previous time.

**Mr Marron:** Yes. In my response to her, the point was about the culture of bullying. What I tried to say in the context of that interview was that in the last couple of years we have had very few. First, let me put it this way: CIT is a large organisation that employs on an annual basis more than 1,100 people. We take everything very seriously in regard to our staff and staff welfare and providing a good workplace. We believe we do. In that article, I was trying to stress that with regard to “mental stress”, which is the term harassment and bullying tend to fall under, we have had very few complaints made to us in the last couple of years—2010-11. In fact, I have the statistics in front of me. We had one complaint in 2010, which was not found to have substance, and one complaint in 2011, which, again, did not have substance. At the

same time, we have looked very closely—

**MR HANSON:** Those complaints were about bullying, were they?

**Mr Marron:** Well, they are mental stress, of which—

**MR HANSON:** But you said in the media that there had been no complaints, unless you were misquoted. But what the quote says is that nobody had made any formal complaints; you have no complaints on record.

**Mr Marron:** Actually, these are not complaints; these are workers compensation claims. People did not make complaints, but they made workers compensation claims through the Comcare system. My point was that, in terms of the culture of bullying, the statistics do not bear that out. People who engage with CIT, I think, would not bear that out.

In reference to the article, in 2009 four people went through the Comcare process. Whilst I cannot say—and I said this in the interview—that the allegations those people made about harassment and bullying were correct or incorrect—because there is insufficient evidence that we have found—WorkSafe is looking at all this and we expect a report from WorkSafe imminently. We looked at the location, which was one centre, and we have been working very hard this year—we have an action plan and courses of action that we are moving through—to build the relationships within the centre. One thing we determined looking back was that the relationships within the centre were not as they should be.

Whether that constitutes bullying and harassment is a different issue. But we can say that the relationships were not as they should be and they required work. We have been working hard to do that through an action plan this year. It is slow progress, but we are making progress.

**MR HANSON:** Thanks very much.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a couple of supplementaries on that. Mr Marron, the questions I am about to ask relate to the ones Mr Hanson has covered, and I understand that these were probably before your time—

**Mr Marron:** I am in the job now, so I understand.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am trying to understand the process. My office has received a number of complaints from people who were, according to them, victims of bullying. There are several different ways their cases have been addressed. I am trying to understand what the policy of CIT is when something is brought to the attention of CIT regarding bullying. Some have been referred to Comcare, some to Shared Services and, I believe, some to the Work Safety Commissioner. What is the reason for referring different people to different areas? In the couple of cases where it has been deemed there is no case to answer, Shared Services determined there was no case to answer?

**Mr Marron:** I will ask Peter to give you the detail in a moment, but, often, where it

ends up depends on the choices of the individual and what they instigate, whether they go through the Comcare process or the—

**MR DOSZPOT:** So it is the individuals who decide and not that CIT directs them to some—

**Mr Marron:** We have an internal complaints process, and if people make an internal complaint there is a process to follow. If we needed third-party intervention, it is Shared Services. That is the process. They will come and review, but people might go directly to workers compensation through Comcare. I will just get Peter to elaborate.

**Mr Kowald:** There are a number of different pathways. The individual can initiate a workers compensation claim and that starts one process. A separate internal complaint has to be addressed by CIT, and in the particular case you are referring to, the complaint was referred to Shared Services for investigation. In regard to WorkSafe, a number of individuals approached WorkSafe themselves quite independent of CIT. So that sets up a number of pathways.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, when there are complaints to Shared Services, who does Shared Services report to?

**Mr Barr:** Under the new administrative arrangements, they are within the Treasury.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Or back then, I guess. I am referring to the case—

**Mr Barr:** They were with Territory and Municipal Services, but they are now with the Treasury Directorate. Ultimately there is a line of reporting to me now as Treasurer, but in these circumstances it would have been to TAMS.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am just wondering what your point of view would be on a report that comes back to say that there is no case to answer when the individual or up to eight witnesses were not even called to talk to Shared Services. They came to a conclusion from just reading reports that there was no case to answer. Is that satisfactory?

**Mr Barr:** I would have no basis to make a comment on that without having seen any of the information, so I cannot make a comment on that. That is an allegation. I have nothing that I can add to that at this point.

**MR DOSZPOT:** How would you propose—

**Mr Barr:** It is a hypothetical question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is not a hypothetical; it is a real question.

**Mr Barr:** It is not before me, Mr Doszpot, so—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Well, that is what I am asking. I am trying—

**Mr Barr:** It would be highly unusual for it to come to a minister.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Well, what I am asking is: what is the process if Shared Services' ruling has been deemed to be somewhat questionable, if you like?

**Mr Barr:** Deemed by who?

**MR DOSZPOT:** The people affected by it who—

**Mr Barr:** They would have a right of appeal.

**MR DOSZPOT:** To whom?

**Mr Barr:** To ACAT, I would presume. They would have an administrative—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I guess my question is to Mr Kowald, because you would be aware of the circumstances I am talking about.

**Mr Kowald:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Would these—

**Mr Kowald:** But I think you are talking about a number of different events which relate to different people.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand. I am not trying to bring individual cases up here. I am—

**Mr Kowald:** And they have just all been combined, and I think a misleading impression has been given about what the process—

**Mr Barr:** There would be a right of appeal on any administrative decision to ACAT. Certainly ministers do not make decisions on that. I am not a judge. I do not make decisions on individual cases in that way.

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, I understand that. I am simply trying to get an understanding of what directions were given to people by CIT and what rights those people had to pursue further action. That is what I am trying to get to, and maybe we can pursue this in a different arena. I would like to put that on the record that—

**Mr Marron:** Not to interfere, but, if you want, we will take that aspect of the question on notice and respond to it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I appreciate that, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We are running out of time, but we will go to Dr Bourke and then perhaps one final question from Ms Hunter.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you provide the committee with some information on how successful CIT has been in turning students into successful employees? Can you elaborate on what work CIT is undertaking to ensure that students have the best

opportunities when going into the workforce?

**Mr Marron:** I will ask my colleagues to support anything I say in a moment. One of the things that is characteristic about CIT and traditionally has been—it probably reflects the territory's conditions—the high rate—one of the highest in the country, in fact—of employability of graduates. We run a tag line in one of our presentations that we have the highest rate of people who got employment who were not employed before they came to CIT. As I say, the way the territory is with skill shortages and job vacancies, it is probably not a huge surprise that we lead the country in doing that.

We also think that part of that is the student services that we offer to our students through engagement with formal processes, which might be guidance on careers or whatnot, but also through the staff and the different delivery centres. The staff are very plugged in to industry. Recently, this year we have had a lot of connection with the industries that we serve.

Because placements are also a large part of what we do in terms of the training, it gives people an opportunity to make contact with potential employers, so there is a combination of events that deliver a very good statistic and a great strength of CIT. It is one of our selling points also to students who might want to come to CIT as part of coming to Australia. Jenny, do you want to add anything about the student services?

**Ms Dodd:** Yes. A couple of things are worth noting here. We have a teaching and learning plan, and that teaching and learning plan has as one of its priorities workplace learning, workplace integration, workplace application of skills. I think that that helps in terms of driving priorities across our teaching workforce to ensure that at all points everything is connected to the workplace.

If we look at the straight graduation satisfaction rates, they are at 90 per cent. If we look at the employer satisfaction rates, they, too, are over 90 per cent. They are two indicators that what we are doing, what our mission is—which is to supply a skilled workforce for the ACT region and beyond—is successful.

Adrian alluded to our industry reference committees. Each of our centres has an industry reference committee. Before we accredit any program, there is an individual program reference committee that also assesses that and brings to the forefront what industry demands are in terms of our delivery. Under the new national VET regulation, that has been strengthened, but we come into that in a very strong position because it has been an operational aspect of how we have designed our programs and delivered them for many years. They are a group of things.

In terms of student services, we put a lot of focus on helping our students actually complete, and our student services team is tasked with that over the next couple of years—to really try and think through that this is not just helping students get enrolled and then have some study success, but move towards completions of their study programs.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you tell me something about Indigenous student enrolments in 2010, please?

**Mr Marron:** Our Indigenous student enrolments improved. They rose by 36 per cent in 2010 to a point of 602. Some of that is in the access 10 program that I mentioned earlier and in CIT's year 12 program. But we also have more mature age Indigenous people coming through CIT. This year we were really proud to have the first Indigenous person graduate at the degree level. We offer four degrees at CIT, as you know. In the bachelor of photography we had the first Indigenous graduate, and a wonderful talent too. So that was a particular highlight.

The Orana Centre, which is the host of our Indigenous effort, is building its reputation. They have been doing work in Queensland and the Northern Territory in terms of raising cultural awareness both in the public and in the private sector. They have been earning commercial dollars, if you like, as most of our departments do, in this very successful program. It continues to go from strength to strength. It grew from 443 to 602 in a year. Part of that is the engagement, getting people out there. We have been putting a bit of effort also into our Indigenous staff and it is great to see two of them graduate with their own qualifications at the graduation. We are growing our own teachers, if you like. So we think it has been a pretty successful year for the Indigenous students.

**DR BOURKE:** That is a good story.

**Mr Marron:** It is a good story.

**THE CHAIR:** It is indeed.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, congratulations. I think it is all laid out on page 144.

**THE CHAIR:** We are at a time—

**MS HUNTER:** A final question?

**THE CHAIR:** Go to the final question.

**MS HUNTER:** What has your engagement been with the proposed merger? What sort of meetings have you been engaged in with the task force and so forth?

**Mr Marron:** When the chair said there could be one more question, I thought that we were going to get out without a question on—

**MS HUNTER:** Sorry.

**Mr Marron:** No, it is all right.

**THE CHAIR:** We might just go a little over, because I know—

**Mr Marron:** No, it is an important point. With the steering group that is looking at, post Bradley, what comes next, we have been engaged in a couple of meetings with the steering group. They were really presentations. We were given a broad brief to look at some possibilities under different circumstances—perhaps scenarios on what might be the way to do this.

At CIT we took—obviously with the Bradley report, everybody has got an individual view of elements of that. But we took it seriously and we used it as a blueprint. We offered advice as a part of government to the government of the steering group. We offered that advice on the basis of some thought-out models that we presented as part of our advice.

They were obviously indicative—our ideas. We understand that there are a whole lot of other things that need to be taken into account. But we have been working closely and putting forward ideas and models of what the future might look like. We have also been cooperating with the steering group in providing information on the nuts and bolts of how CIT operates—where it is at, what its drivers are, what its parameters are in terms of doing the business of CIT.

**THE CHAIR:** A final question, Mr Doszpot, and then we will let you go.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Marron, we do not really have enough information to know which is the best option available. The Assembly has been looking at ways to get more information from the minister on that. But I guess I am more interested to know at this stage what impact it is having on CIT's plans, with next year's enrolments in mind and with the staff, with the level of uncertainty that is going on at the moment.

**Mr Marron:** I think that CIT is remarkably resilient in that, as I mentioned at the beginning, we are ahead of the game in terms of our budget proposals, our budget targets for this year. We are delivering on our contract. We are continuing to do innovative things and student satisfaction has held up remarkably well. But there is no doubt that clarity of purpose into next year is important for us.

We understand, and I think most of our staff understand, that there is a lot at stake and there are a lot of different views. The landscape changes on a daily basis. Last week the landscape changed again because of decisions that are outside the ACT in terms of changing the environment. So we understand that, but we are committed to our mission.

We expect that 2012 will be a very creative year in terms of moving forward with whatever decision the government comes up with. We are prepared, as I have kind of indicated, because we have looked at three scenarios, for whatever that outcome might be and we look forward to having that outcome articulated. There is a remarkable resilience about CIT and the focus on the student experience should not be underestimated.

It is really a bit of a tribute to all that are involved, particularly our staff, that they keep on keeping on when there is a degree of uncertainty and there is no doubt that it has an impact here and there. But we have worked hard to keep people informed. I go out every two or three weeks. I have staff forums and anybody can come. Anybody can send me an email, and they do. We send out bulletins every week about what is happening—as much as we know. When something happens, we let our staff know. We might not know what the answers are, but we let them know as much as we can about what is happening.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Marron. Obviously that has been referred to the committee. I was actually going to ask the minister when we can expect the response.

**Mr Barr:** When it is ready.

**THE CHAIR:** When it is ready. Yes, I was expecting that would be the answer. We will actually have to go. I am sorry. If there are any further questions, they can be put on notice. We have the directorate waiting. Thank you, Mr Marron, Mr Kowald and Ms Dodd for appearing today. We appreciate you answering our questions today.

We will now ask the directorate witnesses to come forward. I will just go through the housekeeping again, because we have got a change of officials. I thank the department for appearing today at this hearing. You are probably all aware of the privilege statement, but I draw your attention to that so that you are aware of that. Obviously our public hearings today are being broadcast. Before we go to questions for the department, Mr Barr, did you want to make an opening statement?

**Mr Barr:** Given that we are running behind schedule, I am happy not to read a statement to you and you can just go into questions.

**THE CHAIR:** I will go to the first question then. It is in relation to page 27 of the annual report and it deals with student satisfaction. Figure 8.4 indicates that the ACT has remained fairly steady when it comes to student satisfaction within public education since 2008. When you analyse the data and what students might not have been satisfied with, what are some of the issues or themes that come up for students? Is there anything we can do to actually improve that overall satisfaction?

**Ms Stewart:** The figures that are quoted in the annual report are just overall satisfaction. We do ask all students, parents, carers, teachers and the school staff about their overall satisfaction with the public schooling. This question relates just to that overall measure. We ask each of those stakeholder groups whether they agree or strongly agree with their satisfaction with public schooling, whether it is neutral, or whether they disagree or strongly disagree.

In terms of that particular question and that outcome, which shows good overall satisfaction with public schooling, we do not have any further detailed analysis than that. We do, however, ask questions in relation to other aspects of public schooling and we do have quite a lot of data in relation to that. We make that available back to schools for school improvement purposes.

**THE CHAIR:** As you said, when you do the survey, it is just that overall broad level. It is at a fairly high level, but because there might be some level of lack of satisfaction there or whatever you might see it as being, do you then sort of identify that there might be some issues that are coming out of that or there might be things we can do to improve that sort of overall satisfaction level?

**Ms Stewart:** Yes, one of the key purposes of this particular survey is to provide feedback to schools on what their stakeholder communities think. So we do provide

all that data and the individual question responses back to schools. Schools do their own analysis and look at areas where they can make improvements. Overall, there are not high levels of dissatisfaction. Overall, there are high levels of satisfaction against all those questions in all of our public schools. But obviously schools will be looking for areas where they can make individual improvements in particular aspects of their school.

**THE CHAIR:** Within the questions that you are asking, there are individual questions that might potentially identify if there are certain areas where there might be improvement required or where there could be some improvement made. Is that the information that then gets passed on to the schools?

**Ms Stewart:** That is right, yes.

**Dr Watterston:** If I can just reinforce what Tracy said, it is a school improvement tool. So while we report it publicly, and we are happy to report it publicly, it is a school improvement tool. You will be aware that we have a network model. So each network has a school network leader. This data or information is used by the network leader and the school executive to talk about the interrelated aspects of school improvement, of which there are multiple sources of data which make up our school improvement framework.

It is important, then, to contextualise the school survey data and talk about what is going on in that particular school. In digging deeper, based on the indicative results, some analysis comes forth about why those areas of dissatisfaction exist, if they do exist. Certainly, any issues which might be impacting on that are addressed through the school improvement process.

It would be difficult to say that across all schools there are commonalities about why there would be levels of dissatisfaction, but certainly the point Tracy was making—and it is one that we would like to present this morning to be quite clear about it—is that satisfaction levels are really high comparatively. But also in the last 12 months, they are slightly higher in two out of the three categories for students and I think it was parents—it was the students and teachers, I think. I think maintenance of those levels has been terrific. But also it is a qualitative discussion. It is not particularly the data. It is how you use the data. I think that is the point I would like to make this morning. It really is a school improvement tool.

**Ms Huard:** I am the school network leader for north Canberra and Gungahlin and recently a principal too, so I can answer from both sides. The data comes back to the school. Using that data, the school network leader identifies the particular issues that might be in the school—because it is a broad brush. It is about sitting down with staff and parents and digging a little bit deeper, doing a little bit more research to ensure that areas that may be of concern can be addressed.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** Thanks. I would like to go to the issue of solar panels, which is discussed on page 142 of the report. It talks about six solar panel supply companies contracted and the panels to be installed early in 2011-12 and so on. The first question

I have is: what dates were the contracts entered into for the solar panels?

**Mr Wynants:** The contracts were entered into in January and February. We have a panel of contracts with six supply and installation companies. During 2010 we went out to the market to get major companies to set up the panel contract and arranged to have those companies install the solar panels as the funding came through, both through the ACT's solar schools program and through the national solar schools program.

**MR HANSON:** You are saying that they were all submitted to the solar feed-in tariff scheme in January and February?

**Mr Wynants:** No, they were contracts that came to us. We have confirmed that those contracts met the requirements of the solar feed-in tariff scheme. We have confirmed that through the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate as well as ActewAGL.

**MR HANSON:** When were they submitted to the solar feed-in tariff scheme?

**Mr Wynants:** The actual applications for all schools were submitted around 8 to 11 July when the legislation went through. That window of opportunity was there. All the schools we put through are the small scale ones, so up to 30 kilowatt systems.

**MR HANSON:** So they are all getting that same rate, all the schools that were submitted?

**Mr Wynants:** All schools were submitted. The assessment by ActewAGL is that they have all been approved, so they will get the maximum rate of 45.7c per kilowatt.

**MR HANSON:** All the schools that now have solar panels come under the solar feed-in tariff scheme; is that correct?

**Mr Wynants:** That is correct.

**MR HANSON:** Can you provide me with the exact date that that was provided to the solar feed-in tariff scheme for all of the schools?

**Mr Wynants:** We can give you the dates the applications were put in. There were some schools which had solar panels installed previously as part of a trial. They are already in the system. Then the additional ones were put through on around 11 July.

**MR HANSON:** That would be great; thank you.

**DR BOURKE:** I notice that eight public schools have trialled greater school autonomy this year. Could you provide an update and overview of what that has entailed, the support provided by the directorate to the schools and the response from the trial schools?

**Dr Watterston:** Thanks for the question. The school autonomy trial, as you correctly stated, in the 2010 calendar year has been undertaken by eight schools. We ran an

information session last year and selected those schools. Primarily, the school autonomy trial revolved around two aspects—that is, flexibility around the financial resource allocation and local capacity to attend to staff matters. It is a bit more wide ranging than just local selection. What we have done with those eight schools is work together in a steering-type approach. They presented issues of complexities to the table and we have looked at ways of trying to free the system up to enable them—and the word we are using is “empower” them—to be flexible at the local level.

I bring to your attention a report from the OECD, which is international evidence from 2003, which talks about the 65 countries across the Western world that report their educational outcomes in a comparative sense. This report, which was also written up recently in the *Australian* newspaper, talks about the fact that the highest performing schools in the world—the highest performing school systems—are schools that have autonomy over these two issues. The report specifies that autonomy over local selection is, in fact, the prime driver of school improvement. The financial resources make some difference, but clearly not as big a difference as local selection.

I am not sure you would be aware that we have what I would consider to be—and I probably should have thought about the way I choose my words—a cumbersome HR system. In the past we have had a centralised system. We would take a number of principals off-line for the whole of fourth term and we would interview up to 800 prospective teachers, rate them and then allocate them to schools. Not only in terms of the way we do it from the central office but also for school improvement in general we think that for schools to be able to make those selections directly will enhance the capacity to improve outcomes for all students.

In the trial that we have had—going to the question that you asked, Dr Bourke—we have been astounded by some of the results, and I can give you one example from Weetangera primary school. Principal Phil Gray advertised one position and got over 51 applicants. Some of those applicants were teachers from non-government schools in the ACT—people that would never be part of our centralised selection process—and also there were a range of applicants from interstate. In advertising individual positions throughout this year we have attracted a range of people of high quality that would not always be in our system as we had it in the past.

Peter Sollis at Calwell high school is another strong advocate of the process. He tells a story about centralised allocated staff that go to his school that do not always feel esteemed about being third or fourth or fifth choice on their list. When they get to that school they stay a short period of time and look for better opportunities. What he has been able to determine now with having this one-on-one contact with people—where they apply, he selects them and they feel esteemed about being selected—is that there is a greater engagement and greater commitment within that school.

As a principal who came into the program not particularly sure about whether the efficacy of a local selection would, in fact, enhance his school improvement processes, he is now a really strong convert and a great advocate for the opportunity to choose staff that, in fact, want to be at his school. They are choosing to apply for that school directly and then, as I said a minute ago, they are feeling quite privileged that they were selected within that group. As you are aware, that is the way every other organisation and enterprise in our community operates. I think that for us to be able to

get into a position where we appoint staff directly to the place of their choosing is important.

It is also important to point out that until 2010 some of our HR processes have not permitted us to appoint substantive teachers during the school year; we have had to wait until the end of the year to confirm a substantive appointment. Some of those people who have come from other places are not keen to wait for that period of time. The length of time that it takes to process people and get them into positions has also caused people who have moved to the ACT to take up earlier offers with independent schools or universities. We have got some evidence about that.

The other issue that we have been able to address in this local selection trial has been the appointment of high performing graduate teachers. In the fourth year of their teaching degree they obviously do a placement in a school. Independent schools in the ACT have been able to select those students before they graduate at the end of the year. Through this process we have now developed a strategy where ACT schools in this trial have been able to do it.

I might also point out that we had an information session in the last week for schools to come into the process for next year. We have only got 12 places because it is a rolling implementation. We will have 20 schools in this trial next year. We had between 50 and 60 schools with their business managers, board chairs and a range of other staff in the room. They were excited about the opportunity because they have seen some of the evidence from their colleagues about how this is working.

The problem we have got now, which is a good problem in a sense, is that schools have realised the opportunities to be gained and we have got an oversupply of people wanting to be part of the process. We are now thinking through how we can bring more schools on or give schools a greater opportunity if they are ready and willing to be part of this process.

**DR BOURKE:** It sounds like your principals are very enthusiastic. I presume this is moving beyond a trial?

**Dr Watterston:** Certainly, there is a national partnership and the federal government are funding four schools as part of our allocation from the national perspective for next year. There is around \$50,000 for those schools to help with the implementation. The answer to your question is that the schools are very excited and they do see the benefits, but at this point we are still negotiating with the AEU about how we would implement the autonomy process, if you like, and the trial.

You would be aware from the media that there is still some difference of opinion about the advantages for the school system in that regard. There is still some work to do to convince stakeholders, if you like, about the need for this reform to be expedited. Certainly, as I have said to you before about the OECD report, the evidence and information are absolutely compelling. There is probably no more rigorous study that has been done on this area than this one. As I said before, it is quite conclusive that the highest performing systems are going in this direction.

You would be aware that we pride ourselves on being the highest performing

jurisdiction in most educational indicators in Australia. So for us to continue the improvement trajectory I think is the next phase for us—to look at other levers that schools can manipulate to be able to continue what is a very high level of school performance and school improvement. It is important that we really look at strategies to try and bring as many schools in and give them opportunities.

**Mr Whybrow:** Just to expand on the financial elements, I probably should refer you back to a newspaper of 9 November, which was talking about the on-passing of funds for primary school students and a question about whether an extra \$100 had been passed on. One of the greatest benefits in the financial elements of schools' autonomy is greater transparency. Within our system, being a complex system, there are effectively two sets of currency in operation at the moment which makes it difficult for principals, the community and school boards to see transparency in activity.

The person who was quoted in that article was one of our principals, Dennis Yarrington at Harrison. Dennis is actually a very strong supporter of our schools' autonomy. He sits on our schools autonomy reference group, as do union members and other key stakeholders, including the P&C. He made some statements there which, from my reading of it, were, "Gee, I wish I could be in schools autonomy now." I use his school as an example. He gets in the order of \$500,000 a year through SBM, which he sees and controls. The vast majority of the resources in a school are for staffing. His staffing budget he has not seen in dollars, but it would be the equivalent of \$5.2 million.

I come back to that article that says in 2009, due to an anomaly in funding from the commonwealth government, an extra \$100 came through and asks: did it get on-passed to schools? The simple answer to that is yes. In 2009, in the annual report, we have a measure which talks about primary school cost per student. We can confirm it, but from memory it would be \$11,771. If we look at the cost per student in this annual report, it is \$13,030. Quite clearly, there is about a \$1,300 increase in funding in the primary school sector. But if you sit at the school level—and the vast majority of dollars are tied up in school staffing resources—you do not actually see that in a transparent way.

When additional funding comes in, there is a natural reaction to say, "Someone's not doing the right thing by me." A real plus with schools autonomy is that people within the school who are managing the school, the principals and the school board, see clearly in a school board report their financial situation in a real sense, not the 10 per cent or the 100 per cent of things, and they get greater flexibility about allocating their resources around need.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Before I start, can I compliment you and the Narrabundah college in particular for a fantastic production I saw last Saturday night, *Death of Marat*, a very intense but absolutely fantastic production. Congratulations on the level of student and teacher involvement to put such a production on. Thank you.

**Dr Watterston:** I will pass that on. Thank you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My first question is regarding school libraries, page 16. How many school libraries currently have access to the new library software Oliver?

**Dr Watterston:** Mr Huxley will certainly give you the information that you require.

**Mr Huxley:** We have been implementing the new and centralised library management system, Oliver, since the start of the year. In excess of 72 libraries are currently using the system across the ACT and we are on track to bring all of those libraries on within the one calendar year as set out in the original implementation. So it has been very well received.

At the moment, we have actually taken all the servers out of schools that were running a range of different library management systems that existed prior to this. Especially smaller primary schools were having a lot of difficulty managing those servers on site. As a result of the high fibre connections for schools, we have been able to take those servers out, take that technical management burden away from schools and implement a standardised system which will be kept up to date and monitored centrally by the directorate in partnership with Shared Services ICT. So it has been a real success for us this year.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Tremendous. And what is the cost of the software?

**Mr Huxley:** I would have to take that one on notice, unfortunately.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is fine. I would be interested in that. That is not a critical question. How is the software utilised through the schools? Does it need any specialist assistance to actually utilise Oliver?

**Mr Huxley:** Basically what we have been doing as part of the implementation is looking at offering training and support to all schools on a staged implementation so that schools actually receive training and professional development support for staff that they choose to send along to that training. That support is provided as part of the implementation. It is a web-based interface. It is quite intuitive to use and it has been very well received by the schools to date.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Is it preferable for a teacher-librarian to be actually in charge of the utilisation of the software?

**Ms Wilks:** The Oliver system is really a system that anybody can use. What we have done in preparation for the introduction of Oliver is have teacher-librarians work in every school to do the teacher-librarian side in terms of ensuring that the resources have been weeded, that they are the right resources, that the catalogue, which is a technical requirement, is right to be able to transfer over to the new system. So it has not just been the actual Oliver changeover. It has been the preparation beforehand which has made this such a smooth operation.

**MR DOSZPOT:** How many primary and secondary schools have full-time teacher-librarians?

**Ms Wilks:** I will have to go through sector by sector. In the eight colleges and Melba

Copland senior secondary school, percentages vary between 100 and 200 per cent, in other words, one full time and two full time.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, if it is—

**THE CHAIR:** It might be better if we have that information provided to the committee, if that is possible.

**Ms Wilks:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am quite happy for that to be provided to the committee. I will ask it differently. How many schools, primary or secondary, do not have full-time teacher-librarians? Can you tell me that?

**Ms Wilks:** There are a number who do not have full-time teacher-librarians. Everybody has somebody in the library, either a library technician to work in the library or a teacher in charge, so that there is always somebody with responsibility for the library. But again, as part of school autonomy and school-based management, principals make decisions around whether to employ a teacher-librarian or not.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have had the pleasure of visiting now almost all of the government schools in Canberra, and my congratulations to them. All of the people I have spoken to have been absolutely fantastic in letting me understand the workings of their particular school. I am getting a lot of feedback from people about teacher-librarians obviously. They feel that there is not enough emphasis at the policy level that their profession should be maintained. I am not sure which one of you I ask, but is there a policy regarding the continuation with teacher-librarians?

**Dr Watterston:** I am happy to reinforce Ms Wilks's last comments and go back to the original answer I gave to Dr Bourke about autonomy. It is a school-based decision. One of the things that we pride ourselves on as a centralised bureaucracy is not to be cleverer than the principals, and even though I have been a principal for 12 or 13 years, I make that point all the time, that they do not need me or my department telling them what their staff profile could be.

So part of this autonomy is about making sure schools can make the best decisions based upon the complexities and the priorities within their own schools. It is a long answer to your question but the schools that have teacher-librarians have identified that as being an area of need. So all schools have sufficient—

**MR DOSZPOT:** But the ones who have not?

**Dr Watterston:** They have identified areas of greater need. That could be literacy and numeracy. In some cases it could even be by phys ed, but specialist teachers and certainly languages other than English are getting additional support time. And some of our secondary schools are looking at increased pastoral care and pastoral support. So each of those priorities is different in different schools. In the old days when I first became a principal, the department would give you a profile and it usually included a teacher-librarian, but there were other areas that were not included. So it is always going to be a difficult choice for a school to make those allocations, but we spend all

of our time in schools and talking to principals.

As I said before about our network model, we are convinced that all schools are addressing their priorities in the best possible way. So it is a much more complex question than just schools should have teacher-librarians, because every school would be having people that fulfil functions that make sure the library is well utilised and respected as a major resource centre within that environment.

**THE CHAIR:** We might move on to the next question and see whether we can get that information for the committee as well. Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** I was interested in how we are tracking or whether we are tracking students who are falling out of the education system between years 6 and 7 or other years along the way. We now have signed up to youth commitment. Have we done any work on how many are disappearing—not going to other education systems, not moving interstate—out of any education or training system?

**Dr Watterston:** Sure. I will just introduce the idea and then let Leanne or Tracy give you the specifics about it. But as you commented, the youth commitment is an area now of greater collaboration that all schools, independent, Catholic and government, are now collaborating around. So the very essence of this work, which I think is a fantastic and very noble aspiration, is to make sure that does not happen. But as you say, even in the best of systems, because of transitions with families and the proximity of New South Wales and the ACT and people moving between those systems, there are a number. I will hand over to Leanne to see whether we have got the figures around that.

**Ms Cover:** In regard to the tracking of the students in particular, data is only one aspect, as Dr Watterston referred to in terms of the overall youth commitment. At this stage we have really focused our work on the data relating to the transition of high school students moving on to colleges and at the moment we are working with around 130 students that we have identified in that transition period that we have had to track and locate.

Sometimes it is just an administrative issue about duplication of names et cetera, things like that. In other cases, those students have moved into alternative education settings, which is part of the process that is endorsed, tracked, monitored and supported, or they have moved on to work-related training such as Australian apprentices as well.

**MS HUNTER:** Are you going to be going down the years, if you like? Are you looking at that sort of transition?

**Ms Stewart.** Yes, we have already started doing some work along those lines. You may be aware that for quite a number of years the directorate has run a survey on year 12 students who have completed and gained a certificate in year 12 and the destinations of those students six months after they have left school. We have this year for the first time now expanded that survey and asked students who have left ACT schools, both public and non-government schools, from year 9 and are currently analysing some data about the destinations of those students and whether they are in

employment or alternative training, whether they have gone to other schools. We are going to supplement that data with some additional data about movements of students in the earlier years, right down to primary school, and undertake some analysis of transitions and destinations of students and where they are actually going. So some of that data will be available shortly but we have not finished the analysis of it yet.

**Dr Watterston:** Can I just add that Emma Robertson from the Youth Coalition has highlighted this as a priority. We have done some work with her in the last three months to try to look at some systems that we can use to track the very cohort that you were talking about, the year 5-6 area, end of primary school. We are becoming more proficient in the secondary level and they are easier to identify, but schools are aware that we are now highlighting this area, years 5 and 6. As I said before, it is a really complex issue. We need a unique student identifier, which is a number that would transport with the student. There was some media around that, I think today, about the need for that in Australia. It is really going to take something like that for us to be able to find students who disappear overnight and have not moved interstate or to other places. So the complexities are quite severe in a way but we are really working hard on it.

**MS HUNTER:** That leads me to alternative education programs. You just touched on that in that answer. What work is the department doing around alternative learning centres, alternative education settings, now that the youth commitment has been signed up to?

**Ms Cover:** As we just mentioned, the whole youth commitment comes under the national partnership of youth attainment and transitions. There are five elements, if you like, to that, which include not just the Education and Training Directorate but our work with the Community Services Directorate and also support agencies in the community that support young people.

**MS HUNTER:** And there are 140 organisations that have signed up?

**Ms Cover:** Yes, they have signed up to the actual youth commitment. In terms of alternative programs, there is a lot happening in that space. I will give you a couple of good examples of what has happened just over the last 12 months. A number of programs are operating and are designed to re-engage disengaged youth with training and education. They are in the areas of construction, business administration, community services, horticulture, hairdressing, and hospitality. I will just touch on a couple of those programs.

Alfred Deakin high school and Stromlo high school are working with Galilee and Wanniasa high school on the pace it program, which is really targeted at trying to re-engage those youth which have already disengaged formally from the education process. They are re-engaging through being introduced to some vocational education training programs around activities, including the white card, which is an entry level qualification for construction training, a certificate I in business and a certificate I in community services. Two programs have been organised for term 3. Eleven students attended the first program, with 10 students achieving certificates. Six students attended the second program, with three students achieving certificates. That is an example of a program which is small but which obviously has a significant impact

there.

There is a horticulture program called the gum program, which is working with the Greening Australia nursery at Aranda. The Westwood farm at Kambah are working on this program. Its focus is really on learning by doing. There is a very applied vocational educational training program aimed at certificate II in horticulture. Again, a small number of students have attended and gained certificates in that program, but it is a really good partnership with our directorate, Greening Australia and the Lions Youth Haven in that program.

In regard to hairdressing, we are working on prevocational qualifications there. We have run one program already. Training was provided by Cooloola hairdressing. They are working towards competencies in certificate III in hairdressing.

The club start program, which provides skills in bar service and waiting skills there, coffee service skills, barista, part-time employment or an entry into hospitality training is a really successful program that we have done there with Calwell clubs. The north side program is with Belconnen Labor Club in partnership with the community. The CC cares program is the program run out of Canberra college. They are working on a certificate III in hospitality.

**MS HUNTER:** Is there any research being undertaken around alternative options, further options or current options and having a look at whether they are working?

**Ms Cover:** Yes. We have just—

**Dr Watterston:** Sorry, I was just going to say that it might be a good time to introduce our newest director, making his debut here this morning, Stephen Gniel, who can talk perhaps a little about the engagement framework and the way that we are trying to categorise our levels of students in terms of what alternative settings we need to provide for them. So it is probably your chance to go, Stephen.

**Mr Gniel:** Thank you, Dr Watterston. I am the new Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Support, which encompasses support and wellbeing as well. What Dr Watterston was alluding to was our enterprise and excellence framework for advancing public schools of distinction. One of the key directions within that document is in the area that you are asking about, which is about re-engaging or maintaining engagement of young people in our schools. And that is to do with mainstream school settings but also other settings. Some of those Ms Cover has already alluded to.

The work around how we best do that is about developing a re-engagement framework that talks not just about students who have disengaged from school. It is about how we also look at preventing those things happening in the first place. So the tiered structure that has been mentioned is around what we are doing in all of our schools. It a universal thing for every student, to make sure they are engaged in their schooling.

That is more to do with every teacher in every classroom being aware of the curriculum that they are using and providing and that it is meeting the needs of the

students in their class and recognising that those students come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, a variety of home environments and other things that can impact on their levels of engagement when they are walking in the door, through to, I guess, the pointy end that we talk about in the tiered structure, which is around those alternative settings where students may not be succeeding in mainstream schooling. It may need a much more targeted approach to their learning.

When we get to that point as well—and you would appreciate that this is about how we do this not just across our directorate; these students can come from Indigenous backgrounds; they can be students that have disabilities; there are a whole range of things that can be leading to this disengagement—it is not just across our directorate that we need to look but also across government and so across agencies. So a lot of our work around this has to be working with Health, for example, around mental health issues, and working with the Community Services Directorate quite specifically, because a lot of this can be to do with accommodation especially. For some of our students, just getting to school is a huge challenge. It is about working with those agencies that actually have direct input with those students in those environments.

Our role is in terms of making sure that they are not lost to the system you are talking about and that we are making sure that we have things in place that can work with other agencies to get them into whatever alternative setting that might be. But the alternative setting provides that wraparound service. You would appreciate that until we deal with some of the issues that are causing the disengagement, forcing a curriculum down their throat is not the first sort of option for us. It is about making sure that these kids are healthy and safe, and that is why a lot of our programs include youth support workers in the schools. We are also at the moment working with Health around nurses in schools and making sure that those specific skill sets that are required to deal with some of these very complex issues are situated in the place where these young children are.

This is an issue not just across Australia but internationally. The real challenge for us now that we are talking about engaging all students, including those that previously left our system and went straight into work or whatever it might be, now that we are including those in our system, is how our system responds to the needs of those students. And I think that is where the framework is developing, which is about the principles on which we base that as well, making sure that we have got those firmly in our mind so that we are treating not only the students in all our mainstream schools with that kind of respect but also the students with high-level needs with the respect that they so deserve.

**THE CHAIR:** We might break now. It is probably a good time. Dr Bourke might have another question on that. We will come to you first, Dr Bourke, after the break.

**Meeting adjourned from 11.05 to 11.24 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** A document has been tabled. Dr Watterston, do you want to say what it is, for the record?

**Dr Watterston:** It is the document that I referred to a number of times in my first answer, about the OECD study around school autonomy and the connection between

school autonomy and school improvement.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for that. We will go to Dr Bourke first. It is a follow-up to the issue that was being asked about previously.

**DR BOURKE:** Yes. Could you tell the committee about the aspirations program?

**Mr Gniel:** The aspirations program involves three teachers who work directly with Indigenous students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, in our system. This year they have been working with 130 of those students. You would have seen one of those pictured on the front page of the *Canberra Times* this morning and another one who is also part of the ANU secondary college.

The aspirations program has been running since 2009, particularly working with students around retention and making sure that they do complete school. So it is very much in the area that we were talking about before. However, this is a more specific program, targeted at students who are showing real promise—the students that we want to make sure have all the options open to them.

The aspirations program is based on relationships too. They very much work with students individually and then bring them into groups. I have only been in the job for a couple of weeks, as you know, but I have already been hearing stories about some of the students involved in the aspirations program. It has gone beyond just our directorate working with these kids to creating networks for them to support each other—that direction for those students around a network that supports them to fulfil their dreams, whatever that might be.

The aspirations program is not just about channelling in one direction or the other; it is about opening up all the options that they have when they complete school. For a lot of students, that is university studies, of course. Some of those students go on to university and work, particularly at the ANU, with support mechanisms that are around at the ANU. Some of those students go interstate.

One of the great stories I have heard already is around the importance of this program being supported. When these students come back to Canberra, they give the teachers in the office a call, because they want to have a coffee with them and let them know how they are going. So they are very proud of how far they have come. But it is based on those people being able to develop those very strong relationships. It is a program that is not about catering for everyone in the system; it is about selecting students, and the family are also involved in that process. It is about making sure that we support the whole child around fulfilling those dreams, whatever they might be.

Certainly it is a program that I am interested in hearing more about as well. I believe it has had quite a bit of impact on our retention rates, which are extremely high and the best in the country—or I believe so. Those things are what the aspirations program is trying to achieve. The links with what happens after school are important as well. Those are the strong links that we are trying to maintain. This is not just about ducking in at one point with a quick conversation; it is about following these students through on the entire journey, and particularly at transition points. I would say that our aspirations workers particularly concentrate on kids when they are going through

from year 10 to college, which previously has been identified as a difficult time for some of these students. So it is about connecting them with the college, making sure that they do continue with their studies through college and also making sure they have the next stage of their lives and their careers well and truly planned out for what they want.

**THE CHAIR:** I might go to another question and then we will go down the line again with questions. On page 33 it mentions the implementation of the Australian curriculum. It mentions phase 1 being implemented. Can we get an update on how that is going? Obviously there is an update there, but can we have a bit more information on how that is going? In particular, has there been any feedback from schools about how that implementation is going?

**Dr Watterston:** I sometimes think that we do not tell the really good stories often enough. As you would be aware, there has been some natural criticism around both the curriculum content and the implementation time line for the Australian curriculum. The ACT, without any fuss at all, has jumped to the lead a bit in terms of implementation. So the work that we have done across 2010 to embed the curriculum and also to introduce it to staff who might have been sceptical has been quite profound.

The bit I want to add before Trish starts is that I think the thing that we are doing better than any other jurisdiction in Australia is the cross-sectoral work. Our independent and Catholic schools are working with us in a number of ways, but especially centred around the Australian curriculum. Of course the beauty of this model is that eventually we will have eight states and territories working together. But within the microcosm that is the Australian Capital Territory, I think we have created a model where all schools, not just government schools, are collaborating around this. I might say that it is going incredibly well, but I will hand over to Trish to give you the specific detail.

**Ms Wilks:** In terms of where we are at one year into the implementation of the Australian curriculum, as Dr Watterston has said, this has gone incredibly smoothly. Part of the reason for that is the work that was done in terms of where schools were at with “every chance to learn”, which was the ACT curriculum framework for all schools. This was really the next stage of the journey that I talk about. We moved from school-based curriculum development to “every chance to learn” only three years before. So that was a big leap. Because that was a recent curriculum, the leap to the Australian curriculum has not been as gigantic as it will be in some of the other states and territories. That is part of the reason why schools have accepted it so readily.

As an exercise, mapping was done and given to every school to show what was the difference in going from “every chance to learn” to the Australian curriculum. So schools did not have to throw their curriculum out and think, “Gosh, we’re starting from the very beginning.” All they had to do was look at their curriculum and go, “Okay, I just need to add this little bit in here, I’ll take that bit out.” So there were minor modifications.

With the cross-sectoral work that has happened, we have a number of committees. We have a cross-sectoral implementation committee, which comprises people from the

Catholic Education Office, as well as the ETD office and the AIS, and there are a number of principals on that. We meet about every six weeks to discuss where schools are at, what we need to do in terms of professional development and what additional documentation we need to provide to schools. Collegially, that information is going out to all schools.

A newsletter goes out once a term, which again talks about what is happening in the ACT, things they might need to know, what the professional development is, what the major things are that are happening from ACARA, and also a reinforcement that schools do need to keep looking at the ACARA website, which has the latest information. But we are always, I would have to say, one step ahead, so we have that information, we are looking at that information and saying, “What does that information mean to schools?” and then preparing documentation, whether it is about professional development, which is going on today, actually, with a large number of schools cross-sectorally in looking at the achievement standards and consistency of judgement, which is the next stage.

Stage 1, with English and science, was very comfortable. That is the first one in the primary schools. Next year primary schools will in addition take on maths and history. History, we know, is an area. So we are doing some work with both the University of New England and the ANU in terms of how we support teachers of history. For many years that learning area has been morphed into social studies, social sciences, SOSE or whatever you call it. The Australian curriculum at this stage is quite particular on the study of history. Phase 2 will bring the study of geography in and then there will be the chance to blend those together.

The English curriculum was not very different from “every chance to learn”. With the maths curriculum there is even less of a difference from what has already existed. The fact that we are all working together cross-sectorally at every school is the real plus. I go to national meetings and teachers come up to me and say: “We wish we were in the ACT. We would like to be part of this and all together and working together. How come you’re able to do it?”

Part of it is because we are a smaller jurisdiction and we have a history of working together, but I would have to say that ACT teachers have a long history of being involved in curriculum, being excited about curriculum and seeing the long-term benefits of the Australian curriculum—the fact that it is digitised, so that they can pull out the specific thing that they need. There is the fact that Education Services Australia is developing Curriculum Connect, which is a resource which will link into bits of the curriculum. So you will hit one part of the curriculum and up will come the resources which will support the learning. That is something that, as a small jurisdiction, we would never be able to do by ourselves. So the fact that it is national is a huge plus to support our teachers.

**THE CHAIR:** Because, as you say, the ACT is a bit of a step ahead of the rest of the country, is there any feedback which comes along the way in regard to its implementation? There might be particular issues that come up during that time—just the usual thing, with that ongoing process of feedback. How is that being incorporated and how is that being fed back nationally?

**Ms Wilks:** We are the best thing since sliced bread as far as ACARA are concerned, because we are a jurisdiction that is moving forward. So when we have forums, when we provide feedback to ACARA, ACARA know that we are coming from a sound base with that. With respect to the forums and any information that is fed back to ACARA, we use it in two ways. Again, it is cross-sectoral input, so it goes back. They look at that quite heavily in terms of saying, “Yes, you know what you’re talking about, because you’re actually doing it.” We also feed in to ACARA, and this is part of our lead school process: “It’s a bit hard to understand this part of the curriculum” or “There don’t appear to be any resources in that part,” so we are talking to ESA around, “Here’s an area of the curriculum and we’re really low on resources there, so can you help us?”

We have just sent last week, in the hundreds, work samples through to ACARA. These are going to be used to annotate, to be able to look at the Australian curriculum and to look at standards. Again, sometimes we do not accept just how high a standard our work samples are. ACARA have said, “We cannot believe the standard that has come from the ACT.”

**THE CHAIR:** In terms of within schools and teaching staff, how confident are you that we are going to be able to meet that 2013 target and to be able to have that implemented?

**Ms Wilks:** We are fully confident in that we always had a three-year plan. That three-year plan involved documentation, professional development, reflection et cetera, work with principals, work with curriculum coordinators, work with individual teachers. We have this feedback loop through the implementation committee, who feed back directly from schools, so we are getting that quite clearly. There is a bit of an issue around “what can we do”, and we then use that to go back and refine or change the professional development that we are offering. So we have a feedback loop.

We are in the process of developing for public schools a checklist for principals and the network leaders, so that when they are talking to principals and when principals are talking to their staff, they can annotate, “Yes, we have done this, this, this and this.” That was in the bridging document which went out 12 months ago, but it is now time to reflect and get the information back, one year down the track. I would have to say that in my role I have not had one school comment to me that they have concerns around the implementation of the Australian curriculum. I have many people who say: “This is fantastic. We’re enjoying doing this. We are proud to be leading the nation.”

**Mr Kyburz:** I suppose one of the goals of the network model is around collective collaboration. I will give some examples relating to the Australian curriculum. I will draw on the high schools. I have four high schools in my network and since the beginning of the year those four high schools have been working closely together, not just at the principal level but down at the faculty head level and then down at the teacher level.

They had ongoing meetings during terms 1, 2 and 3. On 18 August, in term 3, the four high schools, because that was a pupil-free day around the augmentation, took advantage of that particular day by all meeting at different times, but together. For

example, the English faculty at Melrose high school met at the same time with the Telopea people, with the Stromlo people and with the Alfred Deakin people. So they were all meeting together to look at how they could best implement and develop better practice around the implementation of the Australian curriculum.

That happened at every particular faculty level. The principals also met together, the deputies met together, as to what they could possibly do to ensure that from the beginning of 2012 teachers would have detailed teaching programs, how they would map “every chance to learn” to the Australian curriculum, what resourcing they would need. As well as establishing those networks, they determined the way forward, whereby they would have a process of meeting continually to ensure that it was not just a process to get themselves ready but that it was a matter of how they could work together in the implementation phase and how they could evaluate what they have currently put together to ensure that it was the most effective way possible to do it.

With the high schools working that way, and working collaboratively, it was a great example of getting people together. I think this is probably the first time that they had all got together over a longer period of time, and specifically for that one day, and that has continued in term 4, as to how they could best implement the Australian curriculum.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My compliments on the implementation of the Australian curriculum. I have had some very good feedback as well. I must bring to your attention, though, one concern that a lot of teachers seem to have: the lack of budget availability for professional development and opportunity to have enough professional development in order to come to grips with the changes required. Do you have a comment on that?

**Dr Watterston:** I have got a comment to start with, in the sense that all schools seem to be aware of bank balances—and we publish them, and Mark has talked about autonomy—in terms of what resources they have available to provide professional learning. So I do not buy that complaint from every school, but there are certainly some schools that have got greater resources than others.

You would be aware that the government created an extra pupil-free day this year which was designated, as Mr Kyburz talked about, for the Australian curriculum. That is a big undertaking, and it is hard to cost that. But there were very mild or few complaints at all from the community about another day when students do not go to school; I think that was based on the fact that people read rightly that this was a really important innovation for the ACT.

So when you talk about resources that are being deployed to address the groundwork that we are undertaking in terms of the whole nation in implementing this curriculum—I think it has been well resourced and that the opportunity for schools to access resources that we have has been available to them, plus the expertise that we have from a curriculum sense in our central office, which has been working with schools directly, one on one.

You may not be aware—I am not sure if schools have told you—that we have a six-point school improvement plan. One of those very central points is that we want to get

away from the old notion of professional learning being in the main hall at the Hedley Beare learning centre where everyone comes together and takes a day out of their school. We think that the professional learning of choice is coaching one on one in classrooms. It is hard to put a price on that or to allocate those resources in a lump sum, but I can assure you—and certainly the work that Mr Kyburz was talking about shows—that we have changed the nature of how schools learn, about how teachers develop their own repertoire of skills. Nearly every school in the ACT has moved more directly to this in-school class coaching.

I can use a sporting analogy, if you like. We want people learning on the field in the game plan, so we have got teachers in their room with other teachers who have been teaching for 30 years. That has never happened. The success that we have got in terms of the optimism and the productivity around the implementation of the Australian curriculum comes from the strategy that has been used where teachers, for the first time in their careers, are actually getting in-class, on-the-job, in-time training.

I am sure the complaints are legitimate, but again it is a bit like the answer Mr Whybrow gave before about the \$100. It is schools not being able to see exactly where that resource is being deployed. I am absolutely confident that both intangible and non-tangible resources that have been deployed have been the making of the success of where we are so far.

**Ms Wilks:** I would like to come in on one point. Some of the confusion in the community is around an arrangement the Catholic Education Office and ETD have around the funding for courses associated with the Australian curriculum. Some people think that Catholic education are getting these courses for free and independent schools are having to pay. It is because Catholic education are paying through an agreement: we pay them when our teachers go to their courses and they pay us. We have arranged a flat fee, so to speak. That means that we are paying through central office and Catholic education are paying through central office, so their schools are not picking those up whereas independent schools—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Ms Wilks. The comments that I have passed on to you were from government sector teachers.

**Ms Wilks:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr Whybrow:** There is something within our existing system where we are not very good at marketing what we do for PD. If we look at any of our school board reports, then individually, locally by schools, there will be an element in there which talks about PD per teacher. What is used there is the local expenditure of PD per teacher. What it does not pick up is the larger amount. Under our EBA we have got commitments for a PD fund. Ms Sharma has just identified that for 2011-12, there is \$2.5 million in that fund. That does not include the huge investment that the department has made in the Hedley Beare centre, so that resource is primarily used for teacher training. A lot of that \$2.5 million is used in scholarship programs, a number of additional things and payments to schools, but we do not in total ever display to the public the entire value of our teaching investment per teacher. If you are sitting locally and you see a report that says that it is only \$100 or \$200 that you invest in per teacher training, we are underselling it and, I think, creating an atmosphere that here

there is some evidence, without showing the big picture. I think we need to improve our marketing of what we are doing.

**Mr Barr:** In fact, we make that commitment now. We will report on this.

**THE CHAIR:** We might move to the next question. Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** Thank you. The proposal for a Catholic school at Throsby has run into some trouble with the sun moth, I believe, and that matter has been referred to the department of environment so it has been delayed. Can you tell me where that process is up to?

**Mr Barr:** From the education perspective, the registration has been approved, so education has completed all of its tasks in terms of facilitating that school. The matter largely sits, as you have identified, with commonwealth approval through the EPBC process. Depending on that, the time frame will flow from that approval. From a government perspective, we also have the Throsby district playing fields captured in that same EPBC EIS process.

**MR HANSON:** Where is it at, though, specifically? When was it put through to the EPBC and do we know—

**Mr Barr:** That is not a matter for the education directorate. I would suggest that when we reappear with officials in another directorate you ask that question then.

**MR HANSON:** I would have thought that by virtue of the fact that this is a major school—

**Mr Barr:** No, it is not. This is not a matter that this directorate has responsibility for.

**MR HANSON:** And you have not had any liaison then with the Catholic Education Office?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR HANSON:** To keep them informed of the process and where it is at?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, but through the Economic Development Directorate.

**MR HANSON:** Right. Just as an aside—

**Mr Barr:** The education process is complete; it is now a matter of land release.

**MR HANSON:** Sure. There is a further question then. With the Catholic Education Office, I assume that there has been some additional cost borne by them through this process. If they are out of pocket, whose responsibility is that? Is that theirs? Is that their problem?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. It is their problem, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Anything further on that?

**MR HANSON:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you. My question is about the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. I want to get an update on how the institute is working with schools across the sector to register existing and new teachers and implement new national teacher standards.

**Dr Watterston:** Thanks for the question; I appreciate it. It has been another really good story, one that initially started out within the Education and Training Directorate in terms of the planning and organisation. One of our vital and integral staff members was then appointed as the CEO. Anne Ellis is here, and I will hand over to her to talk about the successful implementation and the work that she has been able to facilitate to put us in a position of, we think, leading Australia in terms of teacher registration.

**Ms Ellis:** We have had a fascinating journey this year in a cross-sectoral initiative. The key thing for us is that, as with the curriculum work, we are able to lead the nation in terms of cross-sectoral collaboration. We embarked on the registration process with three phases. We started with trials in April, with cross-sectoral trials for the registration of existing currently employed teachers. In a period of eight weeks, we worked with all of our schools and we had over 5,000 people complete the online application process.

The key part of our work with schools is that we are looking at the registration of teachers in the broader agenda of teacher quality. It is really important that we are conscious of the way—in fact, next year—we are able to lead the national implementation of the new processes for the implementation of the professional teacher standards. That is perhaps one of the key successes that we have had. At the beginning of next year, we will be the only jurisdiction that is implementing the new standards in terms of the registration process moving to full registration. We are also leading the way in the national consistency of teacher registration. Our legislation aligns with the new national model, and our minister is able to say from the very beginning that we are compliant with it.

We have embarked on a pilot to implement the standards to look at the impact of quality pre-service teacher placement and the role that the standards can play with that. The wonderful thing about that is that the cross-sectoral nature is not just about public, Catholic and independent schools, but about both universities—ACU and UC—who provide initial teacher education looking at a totally different way of improving feedback and self-reflection by using the standards. We are also, in the middle of next year, looking at a pilot implementation of the new nationally agreed process for certification of teachers against the high-level standards. We have been very keen, in our work with schools, to position it as not just a regulation but a way of recognising and improving teacher quality. We have had various successes through the year, but the key part about it is the partnership.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there anything further on that?

**DR BOURKE:** No; that is great, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. Minister, I understand that there was an increase in the number of ESL teaching positions. How does the increase match the increase in the number of students requiring such assistance?

**MR BARR:** I will get some detail, but there are 8.4 additional full-time equivalent positions, from memory, and it has allowed an expansion in the level of service above and beyond the numbers of students. Trish will be able to give some detail on the ESL level that we are now able to provide additional service to.

**Ms Wilks:** As the minister has said, we have had an additional 8.4 teachers into the mainstream to support ESL in schools across the ACT. We have also redirected another nearly \$400,000 out of directorate funds to support mainstream teaching. As you would be aware, we have redirected central office staff, not without some controversy, again to ensure that support is there for the mainstream. Everything that we have done in terms of ESL funding over the last few years has been to support mainstream schooling.

The other major thing that you may not be aware of is recognition of the increasing numbers of high needs ESL students. We are opening another primary intensive English centre in Charnwood-Dunlop school for 2012. That will have an added bonus for some of our young students who are spending up to an hour in transport getting to north Ainslie, because they are mainly coming from outer Belconnen and Gungahlin. We will cut the transport time, which is to be recommended, and also improve and increase the amount of intensive English provision, which has a flow-on effect to mainstream schools, because if we do not provide that intensive English provision, these students then go into the mainstream schools and that affects the ESL provision in mainstream schools.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Ms Wilks, my question was also aimed at trying to understand how you assess the funding for students. How does it apply? Are you still using the 1982 model for this?

**Ms Wilks:** It is not the 1982 model. Are you talking about the LPR—the language proficiency rating?

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is the number of students—the percentage of students in the system identified as ESL.

**Ms Wilks:** Yes, you are talking about a cap that occurred in 1982. As I have just reflected, we have used that partly, but then we are now adding on to that through 8.4 additional teachers, through \$400,000 of additional money going in. So there is an increase in the money going into ESL—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, I am not trying to interrupt you. I am trying to get to the bottom of that. What I am saying is that I do understand the number of teachers has increased. What I am trying to ascertain is this: what is the number of teachers in

relation to the number of students? My understanding is that about 12 per cent of students identified these days as opposed to three per cent back in 1982. Has the percentage of the number of students compared to the increase in the number of teachers kept parity?

**Ms Wilks:** The number of students who are identifying as from a non-English-speaking background has increased. In recognition of this—yes, the level of teachers has not increased in the same proportion. So we have addressed this in a number of ways. We have addressed it through providing scholarships for teachers to get experience in ESL. That is through the University of Canberra. That targeted scholarship has run for a number of years.

We have also introduced two highly accredited programs from South Australia—teaching ESL in the mainstream and ESL in the mainstream for early learners. Again, we are building the capacity of teachers. We are recognising that there is a need, but recognising that it is not just an ESL teacher who needs to meet this need, that this is an issue for every teacher in every school. So we are building capacity across the system in addition to support, particularly in ESL.

**Mr Whybrow:** I guess there is another set of contextual things that have changed since 1982 that actually build into the funding relationship. It is the increased numbers of international students. A number of our international students also require English as second language. We do have complex funding allocations, but in its simplicity that is another funding source for ESL activity within our system, as are recent arrangements for placement of refugees. The funding model has evolved with the change of environment as well.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I may ask a couple of written supplementary questions on this but thank you for the information. I appreciate it.

**MS HUNTER:** I have a quick question in regard to one of the contracts that you let this year, which is dealt with on page 334. It was Canington International Training for audit services for Defence, which was for about \$173,000. Also I have a question in regard to the adult and community education grants. There was \$9,000 given to Merici college around building confidence and expertise for graduates from Black Mountain school. I was wondering if I could get a bit more information on both of those.

**Dr Watterston:** That was not a quick question.

**THE CHAIR:** It was quicker than Mr Doszpot's.

**Dr Watterston:** I do not dispute that.

**Ms Cover:** In relation to the consultant for Defence, that money comes to us in the role that we used to have before the accreditation and registration role that we played through the ACT registration council, which was embedded into the directorate. That has now moved to a national regulator for VET, but that money comes to us from Defence to actually engage with them to do that quality assurance on their regulation accreditation.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you. The second one was around Merici college. There was a grant that was around working with graduates from Black Mountain school.

**Ms Cover:** I will take that one on notice. I am sorry; I do not have the detail on that one with me at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** So that one on Merici has been taken on notice.

**Mr Barr:** I think it relates to their community garden. I remember opening it.

**MR HANSON:** I remember that.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, you were there, Jeremy.

**MR HANSON:** It was a cold morning, wasn't?

**Mr Barr:** It was a very cold morning.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Doszpot was there.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, I think that may be what it is, but we will double-check that.

**MR HANSON:** Can you name the gardener?

**Mr Barr:** Can I name the gardener? It was the Greek guy from SBS.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The garden guru, wasn't it?

**THE CHAIR:** We will go to the next question. It is in relation to some of the recommendations that came out of the Human Rights Commission's report into youth justice services. One of the things that it reported was that sometimes young people at Bimberi refused to go to school or were sometimes segregated and, therefore, could not attend school. I am wondering how, in terms of encouraging their attendance, that is worked through. Is there any process of tracking young people's attendance at the school? How are those issues worked through?

**Mr Gniel:** I will answer some of this and then I will hand over to Dave for more specific details. I will provide a little context around that as well. The average age of young people in detention is around 16 years old. Detainees' average length of stay is 2½ weeks. That does have an impact on the way in which we provide services to those students around education.

There are also two groups of students or young people in Bimberi: those on remand—those that are awaiting court directions—and those on committal. Those students, those young people, fall into two very different categories around how long they will be there. For some of those students long-term planning around education is possible and for some of those other students, they are unsure of how long they are going to be in there, as well as us. So some of those things are done and reviewed quite regularly with the young people, depending on what information we have around their custodial

sentence or the remand issues.

The staffing model at the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre includes a large number of teaching staff but also youth workers. They work together to cater on an individual basis for each of the students that are in care.

With the specific programs, they are much more developed through individual learning programs and the way in which those students are going to be most effective in terms of an education program whilst they are in the centre, and also looking at the transition for when they leave. I think those were points made as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question on that too, actually. But I will let you answer the first question.

**Mr Bromhead:** The review mentioned how students can sometimes refuse. It is actually fairly rare. On the odd occasion that they do, what happens is that teachers will go down to their unit, called Coree, catch up with the young person, talk with them about what issues might be impacting on them, why they do not want to come to school. The teachers also bring some work, set some work and help the student through the work.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that the same with the segregation as well?

**Mr Bromhead:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Because that was one of the other issues.

**Mr Bromhead:** That is the same.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Bromhead:** If they are not coming to the school then the teachers will go to them, either in their residential units or in the Coree unit.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned the pathways or the transition. The government's response to the report, recommendation 7.6, about developing those pathways with community services, said that that recommendation had been completed. Can you give us some more information about how that coordination between community services occurs? It states that it is completed; so it would be interesting to know how it has been completed and how that, involving young people and that transition with the education system, is actually being done.

**Mr Gniel:** I will give a little information that I have around that. The task force meets on a fortnightly basis. That includes representatives from the Community Services Directorate as well as people from education. Rightly so, they are the agencies that are involved in making sure that there is a coordinated approach to these issues. In the previous answer I alluded to the fact that the transition arrangements are to do with the education provisions for these young people, but also can be to do with housing arrangements and accommodation—about making sure that those things are together in the response and the planning for those students so that they are more likely to

succeed. But in terms of the detail, I will ask Dave to give you some more information.

**Mr Bromhead:** The recommendation that you refer to also partly refers to the programs that the Community Services Directorate provides; so you would probably need to talk with them.

**THE CHAIR:** But it is actually about that coordination issue.

**Mr Bromhead:** Yes. Murrumbidgee certainly has a lot of relationships with community agencies. We actually have registered training organisations who are providing training. They also provide the trainers for the wood and metal program and our transition program, which we are just beginning this term. I have gone around and met with each of the CEOs from the major community agencies, like Belconnen community agency, Gungahlin regional, Woden Community Services and Communities@Work. So we are exploring how to support students who are moving out of Bimberi and how to provide some educational provision, which will be of a stepping-stone nature so that they can then move into alternative education settings or mainstream settings. Those community partnerships are growing.

**Mr Gniel:** I just add to that as well that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body are also involved in those discussions around transitions. So we are not only working with the government agencies but also with other stakeholders to make sure that those transitions are going to be successful and do relate to family and history and other components of these young people's lives.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any follow-up questions? Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** I have a question and you may refer me to someone else. Burgmann Anglican college has raised a number of concerns about the traffic around their areas, which is a safety issue for their children—particularly by the principal, Steven Bowers, who was at the Gungahlin Community Council AGM a couple of months ago. Are you aware of that issue? If you are, have you taken any action to make sure that somebody is dealing with it? It may not be your directorate. It may be another.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, I have met on site with Steven on a couple of occasions and have facilitated through Territory and Municipal Services on-site meetings with officers from Roads ACT. We are looking at coordinating the key stakeholders, both government and non-government. Obviously, the traffic issues have impacts on the residents who live nearby. So traffic flows are of concern to them. Previously, we have been able to open an additional access road for Burgmann. I forget the name of the street that it connects to. I am sure I could remember if I looked at a map.

**MR HANSON:** Valley Drive?

**Mr Barr:** No, it is a street back from Valley Drive. Yes, I am aware of this issue. I have met with Steven on site. I have met with Allan Hird, the board chair, and Steven in my office and have coordinated a number of meetings on the school's behalf.

**MR HANSON:** Are you satisfied that that is being resolved so this will not be a safety issue, because it is the particular concern?

**Mr Barr:** It is a complex matter. The school is at the intersection of two major roads. There is roadwork planned in relation to the precinct, particularly with the further progress of the enclosed oval in Gungahlin, also the swimming pool and, of course, the wetlands that are adjacent to the school. There is a car parking question associated with the scout hall that we have also been discussing. There have also been changes made, I understand, to where the buses pick up and drop off students and to traffic flow for parents, as well as a set of pedestrian lights that have been put in adjacent to the school.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Yes, I notice the list of achievements in the report on closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcome in education. One of the usual things we talk about in that area is numbers of Indigenous teachers and increasing that within the system. What strategies has the department undertaken to improve or attain that objective?

**Mr Barr:** There is a scholarship program, and I will invite Michael Bateman to talk about that.

**Mr Bateman:** As the minister mentioned, there is a scholarship program that we support with the University of Canberra to assist students engaging in continuing education. For part of our teacher recruitment, we look at all the universities that are offering teacher education programs, particularly looking for new Indigenous teachers coming into teaching. I do not have the figures with me today of how many applied this year, but I can get them for you. I am not too sure of those numbers, so I can get them for you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, that has been taken on notice.

**Dr Watterston:** Ms Sharma might have that information.

**Ms Sharma:** Back in 2009-10 there was an initiative relating to Indigenous teachers and a teachers assistants scheme. The initiative was to provide 10 scholarships in years 11 and 12 for students to pursue a career in teaching and also to offer three Indigenous university scholarships to year 12 graduates to undertake a teaching degree. The recipients of the university scholarships will work part time as school assistants during their study. So that is the contribution towards the Indigenous teachers.

**DR BOURKE:** So you are not only targeting graduates but also trying to promote teaching as a career within years 11 and 12?

**Mr Barr:** Absolutely correct.

**Mr Whybrow:** And establishing that pathway for people in our system to complete schooling and receive that university scholarship.

**Mr Bateman:** There is also a commonwealth initiative managed out of the University

of South Australia by Peter Buckskin that is just starting up, and that is looking at increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers across Australia. We have been involved in the initial stages of it. But, as I said, it is only just starting its work.

**DR BOURKE:** Can you give me some more detail about what other strategies you are employing to bring that bell curve of student performance further up? You talked about the aspirations program, which is focusing on the top end of the curve as well as other programs which are focusing on engagement, so what else are you doing?

**Mr Barr:** There is a nice graphical illustration of the success in the ACT in today's *Australian*.

**THE CHAIR:** So you will table that.

**MR HANSON:** Do you read the *Australian*, Andrew?

**Mr Barr:** I enjoy my News Limited publications as much as the next man, Jeremy.

**MR HANSON:** You will be hauled up before the inquiry on the hill, mate. Be careful.

**Mr Barr:** I look forward to it, yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I will recommend you to it.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, can we just come back to Dr Watterston.

**Dr Watterston:** It is an area of success for us in terms of the strategies that we have implemented that are making a difference. I will leave it to Mr Gniel to talk specifically about some of the details. But the article that the minister referred to in this morning's paper, which I will table, really highlights the success of the ACT strategy in the sense of students from low socioeconomic areas, which includes a range of different cultural groups but certainly a number of Indigenous students. It shows that the high socioeconomic performers are about equal in terms of their performance levels in any state. But it is at the lower socioeconomic level that the ACT is head and shoulders above the rest of the country.

In terms of the quality outcomes that we are getting, specifically in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student area, it is working with kids that come from significant areas of challenge. Our results on a national basis demonstrate that we are able to lift the performance levels of those students at a much higher rate than other states.

We have a range of additional strategies, which Steve will talk about now, specifically aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. You will be aware that we have about 1,200 students in the system, and that is 75 more than last year. With that also has been the legislated retention of students into year 12, which was not previously in place. So a number of our teachers—

**Mr Barr:** Or equivalent.

**Dr Watterston:** Or equivalent, yes, sorry—education or training. So a number of our students, including Indigenous students, are now in the secondary sector that were not there before or would not have naturally followed that pathway. One of the great success stories for us has been the cultural understanding that teachers in the senior secondary part of our system have developed in terms of not just retaining those students but engaging them in a way that is value adding to them. We have seen some great progress in the short period of time we have been operating under that new legislation. Steve, if you want to talk specifically—

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, just before Mr Gniel begins, we are running out of time, so I ask you to be brief on this so we can have questions from Mr Doszpot and Ms Hunter.

**Mr Gniel:** I will be to the point. There are currently six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers, and they are located in each of our high schools to work with students but also to work with staff on exactly what Dr Watterston was talking about, around making sure that our curriculum offerings and the way in which we engage young students, young people, is maximising the opportunity for those students who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to continue through schooling. I have already mentioned the aspirations program, which I will not go into, considering the time.

If I can just add to that briefly, one of the things in the ACT that we are doing particularly well is looking at this as much more than one section who works with one group of students. It is around our strategies to involve the whole school community and the broader stakeholders—parents and the community members—around developing things like the reconciliation action plans and making sure we have a strategic plan to address these gaps. They are leading practice in the nation around what strategies we are putting in to address these concerns.

For us, changing some of the cultural aspects of schools and around our department about cultural competence especially and moving that into cultural integrity where it is part of our daily work, not just in our schools but also when we work within the community, are all things that are going to contribute to addressing the statistical side of things, which is through NAPLAN, and also attendance and those sort of issues.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, moving to page 134, major asset upgrades, older school upgrades, \$330,000. The report suggests that, due to cost overruns on some major capital works projects, a number of upgrade projects were deferred until the 2011-12 year. The report mentions that work has started at Torrens, Hughes and Yarralumla schools and it is expected to continue through to 2013. Can you advise what works are being undertaken at those schools?

**Mr Wynants:** At Torrens we have actually just completed about a week ago a \$2.5 million refurbishment right through the school. The school had some refurbishment works under the building the education revolution initiative, and the works we did was to continue that refurbishment work right through the school. The school also had a new multipurpose facility built under the BER, and I think you were there at the recognition ceremony as well. It is all part of improving the whole school.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And Hughes and Yarralumla?

**Mr Wynants:** Hughes and Yarralumla will be the same thing. We undertake each year a major refurbishment at an older school, so Hughes is the one for the next calendar school year and then Yarralumla is the one after that. There is around \$2 million, \$2½ million worth of works.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My compliments on Torrens. I was there, but it was not at the minister's invitation; the parents and friends invited me. So, thank you, Andrew.

**Mr Barr:** Your party spent the entire last two years bagging the program, and then you want to turn up to the morning tea? You are kidding me!

**MR DOSZPOT:** Given that 65 per cent of all ACT schools are aged between 30 and 50 years, have you done an audit and priority assessment of the degree of work required at all schools in that age bracket?

**Mr Wynants:** We get condition assessment reports on all schools. They are undertaken every three years, and that gives us an idea as to the most critical things that need to be undertaken. Certainly there is a priority in terms of OH&S and major refurbishments, and they are responsibilities both the school and the directorate undertake.

With the further works, we look at it in terms of how we are able to undertake those works. We have a five-year asset management strategy which just has concluded this current financial year. It is the final in the last strategy, and that has informed the repairs and maintenance program as well as the capital upgrades program.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Is there a list of those schools that we could have a look at?

**Mr Wynants:** There is a list of works that we have undertaken for the last five years, yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, the projected—

**Mr Barr:** Fishing for some election announcements, are you?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am asking for facts.

**Mr Wynants:** We have got this year's program, so we have got until this year. The five-year asset management program was through to this year.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you asking for that information?

**Mr Whybrow:** Can I quickly follow that up?

**THE CHAIR:** First, we will go to Ms Hunter for the last question. It is just that we are running out of time.

**MS HUNTER:** I want to go to the issue of indoor air quality and the use of chemicals in schools. I am wondering if you can tell me more about how principals may monitor

the use of chemicals in schools. We have more and more children with asthma and other respiratory issues. It is particularly about cleaning chemicals, although it can be also off-gassing from new carpets and also paint. What are we doing in this area? It is becoming more of an issue. We have other sorts of policies in place, like banning peanut butter, peanuts and so forth, recognising the health concerns there.

**Mr Whybrow:** People may not be aware, but we have introduced new cleaning arrangements in all our schools. As part of that process, we have required stringent controls around cleaning. That includes the use of low-impact, if I can put it that way, cleaning products and assurance that our cleaning contractors are using tamper-proof containers so that we are aware of what chemicals are being used in our schools. That has been quite positive.

It is probably worth also handing back to John Wynants. As you mentioned, as part of our development of any building work in our school, we do use low toxic, I guess you would say—it is the wrong terminology, and I had better hand that back to John, but it is the use of appropriate carpet, furnishing and fittings. We take that into account in our capital construction of schools. John has the detail and will not use the inappropriate words.

**MS HUNTER:** I am pleased to hear about the cleaning contracts, because that has been a step forward.

**Mr Wynants:** As Mark Whybrow has mentioned, part of the requirements for new schools is to use low-VOC products—carpets, paints, all products. That is all part of the environmental sustainability requirements that we are putting into new schools as well as refurbishment works. As carpets come out, the right sort of carpets go in. As painting is undertaken, the right sorts of painting products are used.

**MS HUNTER:** Have you also looked at alternatives other than carpets—cork, for instance, which is used in New South Wales schools?

**Mr Wynants:** We have not. It is something we can look at as part of the design for schools, as to the different products. We can look at that as we go through the next school, which is Coombs, which is under design at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** I will go to you, Mr Doszpot, because you were aggrieved because I cut you off before. You can ask the last question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** Looking for an invite to anything, Steve?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am always very happy to get an invite from you, minister, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** The question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I want to ask about attendance record keeping. Some months back, I presented a petition to the Assembly, to the minister, regarding some teacher disquiet

about the attendance record-keeping changes that were coming in. Has there been any progress made in this area?

**Mr Bateman:** Since the petition was presented, we have met with the union, the AEU, on that particular matter a number of times. Currently it is one of the bans that have been placed through the industrial campaign. In term of progress, while the bans are on there is no progress in that. We are still looking at other ways to do it more electronically, but that is something that is a little further down the track than what is happening at the moment. We are introducing the HR21 system in the schools. It will not necessarily remove the need for that particular level of compliance with attendance records, but it will, at least, be an electronic version for entering some leave forms, as other public servants do.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What is happening in the meantime in regard to the way you are currently doing it?

**Mr Bateman:** That would depend on individual schools and the application of the ban within that school—as to whether it has been completed. We get different reports from schools about the amount of time involved and the way it is managed in schools. Those schools that have devolved the responsibilities across a number of key staff probably find it a little less onerous to fill out than others, but—

**MR DOSZPOT:** But seeing as there are only a minority of teachers who were not doing the right thing, would it not have made more sense to revert to the old one and punish those who were not doing the right thing rather than disadvantaging all the teaching community?

**Dr Watterston:** Can I just say that we are not trying to punish anyone. We are actually trying to keep—

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is what they feel.

**Dr Watterston:** I understand the way that it would have been portrayed to you by some schools, because there have been a number of comments made about it, but this is record keeping that was not accurate at all prior to this, and it was a result of an audit finding on the department that we were not doing this properly. We had to respond to the audit finding. I can understand why some schools think it is cumbersome, but the impact in terms of the change it has made in recording absences from what was previously happening is quite significant. From that point of view, while it is an additional task for a school, it has clearly made a difference. Notionally, that dollar value that we are now able to record is important for the way we account for school funds.

I agree that if it was online it would be better, and we are working towards that end. But for some schools, this is a two-minute task. I understand that it took a while initially and that some organisational structures had to be put in, and for some people it was a little bit cumbersome. I accept that it can be done better, and we are working to that end, without any question. We do not want to add administrative trivia to schools just for the sake of it. But, as I say, it was brought to our attention through an audit finding. We have to respond. And it has made a significant difference. The

accumulated data that we now have is very different from the data that we were getting prior to this process being in place.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It depends on how each school is addressing it, by the sound of it.

**Dr Watterston:** That is right; absolutely.

**MR DOSZPOT:** How would your internal audit team treat the current circumstances?

**Mr Whybrow:** I guess there are two issues in relation to this. The initial audit finding that Dr Watterston is talking about was an internal audit program around our leave balances, which identified significant dollar value carrying value balances which were—

**MS HUNTER:** What was the dollar value?

**Mr Whybrow:** In the order of \$2 million. Is that correct?

**Mr Bateman:** It was \$2.4 million.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes—of leave balances that had not been appropriately adjusted down for leave taken. There is a second audit finding in our annual financial statements this year from the Auditor-General's Office which is talking about this exact same issue. This is a core fundamental in ensuring financial control over our system. Any system has in it the question of whether people are being paid and whether they get paid the right amount. You can only check that at the local level. If you try and do it centrally, you do not know what people turned up or did not. It is an essential control that we have around our financial management responsibilities.

**Dr Watterston:** I need to reiterate that it was not being done well prior to this process.

**Mr Bateman:** Mr Doszpot, I have got a copy of the actual forms if you want to look at how simple it is.

**THE CHAIR:** We might table those.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Those are tabled.

**Mr Bateman:** And, as Dr Watterston said, this is the first formal process. With the previous process, there was not a formal process. That was one of the issues with the audit committee. This is an application of an across-the-board process to try and get some more rigour into the collection of the data.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, you have got something—

**Mr Barr:** There was a question taken on notice earlier in relation to the Oliver

licensing costs. I can inform the committee that the annual fee is \$205,166.50. This is centrally funded, thereby removing the cost burden from individual schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Thank you, minister and officials, for appearing before the committee today. This hearing is adjourned.

**The committee adjourned at 12.31 pm.**