



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2009-2010**

**(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2009-2010)**

**Members:**

**MR Z SESELJA (The Chair)**  
**MS C LE COUTEUR (The Deputy Chair)**  
**MS A BRESNAN**  
**MR B SMYTH**  
**MS J BURCH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**FRIDAY, 22 MAY 2009**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Ms G Concannon (Ph: 6205 0129)**

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

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

## APPEARANCES

Department of Education and Training .....	631
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*Amended 21 January 2009*

## **The committee met at 8.29 am.**

### Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Planning and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation

### Department of Education and Training

Davy, Ms Janet, Acting Chief Executive

Tardif, Mr Phillip, Acting Deputy Chief Executive

Wilks, Ms Trish, Acting Executive Director, Business Improvement Services

Whybrow, Mr Mark, Director, Finance and Facilities

Collis, Dr Mark, Director, Student Services and International Education

Bray, Mr Rodney, Director, Schools Capital Works

Melsom, Ms Kathy, Director, Indigenous Education and Early Years Learning

Nicol, Ms Lorraine, Director, Education ICT

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome to this public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. This morning the committee will be meeting with the Minister for Education and Training and departmental officials from the Department of Education and Training.

Minister, welcome. I would like to make a couple of housekeeping announcements before we get into it. Mobile phones should be switched off or put in silent mode. Witnesses are asked to speak directly into the microphone for Hansard. Only one person is to speak at a time. When a witness comes to the table, please state your name and the capacity in which you appear. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, chair. Very briefly, the 2009-10 education budget has as its centrepiece a \$28 million commitment to lower class sizes across all years of schooling in ACT public schools to an average of 21 in primary and high schools and an average of 19 in colleges. The budget also includes a \$6.4 million commitment over four years to provide specialist teachers to work with other teachers in the development of learning plans to support students who need help in literacy and numeracy.

The budget also delivers on a range of capital commitments, most particularly, the delivery of the new Harrison high school, the performing arts theatre at Canberra College, some additional funding for the Gungahlin College aimed at increasing VET provision and improving the green star rating of that project. There is a range of capital commitments, including:

- the installation of rainwater tanks and solar panel for our schools;
- just short of \$1 million to assist gifted and talented students as part of the in pursuit of excellence program;
- a near \$700,000 investment to increase the number of Indigenous teachers and

teachers assistants working in ACT public schools;

- more money over four years, nearly \$3.2 million, to provide more support staff to assist students who have English as a second language;
- another \$200,000 commitment on top of a series of commitments in previous budgets to improve language education;
- the establishment of a \$4 million non-government schools equity fund targeted to assist students with a disability in non-government schools and also to provide additional funding for low-fee Catholic and independent schools;
- a significant investment in information and communication technology across government and non-government schools, targeted particularly at the primary school sector, noting, of course, the significant commonwealth government investment in ICT for secondary schools; and
- finally, but perhaps very importantly in the context of a number of significant ACT government and federal government policy initiatives in relation to the youth compact, a significant increase in funding for Australian school based apprenticeships through the Department of Education and Training—a significant increase to enable a greater range of opportunities for school-based apprenticeships to be taken up through a range of industry fields.

Overall, this education budget, from providing an increase in funding of around 4.4 per cent, targets a number of the government's key election commitments but also goes to a number of key national partnerships with the commonwealth government and sets the education sector up for a very positive next four years. I thank the committee for the opportunity to appear and I am happy to take questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I neglected to say earlier, and I have said this in other hearings, that the committee has agreed that where any person answering a question gives an inordinately long answer, I will ask them to wrap up. That has not really been needed yet, but it is just to let you know and to let officials know. Ms Le Couteur?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you. Minister, you mentioned lowering class sizes as part of your opening statement. Minister, what research are you aware of which shows that students who are falling behind actually increase their outcomes by reduced sizes?

**Mr Barr:** Well, there is a considerable amount of research that goes to highlight a range of factors that influence improved student results. Clearly, the number one factor—with a bullet—is quality teaching. There is no doubt that the single biggest factor that influences student outcomes is the quality of teaching.

I have consistently said, and certainly it is on the record in the Assembly as far back as 2006, that there are four key factors that go to improve student performance: quality teaching; a challenging curriculum; a school size of around 300 to 500 students, particularly in the primary school sector, and smaller class sizes, particularly in those early years. That is why the government has a policy that provides for a

maximum class size up to year 3 and then seeks flexibility for principals in having an average class size beyond that, recognising that in some circumstances class sizes smaller than 21 are appropriate and in other contexts classes larger than 21 would be appropriate.

There are many examples. For example, in PE, if you were having a game of soccer, you would need more than 21 people to have two teams. That is just one example in a PE context. If you were thinking of a dance class—there are many contexts where classes would need to be larger than 21 and many contexts where there would be considerable advantages in having smaller class sizes, smaller than 21. Principals should have the discretion, but I might get Ms Davy to outline some of the department's thinking in relation to the implementation of this policy.

**Ms Davy:** Thank you, minister. Basically, in order to implement the government's policy commitment around average class sizes, we are using a similar methodology that we do for national reporting. We have started with determining what is our current average class size across the sectors, and we have done that by looking at the total number of mainstream students and dividing that by the total number of mainstream classes. When we have done that methodology this year on the basis of numbers, we have determined that we need to direct 10 new teaching positions into the primary sector, 50 teaching positions into the high school years 7 to 10 sector and 10 teaching positions into the college sector.

The way that we will allocate those additional resources into those sectors will be on the basis of student enrolment data. We resource our schools with a currency called staffing points. Each teacher equals 20 staffing points. For example, if we are directing 10 additional positions into the primary school sector, that means we are injecting an extra 200 staffing points into the primary school staffing allocation. We will allocate those additional staffing points to each school on the basis of their student enrolment data, and we will do that each year as a normal part of their staffing allocation.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You will not be targeting, then, particular schools which might have more disadvantage or anything like that in terms of the class sizes?

**Ms Davy:** No. We have looked at a number of different models around this and we have talked to all of our principals about it and certainly to the minister about it. The issue is that schools at the moment have the flexibility to determine how they allocate their resources and if we allocate resources on the basis of a school's current average class size, then there would be some schools that we would be advantaging in that methodology and there would be some schools that we would be disadvantaging because of previous decisions that they have made.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was not trying to think that the class size was the only issue you would be looking at. In terms of schools with relatively disadvantaged class sizes, clearly that is only one of the issues that you could be considering. Basically, what I am getting at is that some kids need more support than others and a policy of lower average, while good, may not be well targeting your scarce resources.

**Ms Davy:** That is correct, and when we look at our allocation to schools we have to

look at the average class size commitment as just one part of the allocation. We might talk later in the day, for example, about literacy and numeracy achievement. There is another bucket of staffing points that we allocate to schools to support literacy and numeracy achievement. There are other parts of staffing allocation that we put into schools to support ESL students. There are other allocations that we provide to schools to support schools with social disadvantage. The average class size commitment is only one of a number of other commitments which will add to the staffing base of schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Davy, you talked about needing to ascertain the current average class size, and that led you to need 10 primary, 50 high school and 10 college teachers. Presumably that is for this year in order to seek to achieve that goal?

**Ms Davy:** Right.

**THE CHAIR:** What are those numbers in terms of average class sizes?

**Mr Barr:** I can provide that information. For the primary school sector it is 22.

**THE CHAIR:** Twenty-two is average?

**Mr Barr:** For high school it is 24 and for college it is 20. That is, I would need to stress, excluding special education students. That is simply mainstream.

**THE CHAIR:** Mainstream.

**Mr Barr:** If you were to include special education students you would already be below each of the averages in each of those areas. That is why the bulk of the resources go to the high school sector, because that is where the highest average class sizes are.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So can I just get clear, Ms Davy, in terms of the extra resources for class sizes, this is purely a numeric exercise?

**Ms Davy:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. It has got no targeting involved in it?

**Mr Barr:** There are about 10 other programs the department offers that target.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. Appreciably there are other programs but this one is purely a numeric one. Is it going to require extra physical classrooms to put extra classes in?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. In some schools it will; in others there is considerable surplus capacity. That is why there is a capital allocation associated with this program. I would, of course, then also draw the committee's attention to the \$140 million worth of work that has been funded by the commonwealth, which, in large part, provides additional classroom space, certainly in the primary school sector. With the exception of a couple of high schools there is surplus capacity.

**THE CHAIR:** You are personally pretty sceptical of smaller classes, though, as a policy, aren't you? You said last year that there is no evidence to prove that placing children in smaller classes across the board has a significant impact on improving students' educational outcomes; similarly, there is no agreement and research that there is an optimal class size for students of any year, let alone in years 4 and above. Given that policy position that you have taken, do you really see this as the best use of resources? You are obviously pretty sceptical about what it actually achieves across the board in particular?

**Mr Barr:** I have said consistently that there are four factors that influence student outcomes. Clearly, the number one factor is the quality of teaching. You could have a one-to-one student teacher ratio but, if the teacher was not of a high quality, then your outcomes would not be improved. So that is the number one factor.

A challenging curriculum is another. All of the work that has been done in relation to the ACT's new curriculum framework—the work at a national level, through the National Curriculum Board, which will then translate into ACARA, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority—is important. Having schools, particularly primary schools, of a size between about 300 and 500 students is particularly important.

Then class sizes are another factor. They are not the number one factor but they are, I believe, one of four factors. I would refer you back to a question I was asked by Mr Gentleman in the Assembly in 2006, on 17 October, where I have outlined in some detail the government's thinking in relation to those matters.

**THE CHAIR:** But putting aside that you believe there are other factors—and I think we all agree with that—you believe that it does not have a significant impact; yet it does cost a reasonable amount of taxpayer's dollars to get these class sizes down. We believe it is a good policy but if you do not believe that it has a significant impact why are you spending the money?

**Mr Barr:** It is one of four factors that I believe are important. It is not the number one factor, and that is particularly why the government has chosen this policy direction, because in certain circumstances, as I indicated earlier on, class sizes much smaller than 21 are appropriate. In other circumstances, classes larger than 21 are appropriate. But the number one factor that will influence the quality of outcomes and will improve literacy and numeracy outcomes is the quality of teaching. That is why the government has invested so heavily in that area over a long period of time.

**THE CHAIR:** You talked about PE classes and the like. Focusing on primary school for a moment, is it appropriate for some primary school classes to be well over 21?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, it is appropriate for some primary school classes to be over 21.

**THE CHAIR:** In what circumstances and how high? What is the number that you would feel comfortable with?

**Mr Barr:** There are a range of different outcomes that will be determined school by school, principal by principal, depending on the particular needs of the student

population.

**THE CHAIR:** Is 25 the highest we should be seeing, is 28—

**Mr Barr:** There is no magic number. My preference of course is that the extra resources will be used across our primary school sector to provide assistance to students who may need that extra time with teachers. I understand from the 2009 census that, of 840 primary school classes across the territory, only nine had more than 30 students. I will look to Mr Tardif who may have some more information on that.

**Mr Tardif:** I think that might have been an earlier one. That was an earlier figure, yes.

**Mr Barr:** Is there more recent data?

**Ms Davy:** Not that I am aware of.

**Mr Barr:** But certainly the large number of classes in the territory in primary schools is well below 30, in fact, yes. Certainly, but the most recent data I have seen was that nine out of 840 primary school classes across all primary schools in the territory had more than 30 students. So it is, what, around one per cent of classes.

**THE CHAIR:** What are those numbers, those nine that are over 30? What does it get up to?

**Mr Barr:** Thirty-one, 32. It will depend, of course, on the moment in time. We take two snapshots: the February and August census. The thing with primary school enrolments is that during the year students can arrive, students can leave. The general trends across the system are that from the February to August census government primary school enrolments increase but secondary school enrolments, particularly college enrolments, decrease in the second half of the year. Particularly in the post-compulsory years of education, students move on to work, training or some other form of education.

**THE CHAIR:** Indeed. I am sure there are more questions on class sizes. Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** It is actually slightly different to class sizes.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we will spend a bit of time on it. It was mentioned as the major initiative. I am sure a number of members will have questions on this. Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you, chair. I am still, I guess, a bit unclear about the process that is going to be used to target extra resources. I know we have talked about it being up to principals to decide somewhat what they need and what particular classes they need. But I guess it is not just about the classes but actually the individual students, where they will be placed and how those resources are going to be determined. It is still not clear to me how that is going to work.

**Ms Davy:** Basically, what principals will do when they get their staffing allocation each year is determine how best they are going to use those resources. So they

determine the number of teachers they need, they determine the number of executive teachers they need. And that will change from year to year, depending on the cohort of children that they are getting through and depending on the different programs that they may want to run year by year. So it will be no different with the average class size injection of points. All it will mean will be that they will have a bigger total allocation of staffing points with which to make some of those decisions.

The notion of some classes being more than 30 is a moment-in-time snapshot, if you like. Today, if we ask schools what is your average class size, it will be different from what it is tomorrow because what they will do on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, on a term basis, is allocate resources in different ways; for example, to team teaching, to separation of students for particular literacy needs or numeracy needs, for learning assistance classes et cetera, which may not be mainstream timetabled necessarily across the whole year. So it is very variable and very flexible and it needs to be so that principals can manage the particular circumstances of particular children in their schools.

**MS BRESNAN:** I understand. I obviously understand it is a changing process but I think it is, particularly for those students who are at risk, important how that is going to be managed. I know there will be changes but then, I guess, if you have got a certain number of teachers, you might one year have more students who are from a particular cohort. How is that going to be determined?

**Ms Davy:** Sure. And they will be managed in terms of the nature of the other programs that the minister mentioned before. For example, we will provide additional allocation for ESL, students with identified ESL needs. Over and above the average class size allocation, there will be additional staff put into schools to support students with ESL needs. When we talk about students with particular literacy and numeracy needs, we are putting additional points into schools to again enable them to look at ways that they might want to take out a small cohort of five or six students who may have particular literacy or numeracy needs and allocate a teacher to them for a particular amount of time during a day or a week to support them. It is not, as I said before, just the average class size points allocation which is going to impact on supporting students with particular special needs.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch has some follow-up on this and then I think Mr Smyth also has.

**MS BURCH:** Perhaps it has already been discussed. I was a tad late. I do apologise for that. But am I right in understanding that, by allocating resources to class sizes, you actually then accommodate more resources into a school and then the principals have the increased flexibility about how they use that resource?

**Ms Davy:** That is right.

**MS BURCH:** Following on, perhaps there are classes where it is sensible to be over average and such things?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly there are some very practical difficulties that principals face particularly in the early years, when the 22nd child arrives after classes have been set

for the year. That does create challenges. That is why you will see, in a number of schools, they have year 1/2 classes, 2/3 classes or K/1 classes, to give the schools a little bit more flexibility. So in discussing with the profession, particularly with principals, what they needed to improve educational outcomes in schools, the key thing that they said to us was, “We need that flexibility,” that mandatory maximums actually create problems for them. In fact, their preference would be that that they have the greatest amount of flexibility across the entire years of schooling.

**MR SMYTH:** If they are after flexibility why have your initiative at all?

**Mr Barr:** Our initiative provides them with the flexibility.

**MR SMYTH:** How?

**Mr Barr:** By giving them additional points and giving them the flexibility to allocate them across their school.

**MR SMYTH:** How do we judge where the point is? If your analysis, your analogy, is that you need 22 for two teams of soccer, on that basis, when they get to the Aussie rules part of the curriculum, the class should be 36.

**Mr Barr:** In the context of running a sport program, they would need that flexibility, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** It is a serious argument. At the heart of educational outcomes, sport is important, fitness is important, PE is important. But when we are talking literacy and numeracy, what is wrong with having classes less than 21?

**Mr Barr:** There are different circumstances but I need to point out to you that, in terms of the reporting of this, we have to include all classes, sport included. We do not exclude it. We are talking about all mainstream classes in schools.

**MR SMYTH:** But on that basis you must then go to the highest level. If the curriculum says we are teaching Aussie rules, all our primary school classes will be 36 so that you can have two teams.

**Mr Barr:** No, but we would need the flexibility, in that context, when we were teaching that particular aspect of the curriculum, to deliver that without having a mandatory maximum rule in place.

**MR SMYTH:** Why have class sizes at all?

**Mr Barr:** What a stupid question!

**MR SMYTH:** No. You are saying we need maximum flexibility so that we can pick and choose at any point in time what the class size will be. Why not just have maximum open plan and not have class sizes at all?

**Mr Barr:** That is the flexibility, then, for individual schools to determine how they will deliver those programs and there are different contexts in which you would

deliver different education programs.

**MR SMYTH:** At a point in time the students must have a home room that they go to.

**Mr Barr:** In a primary school context?

**MR SMYTH:** In a primary school context. Is it not unreasonable therefore to have a maximum size of 21?

**Mr Barr:** For?

**MR SMYTH:** In the home room context. Let us start with the home room context.

**Mr Barr:** For the early years, that has been our policy, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** That worked. It was our policy and you adopted it. It was very good of you to keep it going. But in the upper years, 4, 5 and 6, what changes that means that that is not appropriate?

**Mr Barr:** There is a range of research that shows the biggest impact is in the early years and it comes down to a resource distribution question. If you look at the ACT education system as a whole, the highest average class sizes are at the high school level and that is where we have directed additional resources.

**MR SMYTH:** But the reality is: when the policy was first announced last year, you were adamant that it would not work and it was unnecessary. But in a political sense you simply read the policy and changed your opinion on that, and that is the only reason we have got this initiative here today.

**Mr Barr:** That is a statement that you can make. It is not true.

**MR SMYTH:** So you did not have polling that says the lower class sizes were fine and the public thought it was a good idea?

**Mr Barr:** It has got no relevance to the education portfolio.

**MR SMYTH:** It certainly does. It goes to why you changed your policy.

**Mr Barr:** No, it does not have any relevance at all.

**MR SMYTH:** You said that the highest factor is the quality of teaching; yet for seven years the assistance program for teaching was ignored, at half a million dollars for seven years.

**Mr Barr:** That is not true either.

**MR SMYTH:** What would the numbers be?

**Mr Barr:** There are a range of other initiatives that have been put in place over that period in previous budgets. And you can go back through your budget papers and

have a look.

**MR SMYTH:** Again, until you were caught out, until the opposition announced that they were going to actually address what you had ignored, the quality of teaching and making these funds available—

**Mr Barr:** No. I think if you go back and look at budget initiatives well before you even contemplated any focus on teacher quality, the government was delivering programs and had been for a number of years.

**MR SMYTH:** But that particular fund was static for seven years.

**Mr Barr:** That is not the only fund focused on teacher quality.

**MR SMYTH:** Let us talk about that fund. Why was it static for seven years?

**Mr Barr:** That is not the only fund that focuses on teacher quality.

**MR SMYTH:** Yet again, the opposition made an announcement that pointed out the failures in your system.

**Mr Barr:** We had already funded, in advance of any announcement you had made in relation to that fund, other initiatives. In fact, in your election policy you talk about and compare our policy to yours and claim only in the last two years would there be any additional resources in the policy that you took to the last election. I have got the page in front of me.

**MR SMYTH:** Read the page then; go for your life.

**Mr Barr:** Happily.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Barr can read the page; feel free to; but I will come to Ms Porter and Mr Doszpot next. I know that there are a lot of questions on this.

**MS PORTER:** Are you—

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

**MR SMYTH:** He is not going to read the page.

**Mr Barr:** I will happily table the Liberal policy at some point later on. It is irrelevant now. It will never be implemented, so it does not matter.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you, chair. You mentioned, in this whole discussion about class sizes, some concern that children at risk in certain classes would be missing out in this sort of system. When you made your introductory remarks, you mentioned a number of programs with regard to children who would have some particular needs. You talked about literacy and numeracy; gifted and talented students, Indigenous students, children with English as a second language and children with disabilities. That is the list that I wrote down. Maybe it would be useful for the committee to

actually understand how that fits with this other policy so that we can see how the different policies fit together and how those are delivered.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you. In a minute I will ask Ms Davy to outline how that will work across the allocation for each of the schools. But, yes, it is important to look at the totality of initiatives, not just in this budget but back over the last three budgets, particularly with the emphasis on teacher quality and on support for schools which have students who have particular needs.

So the range of initiatives in this year's budget on literacy and numeracy, combined with the launch of our five-year literacy and numeracy strategy, which goes particularly to addressing the need to improve our literacy and numeracy performance and to address the equity of outcomes issue, particularly for Indigenous students to improve the outcomes from Indigenous students and reduce the achievement gap, are key elements of the totality of the education budget. The literacy and numeracy initiative is at the heart of that. I will get Ms Davy to outline that strategy for the committee.

**Ms Davy:** The 2009-10 budget, I think, provides almost \$6 million to literacy and numeracy. That will allow us to recruit 15 additional positions. Fourteen of those positions will be what we are calling literacy and numeracy specialist field officers. Their job will be to work intensively with the school for 12 months and in that school do a number of things. We know that building teacher capacity to teach literacy and numeracy is a really important thing to support student's literacy and numeracy outcomes.

They will be based in the school. They will have the job of coaching and mentoring other teachers in the school. They will have the job of on-site, in-school professional development. They will have the job of supporting the school to develop whole-school plans and supporting the work of the principal and the leadership team. The budget provides for the 14 positions but, over and above that, we have other resources as part of our whole literacy and numeracy strategy, which I am not sure you want me to go into at this stage, which has quite a number of other elements to supporting literacy and numeracy.

The 15th position within the budget allocation for literacy and numeracy is an additional position which will go to our literacy research centre established at the University of Canberra, which has been a joint initiative between the department and the university for some years. It used to be called the parents as tutors program. We have significantly revamped that over the last 12 months and this additional position will allow us to expand that program so that more students and more parents can access it and expand the program so that we can utilise that program to actually not just support the students and parents that go to it outside of school but also to bring that expertise, again, back into our schools and provide professional learning for our mainstream teachers.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, chair. I have a supplementary question to what Ms Bresnan was asking regarding class sizes. I have documents here from Mr Barr—

thank you for the provision of those documents, Mr Barr—on the number of schools in each region which have class sizes of more than 21 students. There is a total of 57 schools out of 83 schools that have class sizes greater than 21. So that is 57 schools. Focusing on a particular school, and just taking it from the list that was provided, Caroline Chisholm P-10 school has 92 classes of more than 21 students per class. Can you elaborate on how the number of teachers would be applied to those classes in that one school?

**Ms Davy:** I have not got the details in my head in terms of the exact number of points that Caroline Chisholm would be entitled to under the average class size allocation but it would be a substantial amount. There would be a component for the primary component, for the kindergarten to year 6 component, which would be an allocation on the basis of their student enrolment numbers, with 200 points in total distributed, which is the 10 extra teachers.

In terms of their high school component, for the year 7 to 10 component, it would be a substantially larger amount of points because it would be on the basis of allocating 50 teachers across the high school sector, which is 1,000 staffing points across only 17 high school sites. So it would be on the basis of Caroline Chisholm's student enrolment data. I can certainly get you the projected figure, if you—

**MS DOSPZPOT:** Okay. I guess what we are trying to grapple with is how the application of these teachers is going to be done. If we are talking about X number of teachers and we have a very large number of class sizes, will there be four or five teachers allocated to this one particular school to meet those needs? That is what I would like to know.

**Ms Davy:** Again, if I had the exact projected figure, I would be able to tell you that. For example, if it was projected that Caroline Chisholm would get 100 points, would they be entitled to five additional staff?

**MR DOSZPOT:** And that is the question that we are trying to get to—the fact that we have got, say, 10 teachers going into the primary component across all of the schools. If this school takes up five of those teachers, are we really talking about having a sufficient number of teachers in this recruitment process to address this situation with any meaningful results?

**Ms Davy:** I believe so. Again, it comes back to the flexibility of the principal in terms of the allocation of the resources. A P-10 school, as I have said, like Caroline Chisholm, for example, that is getting 100 points, it will be the equivalent of five teachers. The principal will then decide how they will allocate those. That will vary in terms of what their needs are, in terms of whether they need another maths teacher, whether they need another English teacher or whether they want to allocate in terms of some of their executive staffing roles. But one would think that, at this time next year, if you asked for this same information, there would not be 92 classes in Caroline Chisholm that were above 21; the number would be substantially less.

**Mr Barr:** It is worth bearing in mind, for the committee's information, that there are 97 classes in the school that have less than 21.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes, that is correct, but there are 92 that have more than 21.

**Mr Barr:** That is right, but we are talking about an average. We have always been talking about an average. Some classes will be greater than 21; some will be less than 21.

**MR SMYTH:** Can you explain to the committee how this points system will work? Has it been worked out that there are seven extra teachers, they have so many points, we just divide the number of classes by the points and therefore we are working to a target? Or have schools been able, based on the data you have provided, to work out what their needs are, they come to the points and, at the end, if the number of teachers required is 120, will we get 120?

**Ms Davy:** No, it is the first scenario. So on the basis of an allocation within the budget allocation that we have, we will be distributing it, as I described before, with the methodology for distributing the points, as part of the staffing allocation. Schools will make decisions about how they then use that to resource it. As it is a system average, we will be monitoring this each year after the school census and having a look at what the average system class size is each year. On the basis of any information that that might give us, we may need to revise or amend the allocation of points to schools in their next staffing round. That is what we do as a matter of course every year, not just for average class sizes but for every other part of the staffing allocation.

**Mr Barr:** That is the important point to note. That is why we have the census for government and non-government schools, because the enrolment figure leads to a resource allocation and it also leads to commonwealth allocation of resources. This is fluid; it changes every year as schools change in size and as the number of enrolments from one system to another changes. Having regard to the way the commonwealth sets up its funding, the funding follows students—certainly, a proportion of the commonwealth funding follows students. So every year you will see in the budget papers that there is a technical adjustment around enrolment. That goes to the issue of the actual number of students in each of the systems. That is worth noting in the overall context of this. If we have a significant increase in enrolments in public schools next year then we will get additional resources that flow with that. So there is an adjustment in commonwealth funding and also in territory funding.

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a document that outlines how you achieve these points and how you calculated what was required to reduce to your average of 21?

**Ms Davy:** For the average class sizes?

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a document that determines how this will work?

**Ms Davy:** There is not a formal document per se. Obviously, we have done lots of modelling and we have done some projections for what might be the impact on the 2010 staffing allocation on the basis of the 2009 census and on the basis of the average class sizes across the system at the moment, which leads us down to the scenario of the 10 to K-6, 50 to high school and 10 to the college sector scenario.

**Mr Barr:** But there is a document that is provided to each school—

**Ms Davy:** Sure.

**Mr Barr:** that indicates how many points they are getting.

**MR SMYTH:** Sure.

**Mr Barr:** But then that allocation occurs later in the process.

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a document that determined how many points, total, would be required before it was divided up into the schools? Is there a global document that you—

**Mr Barr:** Well, that would—

**MR SMYTH:** based your school documents on?

**Mr Barr:** come to the issue of the number of mainstream class students divided by the number of mainstream classes and then the difference between the current staffing allocation and the one that we—

**MR SMYTH:** Does that document exist?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, that document would exist.

**MR SMYTH:** Is it possible—

**Mr Barr:** We can certainly get that document. That is very simple.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, I am sure it is. Is the breakdown a simple document or is the breakdown 84 documents?

**Mr Barr:** One for each school in terms of their allocation of total points. That is what it will end up being, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** And have those 84 documents been prepared?

**Mr Barr:** They cannot be yet because the allocation for next year's staffing has not been done. That occurs later in the school year. Of course, the census is not conducted until February, so you have got a series of stages where you can make provisional allocations and then things can change from the end of the year until when you get your census headcount in the new year.

**Ms Davy:** That is right. In August each year we will provide principals with what we believe is their full staffing allocation for the next year, which will include all of the different programs and the points allocations against those. Our HR people will work with principals at that point in time and have a look at any trend data, any enrolment data, whether we have got the projections wrong, and we will make our best educated, informed decision around that. We will staff on the basis of decisions that are made at

the end of this year for next year, and after the February census next year we would make any adjustments that might be necessary if we did not actually get it right.

**MR SMYTH:** This document that determines the average 21 class size, how is that class size transferred into the amount that is in the budget? How is the requirement for the extra teachers determined? How does that end up as \$3,087,000 for the first half-year?

**Mr Whybrow:** There was initial work done that established the extra number of teachers. The way that the department receives funding through Treasury for its class sizes is that annually there is assessment based on enrolment. That is considered to be a technical adjustment in our appropriation table. So, year from year, you will see an adjustment to the department's funding as enrolment numbers move. Effectively, what happens is that there is an allocation per student which gets times-ed out to determine an overall budget position. What this has done is that it has said, "We need an extra 70 teachers," and that works out at \$22.7 million worth of recurrent funding. That has been added to that allocation, so the price per student effectively goes up.

**MR SMYTH:** Where would we find that changed appropriation in the budget papers?

**Mr Whybrow:** In the budget papers, it will not be a technical adjustment this year, but I will point you to page 371—"more teachers, lower class sizes", about halfway down the page.

**MR SMYTH:** That is the initiative that is outlined this year?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** I thought you said there was a technical adjustment every year,

**Mr Barr:** That is under the technical adjustment further down the page.

**Mr Whybrow:** And the first one says "government schools enrolment adjustment".

**MR SMYTH:** So that is where we find it every year?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** So in the coming years we will need to look for the government schools enrolment adjustment to see the tweaking of this?

**Mr Whybrow:** It is the adjustment to the overall funding. This is just a very small component. I guess we are looking at 70 teachers. I do not know the exact numbers but we would have over 3,000 teachers. So it just makes a small adjustment to that overall total cost per student. Then, as you get more students, the funding arrangement, obviously, is to provide more funding the more students you have.

**THE CHAIR:** I have got a quick follow-up and then I will move to Ms Bresnan, Mr Doszpot, Ms Burch and then Ms Porter. There are a lot of questions on this area and I think it is right that we drill down on it a fair bit.

On this points system, does this then lead to a situation where individual schools will each have an average of 21 in their school or is it just 21 across the system and then some schools might have an average of 23 and some schools might have an average of 20?

**Mr Barr:** It is across the system.

**THE CHAIR:** So what will be the allowed deviation, I suppose? What will be the maximum that you would allow to occur in any high school or any primary school in terms of averages? Is 23 the maximum? Is 25 the maximum average? How much deviation will there be from the lowest average for one school to the highest average for one school?

**Ms Davy:** We have been talking a lot to principals about this. At this point in time we are not inclined to set a definitive number because, again, circumstances in individual schools will change from year to year. But it will certainly be an important element of their principal's appraisal each year which they have with their school director. We will certainly be monitoring what the average class size in each school is. We will have that information and we will certainly be asking questions and have an expectation of all principals that that will be reduced with the allocation of the additional points. Again, in terms of what figure it will be reduced to, it will, as I said, vary from school to school, and probably will vary in schools from year to year.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, you do not have a view? Obviously you would not want to see too much of a variation. You would not want to see some schools particularly disadvantaged in terms of the numbers in their school.

**Mr Barr:** Currently, with respect to the average range, the lowest is 16, up to 26 in high schools.

**THE CHAIR:** That is a reasonable deviation, I imagine, and that is with an average of 22 in primary and 24 in high school?

**Mr Barr:** Sorry, that is just for high schools.

**THE CHAIR:** For high schools, okay.

**Mr Barr:** And the average is about 24 in high schools, but the range is 16 to 26.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** I want to ask about the process. Basically, as you said, you work with school principals in August and it will be based on projections—looking at what you think will be the required allocation for them come the new school year. Is that correct?

**Ms Davy:** Principals will get in August, from our HR directorate, a very clear estimated allocation of staffing points, which will be on the basis of a number of factors—their student enrolment data, their entitlements under our EBA, allocations

for executive teachers. There will be different allocations for literacy and numeracy, for this initiative and other initiatives.

**MS BRESNAN:** And that will be reviewed in February?

**Ms Davy:** On the basis of the August-September discussion, we have to start working out whether they need additional staff for 2010. So, yes, we staff on that basis. But after the February census in 2010, we will sit back and it may be that, for some reason which none of us could project, school X suddenly had an intake of 30 additional students in a particular year, and then we would need to supplement that school with additional staffing points to enable them to have an extra teacher or two teachers within it.

**MS BRESNAN:** So when the school year has started, if something like that happens, you would have to make some sort of quick adjustment to make sure that happens.

**Mr Barr:** That happens every year.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes, I understand that, but this is a new system and I was trying to—

**Mr Barr:** No, it is the same system. We are just adding extra points to that system.

**MS BRESNAN:** But it will have an impact on the way the school operates.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there are going to be more points.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes, obviously. So how does that fit in with the budget process? When the budget comes out, will that feed into the budget process? If, for some reason, there needs to be a reallocation to another school, will that be shifted around? How will that work?

**Mr Barr:** It is managed within the totality of the education budget. Mr Whybrow might like to—

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes, but it needs to go into the budget process when it comes out.

**Mr Whybrow:** The budget process sets the totalities, as the minister was saying, for the department. Internal re-allocations of resources around need are done with—

**MS BRESNAN:** So it will just be an internal process. If there is a need, it will just be shifted over?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is right. It is done as an internal process within the department.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** This question of the 70, the number of teachers that we are looking at, is a vexing one. I am sure it is difficult for you to allocate and it is difficult for us to understand that the 70 teachers are going to be enough. We will have to put that on the back burner. I will come to the point of where the 70 teachers are going to come

from. Mr Barr, as long ago as 6 August last year, when you still had not made your Damascus conversion to the class size of 21, you said in the Assembly:

The question that remains is where Mr Seselja plans to source these teachers ...

Mr Seselja was enunciating the Liberal Party policy of reducing class sizes to 21. Mr Barr said:

The question that remains is where Mr Seselja plans to source these teachers from and how much he intends to pay them, given the difficulties that we and all jurisdictions are experiencing in relation to recruiting and retaining teachers ...

That was all of seven or eight months ago. What has changed so significantly that we are so confident that we can now recruit 70 teachers in the next six months?

**Mr Barr:** I would make two points in response to that question. The first, obviously, is that there is a difference between the Labor policy and the Liberal policy in relation to this, clearly. Reading from your document, the Canberra Liberals intended to recruit 150 additional teachers and 20 teacher assistants.

**THE CHAIR:** Not in one year.

**Mr Barr:** Not in one year, no, but you did intend to spend, in this coming financial year, just over \$3 million, rising to \$7.6 million and then \$13 million in the outyears. If it is not possible for Labor to recruit 70 teachers, how would it have been possible for the Liberals to have recruited 150?

**MR SMYTH:** That is your argument. You said you cannot do it because the teachers are not there. If the teachers are not there—

**Mr Barr:** That was going to be a significant challenge for the Liberal Party to recruit an additional 150.

**MR SMYTH:** I note in our first year it was \$3 million and approximately—

**Mr Barr:** Right, so you had exactly the same target as we do. You keep on adding year after year?

**MR SMYTH:** No, I am just noting your figures. You are quoting from a document. I am just saying you have got the same numbers here.

**Mr Barr:** Clearly, depending on which colour of political party is in government, there is obviously a massive difference in the ability to be able to recruit teachers.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not think that is the point that has been made. You were sceptical last year.

**Mr Barr:** Am I allowed to answer Mr Doszpot's question or are you interrupting me?

**THE CHAIR:** No, you are indeed, but I will just clarify that. I think the point was—

**Mr Barr:** His questions need your clarification.

**THE CHAIR:** You seem to have misunderstood it somewhat. He seems to be suggesting that you were very sceptical last year of the ability to recruit teachers, and now you are saying you will be able to. The question is: how? What has changed? What are you going to do to make sure you can?

**Mr Barr:** Nothing has changed other than two key factors. The first is a rejuvenation in the University of Canberra's educational faculty. I was speaking last night with both the vice-chancellor and the head of that faculty. They have indicated that they are seeing increases in enrolments in the UC education course of between 17 and 40 per cent depending on the specific nature of each of the courses that they are offering there. So that is tremendous news locally.

The other factor that is worth identifying, again in the totality of a recruitment campaign, is the historic trend for there to be somewhere between three and six applicants per position that the ACT is offering. When I first became minister, there were something like 1,300 applicants for about 200, 250 positions that were on offer in the system. We did see for a couple of years a decline in the number of applicants. This year I am advised of 900 applicants for 250 available positions.

My expectation is that with the increase in enrolments at the University of Canberra we will see over the next few years the capacity to meet that recruitment target. I would also acknowledge, though, that in the totality of your education budget what proportion you allocate to extra positions versus what proportion you allocate for extra salaries is an influential factor in determining your ability to recruit. We need to recognise that. That is why the government did not commit \$13 million in the outyears for the extra 80 teachers. We decided to prioritise other areas and believed that recruiting an extra 70 was appropriate.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, but your answer seems to be that there has always been an abundance of applicants for these positions yet just last year you were sceptical that it could be delivered. That seems to be a contradictory position.

**Mr Barr:** I am sceptical that your policy could be delivered.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, so once again it depends which colour it is in terms of whether teachers are going to come on board.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, because you, in the choices you were making, were seeking to pursue, entirely, more teachers, leaving apparently very little provision for wages growth.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a supplementary on that, Mr Barr. The budget line that we see for \$3,087,000 for the first part of this recruitment campaign: what is included—

**Ms Davy:** Page number?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Page 371 of the changes to appropriation, budget paper 4. There is an amount listed there, and obviously there is an amount of \$6 million allocated over

the next three years after that, but what does that amount include? Does that include a marketing campaign or an advertising campaign as well for the recruitment of these teachers?

**Mr Barr:** No, that just goes to the half-financial-year effect because they will not be recruited and start until the 2010 school year, which is halfway through the 2009-10 financial year, so it will simply be an extension. We recruit 200 to 250 new teachers every year. Given that people retire and people leave the city et cetera, there is a turnover amongst staff of more than 3,000. We will simply, instead of recruiting 250, recruit 320.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So there is no additional campaign aimed at recruiting the additional 70 teachers in there?

**Ms Davy:** Each year we market heavily outside the ACT. Knowing that this government had a commitment around this particular initiative and others, we have just increased the nature of that marketing campaign. So we attend university career expos—we have just started in the last couple of weeks—some of our HR staff travel to different universities and present to undergraduates, and we certainly do that within the local area of Canberra.

We also over the last two weeks have started a national marketing media campaign within national newspapers, on our website and those sorts of things. So we certainly have just increased the amount of presence which we normally do each year in terms of both local and national marketing. My HR people tell us that even over the last couple of weeks we are getting a reasonably strong level of interest as a result of that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Are we looking further than our own interstate activities, looking overseas for teachers as well?

**Ms Davy:** We certainly through the website presence do that, but we mainly try to target New South Wales and Victoria. We even travel to Perth and try to convince people from Western Australia to come over and teach in our schools because they are the best schools. So, yes, we concentrate on the national scene but certainly, if the case warrants, we might go internationally, but we rely on the website for that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure. Another question on our ability to attract teachers: I understand from statements that the Australian Education Union have made that we are becoming less and less competitive with the wages we are able to offer, so is the attraction of teachers proving to be difficult because of these current salary rates?

**Ms Davy:** I might ask the minister or Mr Tardif to answer on the particulars around the comparison detail around salaries, but certainly we are not finding any change in our attrition rates in terms of people leaving the system. In fact this year we have gone from a 10 per cent attrition rate to 8.5 so it has actually reduced. So we are not losing teachers. We do not believe the system is bleeding. In fact we are probably retaining more of our teachers than we have in previous years and we are certainly retaining them in comparison with other jurisdictions. As I have said, in terms of the attraction strategy around the marketing et cetera, and certainly from the strong advice that we are getting from the University of Canberra about their graduate intake this year, we

are very confident we can attract and find an additional 70 good-quality teachers. But the comparison details I might ask Mr Tardif to answer.

**Mr Tardif:** ACT teachers are actually still very competitive in terms of salaries and conditions. Just to give you some examples, a graduate teacher is currently paid an annual salary of \$52,128, so based on that they rank ahead of Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland and very close to Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. That is before the results of the current EBA negotiations. Even a small increase through that will put ACT graduate teachers ahead of all but those in the Northern Territory.

If you look at the top-of-the-range classroom teachers, in the ACT they are currently paid an annual salary of \$74,279, so, based on current salaries and any negotiated increase, top-of-the-range classroom teacher salaries will continue to be competitive with other jurisdictions but slightly behind New South Wales and Victoria. However, you have got to take into account the fact that the incremental scale in the ACT is a seven-year scale, whereas in New South Wales it is a nine-year scale and in Victoria it is 10 years. In other words, it takes a graduate teacher in New South Wales an extra two years to get to the top of that scale; in Victoria an extra three years.

On top of that, of course, we are trying through the current negotiations to include provision in the new EBA for the best classroom teachers to be paid salaries of \$100,000. The ACT teachers also enjoy better superannuation employer contributions than most other jurisdictions, including New South Wales and Victoria. The ACT employer contribution is 10 per cent compared to nine per cent in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

In terms of conditions, face-to-face teaching hours: in ACT primary schools it is 21 hours 30 minutes a week. That is lower than in any other jurisdiction except Western Australia, which is 10 minutes less per week. In secondary schools, face-to-face teaching hours are 19 a week. That is lower than any other jurisdiction. South Australia has the highest, at 22 hours and 40 minutes. Teaching days in the school year: 197 in the ACT, lower than New South Wales and Victoria, third lowest overall. The student-teacher ratio in ACT public schools primary sector is 13.6 to one, lower than any other jurisdiction; it is equal to the Northern Territory. In the secondary sector the ratio is 12.1 to one, which is on a par with other jurisdictions and is lower than New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. So, in terms of overall salaries and conditions, ACT teaching conditions are very competitive.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Tardif, and I have seen those figures. I also understand, again from comments that I read in the press from the Australian Education Union, that the union are very concerned about the opportunities for their membership, especially in, I think, the upper to mid-level range. Their estimation is that that will be about 4.9 per cent behind New South Wales. Given that that should be our primary target for recruitment, the union, from what I can see, feel very concerned about the way that their teachers will be affected and our ability to recruit and to retain these teachers.

**Mr Barr:** It is obviously why it is important within the context of your overall budget allocation in education to strike a balance between the extra number of positions you

would want to recruit and then to make that initial provision for salary increase. Why, Mr Doszpot? I have been working for some time to seek a major structural change in the way that we pay our teachers. I would like to see an end to promotion by exhaustion. I would like to see an end to promotion by seniority and we would like to see a merit-based system implemented.

We are working closely with the union and with other jurisdictions around national professional standards for teachers, and it is my desire to see this structure changed along the lines of a public sector merit-based promotion with hard barriers between the bands of teacher advancement so that you would have beginning, intermediate, advanced and expert teachers, but to move to each of those bands would require an interview and an application, and it would not be an automatic incremental advancement. There would be increments within each band, but to jump from each point there would be a hard barrier that you would need to go through.

We want to reward the best classroom teachers. We want a merit-based system and I think the best way to describe the system that we are looking to put in place in the ACT is one that is modelled around public sector promotion. So, for example, if you want to move from being an AS06 to a SOGC you apply for the job. If you want to move from being a SOGC to a SOGB and then on to a SOGA there are different requirements. Your job description will be different. So one of the key things that we want to pursue around changing the structure of the teaching profession, particularly looking at these expert teachers, is that they will take on a greater mentoring role with younger teachers and that they will take on a much greater leadership role within schools, but stay in the classroom.

If there is a fundamental problem with the teaching profession at the moment, it is that if you want to advance through the ranks you get drawn further and further away from the classroom and you end up having a greater administrative role and less of a role as an educational leader. That structural change, combined with the work that is occurring around the review of school-based management, is fundamentally rethinking the way we run schools. I would particularly like to see our principals being able to be back in the classroom and have less of an administrative load, so there is a big piece of work that is occurring, in conjunction with the principals association and other stakeholders, around school-based management, what are the appropriate functions that should be dealt with in an administrative stream and where our educational leadership needs to come from.

This is a major reform to how we run our schools. It is not something that will be achieved in a couple of years, but we have been making steady progress and I hope to see this rolled out, combined with, of course, a number of national partnerships and a number of changes that are occurring nationally, over the term of this government and, as this sort of reform process is so significant, continuing into the next Assembly.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, the theory and the way you explained it sounds commendable. The issue, though, is that the reality is that people are not aware of some of the vision perhaps that you are trying to enunciate. Consultation is required to get this message across and to understand what the issues are within the education sector at the moment. There seems to be a bit of a gap in the consultation process, in getting the feedback that I certainly have got from various areas, but certainly I do

commend you. The vision is great, but consultation—

**Mr Barr:** I welcome the endorsement. If you would like to continue to promote my agenda in this area, Mr Doszpot, I would welcome that endorsement.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I think you are missing the point, Mr Barr. I am also talking about the lack of consultation.

**Mr Barr:** I am not sure that that is in fact the issue. This has been the subject of considerable public debate. I have given speeches and had a number of discussions with each of the key—

**MR DOSZPOT:** But are you listening to people?

**Mr Barr:** Absolutely, yes; that is part of this discussion. The review of school-based management is one of the most critical pieces of work that we will undertake this year.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am talking about teacher conditions.

**Mr Barr:** And teacher conditions as well, yes, absolutely. As Mr Tardif has just outlined, we have some equal or best conditions in the country.

**MS BURCH:** I want to ask around the school-based management review, but I will just park that for a minute and go back to class sizes in high schools. You prompted me about Caroline Chisholm, as I have a son who is an ex-student of there. They run a strong subschool system—or they did when he was there—so the extra resources will not take any of that flexibility away about how the school deems it is best able to or prefers to manage its high school classes? That flexibility remains?

**Ms Davy:** The flexibility will remain and one could argue that they are given greater flexibility because they will have a greater staffing allocation with which to make decisions about.

**MS BURCH:** Okay. In high schools where classes get into specialist subjects and often in each year you might have everybody wanting to do music or French and nobody really wants to do high-end maths or something like that, with the class sizes, how does the school manage that? How does this policy limit or enhance their ability to manage different subject streams?

**Ms Davy:** The schools will continue to manage that as they are managing now, and again this additional allocation will just increase their base to give them greater flexibility to make those sorts of decisions. Principals, particularly in high schools, make those decisions now, which is the reason why schools make some decisions about having classes larger than 21, for example, to allow them to run some smaller classes for some of the particular expert specialist elective classes.

Some of our college principals at the moment are wanting to be much more flexible about supporting year 11 and 12 students, for example, by running sort of a mixture of larger seminar type classes with 30 to 35 students or young people to allow them at other times on the timetable to do some very small tutorial type group sessions with

the students. So the flexibility that high schools have around those elective classes et cetera will not change.

**MS BURCH:** I go back to the plot for school-based management. You would think that the hours per week that you made mention of in the conditions seem quite low. But what I hear from teachers is that the higher you get up the career ladder the more away from teaching you become. Can you tell us a bit more around how changing management of school will allow teachers to teach, and will that enhance, stretch, the number of resources within this policy—provide additional resources?

**Mr Barr:** Sure. I suppose on the extent of reform in this area there is no limit, really, to how far we might take this, with the support of the profession. One extreme would be a complete rewriting of the business of running schools. Following a very productive meeting with the principals association yesterday, I am encouraged that they are thinking big picture, perhaps in the medium term, together with some important short-term initiatives around reducing the administrative load and looking at what sorts of things can be centralised—things like cleaning contract administration, for example—and what sorts of things should, in fact, be devolved further to schools, I suppose to the extent of how broad your reform agenda is, how wide your imagination is in these areas.

One could envisage that, in a larger secondary school with a structure that currently has a principal and between one and three deputies, depending on the size of the school, one of those deputy positions could be entirely focused on the business management of the school, freeing up the other positions, including the principal, to take a much greater educational leadership role.

That involves a range of industrial issues, too, around how you would classify those sorts of positions. But at the moment, I would argue, the administrative positions within particularly our larger schools that are public service type positions, employed by the education department but public servants, are not of a level sufficient to provide the sort of high-end business management that the business of running a school requires and so that load falls on principals—and that is not necessarily their background. Their background is in education and educational leadership. So getting that balance right, around exactly what the role of a principal is in a 21st century school, noting that so many of the structures that are in place date back to the 1890s in terms of how schools have been run. We need that fundamental rethink.

When I spoke at the principals conference in Jindabyne about a month ago, three weeks ago—I do not remember how many weeks ago it was—they were particularly focused on this issue and looking at how they might re-imagine school leadership, how they might look to reform the way that we deliver schooling. I think the ACT is perfectly placed to undertake this sort of work. We could have pilot projects within schools or school clusters, given the size of our system. Certainly a number of the people who sit on the executive of the principals association are looking at this and are willing to trial some new options.

So obviously there is a huge amount of work that needs to be done as part of the SBM review but also in terms of our relationship and ongoing dialogue with the principals association, but I certainly would want to flag this as a major area of reform. We need

to move beyond this 1890s paradigm of how we run schools, recognising that it is a much more complex job, technology has changed and there is a range of issues that are very different as we look ahead over the next 10 to 15 years.

What I would like to say is that I am very encouraged by the passion that the principals association are bringing to this. They are obviously consulting widely with their membership. We as a community and we as an education system have invested very heavily in these people over a long time. They have assumed some important leadership roles within our education system and they are keen to get on with the job and think outside the square, and I am really encouraging this piece of work.

**MS BURCH:** Having sat on the P&C and seen what mundane matters principals sometimes need to deal with, I encourage that thought.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you finished on that one?

**MS BURCH:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I was going to come to Ms Porter after Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This is a very quick one, going back to the class size. Have you looked at using median rather than average as your measure, given the issues with averages? You could have a class of one and a class of 41 and if you average them together you have got your 21 class size. That is clearly not an acceptable outcome.

**Mr Barr:** The policy is average class size but, as I think I have indicated in response to a couple of previous questions, the range that goes to the heart of the median question in the context of high schools was between 16 and 26. That gets you your current average at the moment of 24—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And what is the median, the current median?

**Mr Barr:** I do not have it at the moment, but we could certainly find that out.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Because statistically that is possibly the more important question.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter?

**MS PORTER:** It seems like a long time ago, but in an answer to another question about where we find the money from, you mentioned technical adjustments. When I was looking at page 371 and the page after it, I noted that there are a number of technical adjustments that include national partnerships as a prerequisite. I was just wondering how we negotiate those technical adjustments. Is that a negotiated position between us and the commonwealth or how are our negotiations going with the commonwealth around all those kinds of things?

**Mr Barr:** It is a quite detailed negotiation. Obviously the work around national partnerships has been ongoing for some time. Discussions at a ministerial council level are multilateral, but we then get down to the fine detail of determining bilateral

agreements with the commonwealth around specific targets. The way the national partnerships are established is around facilitation and reward, so the territory is granted particular facilitation resources to achieve certain agreed targets with the commonwealth. That involves detailed negotiation. In a minute I will get Ms Davy to outline some of this because she has clearly been involved in some fine detail around these matters.

I think the important thing for the territory is that these negotiations are robust and that we set challenging but realistic targets, which I believe we have. Obviously the commonwealth are not just going to agree to any old target that we put forward—there has to be some robustness around our negotiations—but the reward money that flows from this is potentially very significant for the territory. There is a lot at stake around reaching our agreed outcomes around those national partnerships: it is crucial in terms of extra resources that will flow through the system.

Ms Davy, do you want to speak of the detail?

**Ms Davy:** Yes. Now that the ACT has signed up to these national partnerships, the next layer of discussions has been at the ministerial level in terms of signing up to a bilateral agreement. That has been through cabinet. We are just organising the detail of that, but really the hard work that is now going on with each jurisdiction is developing state or territory implementation plans for each of these national partnerships. We are well on the way to that. We hope that in the next week we will be signing those off, which will allow the first payment to come from the commonwealth in this financial year.

With the work around the national partnerships, in particular, probably the important three are the teacher quality one, the literacy and numeracy one and the low socioeconomic status one. We have been working with the Catholic and independent sector, particularly around the teacher quality one and the literacy-numeracy one. The money that is coming forward in terms of facilitation payments will be shared across all sectors and we will work together on some of the strategies. I am not sure whether you want me to go into the detail, but I am certainly happy to do so if you wish.

**MS PORTER:** Other members may be interested in the strategies.

**THE CHAIR:** Indeed.

**MS PORTER:** Yes, we are.

**Ms Davy:** Shall I go through them one by one?

**THE CHAIR:** Why not—without taking too long; perhaps a brief discussion.

**Ms Davy:** Okay. Universal access—the national partnership around universal access is committing us to 15 hours of preschool education. We have already commenced that this year. In our government preschools we have got the five early childhood schools that have moved from 12 hours to 15 hours of preschool. Next year we will increase that to another couple of sites, and then in future, with the aim that by 2013 we will have all the government preschools offering 15 hours of preschool. We can

manage that within the commonwealth's funding contribution.

The literacy and numeracy one I talked about before. We will add to the government's \$6 million budget initiative. We will add these dollars to enable us to increase the number of literacy and numeracy field officers we are actually having in our schools. We are going to use some of the commonwealth NP money around literacy and numeracy to add to, over the next couple of years, two more field officers. That will mean that two more schools will be able to access specialist literacy and numeracy support. We are also going to use that literacy and numeracy money to provide resources around particular programs to all schools. That is going to be in the government and the non-government sector.

The teacher quality national partnership is again cross-sectoral. We are looking very much around supporting the national agenda around that, which is about the development of national teacher standards, the development of nationally consistent processes for teacher registration and assessment of teacher standards. And we will do some work cross-sectorally and with the universities and the teacher unions around that piece of work.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Davy. Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Just based on the number of teachers, I think Mr Tardif mentioned that there are 3,000 teachers.

**Mr Tardif:** I think it is around 2,800 full time.

**MR SMYTH:** So approximately 2,800-odd. Is there a breakdown on primary school, high school, college and special education teachers?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there would be. Whether we have got it in front of us today I do not know, but we can certainly get that information. That is easily done. Just as a rule of thumb, the primary sector is the largest component thereof.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, that is okay. Going back to teachers' wages and being able to get enough teachers for the class size initiatives, the AEU appeared before the committee last Friday. They were very concerned that teaching is a competitive market and there already exists a gap between the ACT and New South Wales. I think the representative described it as significant. New South Wales, I think, is getting a 4.9 per cent increase.

**Mr Barr:** There is a 4.9 per cent gap.

**MR SMYTH:** No; that is right: it was a 4.9 per cent differential, with an eight per cent differential between the Catholic schools and our system and, she claimed, a 10 per cent gap between the Anglican system and our system. Given the government's policy of wage restraint, what will that do to your ability to recruit good teachers?

**Mr Barr:** Again you need to look at all of the issues that are relevant in terms of a total package. Issues of conditions clearly come into that mix. As Mr Tardif outlined earlier, before there is any increase agreed to—ACT conditions are already in the top

half of the country—

**MR SMYTH:** Are they as good as New South Wales?

**Mr Barr:** Not in all areas, no, at the moment, but this changes depending on at what point an EBA payment comes in. With New South Wales, my understanding of the New South Wales outcomes are that they do their pay rises on 1 January whereas ours have tended to be at the beginning of the financial year, on 1 July. So it would depend on what time you asked me the question. New South Wales would jump ahead for a six-month period. Then, depending on which pay point it is—as Mr Tardif indicated, New South Wales has a number of different tiers in their structure; we have seven at the moment. You need to bear in mind all of those factors.

The other clear one in terms of the difference between the ACT system and perhaps the non-government system in the ACT, which is maybe the most directly relevant for the people who would want to stay in the ACT, is that if you were to move out of the public system you would be teaching more hours and you would be teaching large classes. So you would be teaching more students for more hours if you were in a non-government school than you would be if you were in a government school.

All of that said, that is one of the driving factors for why I would like to see a restructure of the way we pay our teachers. If we are able to get agreement with the union to move to a fourth band, an expert teacher band, and have our top salary point at \$100,000, we will be \$20,000 ahead of teachers elsewhere in the country for those experienced teachers. As Mr Tardif indicated, at the graduate end, when you first enter the system, even before there is a pay rise, we are ahead of everyone but the Northern Territory.

So in terms of salaries and in terms of conditions—plus, of course, the ACT system has many other attractions, not least of which is that the range of schools you are likely to work in in the ACT are very high quality. In New South Wales you do take your chances around where you might be employed within a system of that size. Clearly there are some very desirable schools to work in in New South Wales. Byron Bay high school, I understand, is a very popular school to work in. There are perhaps some other schools in New South Wales, without wanting to name any, that are not quite as desirable.

Teachers have to make a range of decisions around where they want to work, but my view is that, when you look at the totality of the package that the ACT education system provides, particularly when you look at your face-to-face teaching hours, the number of students that you will teach and a range of initiatives in this budget, going to reduce the number of students that an individual teacher will be teaching, combined with a fair and affordable salary increase and a restructure of the total teaching package, we will be competitively placed.

When the formal bargaining period commences with the AEU, the government will make a formal offer and we will move forward with this EBA. It is worth noting that both parties have agreed that we will not seek to enter into a formal bargaining period whilst the Work Choices legislation remains in place. That expires and the new system comes in on 1 July this year.

**MR SMYTH:** So the current agreement finishes on 30 June.

**Mr Barr:** On 30 June.

**MR SMYTH:** So it will simply be extended?

**Mr Barr:** No. It expires on 30 June, and as soon as possible after that we would like to reach agreement with the AEU.

**MR SMYTH:** The concern from the AEU—I appreciate the entirety of the package, but they saw a competitive market. I do not know whether the representative was talking about the entire package or simply the wages, but how do you address that gap? They are obviously concerned about it, and the government's policy in the budget is wages restraint.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, I would like to jump above and create the classroom teaching positions that have salaries of up to \$100,000 and therefore move \$20,000 ahead of everyone else.

**MR SMYTH:** And you would see that coming in as a result of this EBA?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. I would like to, recognising that there is one proviso on that, and that is that the union have indicated clearly to me, and I agree with their position on this, that until we have national standards around each of those categories, in terms of restructuring the teaching profession, it will be difficult for any party to sign up to the expert teacher category—until we have agreed on how we are defining that.

**MR SMYTH:** When are the definitions due?

**Mr Barr:** Within the next 12 to 18 months.

**THE CHAIR:** How many expert teachers would you envisage there would be? What kind of numbers are we talking about?

**Mr Barr:** This is obviously subject to negotiation through the EBA process. It is worth breaking down the current situation across the 2,800 to 3,000 teachers once you add in the part timers. Around half are currently at the top of the scale. So we are talking about 1,500 teachers or thereabouts who are currently at the \$74,000 ceiling barrier. We would not envisage that all 1,500 would move to the \$100,000 salary range. There would be a competitive process. The total number of positions will need to be determined in negotiations as part of the EBA process.

So I am not able to put a figure on it, other than to say that we are not talking about two positions; there will be significantly more than that. But it will not be 1,500 positions either. The union accepts that. It would be fair to say that we have a slightly different position at the moment on whether there should be a quota. The government will not agree to an uncapped number of positions at that level. We cannot just write a blank cheque and say that anything up to 1,500 teachers could be at that level. We will have to set a quota. The union is aware that that is our position, and we will

negotiate over the course of the EBA negotiations around this.

**THE CHAIR:** Where do you find the money for that, though, given wage restraint and given the efficiency savings that are needed? You are either spending a lot more in that scenario or presumably in other salary bands you are not paying as much as you otherwise would?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, that is the balance that we will have to try for. We have a total budget that we can work within, and we have made that very clear to the union. They are aware of that. Through the restructure, you would need to look at each position. The union will argue that they want a minimum percentage increase across all bands. If that is their position, that will of course limit the amount of additional teachers we can place at this new top category. My preference, as I have indicated to the union, is that I want a goodly number at that top.

The other point to make, of course, is that establishing that extra pay point is the key thing in this first round of EBA negotiations. Once it is established, we can have further discussions in future EBAs around expanding the number of positions that are there.

But, given the strong national support for this and the government support for it, I think it would be a travesty for the union to not support it. I would be very disappointed if that was the case. But you will of course understand that I do not want to conduct EBA negotiations through the estimates committee. I have said about as much as I can. Everything I have told you I have already said on the public record. The union is aware of my position on this. This is a real opportunity. My argument would be that we need to make a start. In future EBAs—because these come up every two or three years—we can then look at how we could expand that. But making that leap now is important.

**MR SMYTH:** So what percentage of teachers are currently on the highest level they can be on?

**Mr Barr:** About 50 per cent.

**MR SMYTH:** Fifty per cent. So about 1,400 teachers?

**Mr Barr:** Thereabouts, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** So what is a goodly number in this excellent class?

**Mr Barr:** We will have to see. It will depend entirely on the total outcome within the budget that we have for pay rises.

**MR SMYTH:** But does that presuppose there must be some wage reductions?

**Mr Barr:** No, there will be no wage reductions.

**MR SMYTH:** Because there has to be additional money on top otherwise.

**Mr Barr:** There will be no wage reductions, but—

**MR SMYTH:** Okay, so there is more money coming. If you have 100 expert teachers and they go from \$74,000 to \$100,000, it is 100 times \$26,000, which is \$2.6 million.

**Mr Barr:** That is right, \$2.6 million.

**MR SMYTH:** So is 100 a reasonable number?

**Mr Barr:** It is a reasonable number, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that what you aspire to?

**Mr Barr:** I would aspire to more, but it might be that we—

**MR SMYTH:** So if I get 200, it is \$5.2 million. You do not have that money in your outyears.

**Mr Barr:** We have some—

**MR SMYTH:** Nobody takes a pay cut?

**Mr Barr:** No, that is right.

**MR SMYTH:** Say there is suddenly a call for an extra \$5.2 million, where will it come from?

**Mr Barr:** You have got to the nub of our discussions.

**MR SMYTH:** When you have got wage restraint, you are not going to reduce conditions. You are going to want expert positions to encourage people to perform better, but there is no money in your budget for it.

**Mr Barr:** There is. There is a salary increase and then there is also additional money that flows from the schools agreement with the commonwealth. We have extra money, but it is a finite amount of extra money. This is the point. The number of positions we will be able to fund at the top of this new scale will be dependent entirely on the outcomes we get, given the totality of money that we have.

**MR SMYTH:** The coming year's budget to the year after—you only have an extra \$9 million. If you have got 200 expert teachers they are going to soak up most of that, which means very small wage increases for the rest of the teacher workforce.

**Mr Barr:** That is right. I think it would be unlikely to be 200 in the first year.

**MR SMYTH:** Given the concerns of the AEU, but even \$2.6 million out of that \$9 million—that is almost a third—goes to expert teachers. That is a very small wage increase for the rest of your teacher workforce at a time when you say you want excellent teachers and you want to stop them going to New South Wales.

**Mr Barr:** It is a difficult negotiation. We will see how we go.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you, Chair. I am sorry to go back to the class size issue.

**Mr Barr:** Don't be sorry.

**MR BRESNAN:** I just wanted to apologise to Mr Barr. It probably goes to what Ms Le Couteur was saying about the median issue. This is some information which was provided by the department of education about some of the early childhood schools. There are a number of years, I think: Narrabundah, year 1, has five students and year 2 has four; Lyons, years 1 and 2—and I appreciate this is early enrolments as well—

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** has no students enrolled as at 20 January; and Isabella Plains, year 1, has nine and year 2 has four. Is an average going to be applied across the school? How will that affect some of those classes that will have smaller numbers? Obviously there will be other years which have larger numbers. So how does that impact on the overall resources that will be allocated?

**Mr Barr:** Sorry, to the early childhood schools or to—

**MS BRESNAN:** Will the class average, the resources and the points that are going to be applied be applied across a school or across a year?

**Ms Davy:** Across the system.

**Mr Barr:** Across the system.

**MS BRESNAN:** Across the system, across the school?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. It is a very confusing question. I am trying to understand exactly what sort of answer you are after.

**MS BRESNAN:** I thought it was pretty clear. It is basically just asking how, when you are allocating the points—if there are going to be years that have much larger numbers and some years are going to have quite small ones—it is going to impact.

**Mr Barr:** I see. So how would a principal allocate the extra points within the years?

**MS BRESNAN:** How does it impact—the smaller classes—and does it throw out the ratios and the resources that will be applied?

**Ms Davy:** If you look at one of the P-2 schools—remember that at the moment this is for a kindergarten allocation, so take the preschool years out of it—there are very small numbers in kindergarten, year 1 and year 2. If we go back to our methodology there will be the equivalent of 200 teaching points to be allocated across kindergarten

to year 6 across all primary schools on the basis of student enrolment data. So an early childhood school, for example, might get one or two points of that 200-point allocation, which is not going to make a significant difference, and rightly so—it should not—because schools do not need a lot of points to reduce their class sizes; whereas a larger primary school will get 10 to 15 points et cetera which will allow them to increase their staff.

**Mr Barr:** You might recall, Ms Bresnan, when we discussed this issue at annual reports, I indicated that obviously there would be no point putting additional teachers into schools that had no classes above that figure.

**MS BRESNAN:** No. What I am asking is: how does that affect—

**Mr Barr:** Of course, we will be targeting the points.

**MS BRESNAN:** Absolutely, the large classes; I understand that. I am just asking: there are going to be classes that have a handful of kids and smaller numbers so how does that impact on the whole school in terms of the other resources that are allocated?

**Ms Davy:** I am not sure what the question is; I am sorry.

**MS BRESNAN:** I am just trying to understand—I am sorry if it is a stupid question and if it appears so when I ask it—the way the process is going to work and if there are going to be schools—

**Mr Barr:** I will try and explain what I think you are asking.

**MS BRESNAN:** That is all right; I can put the question on notice and explain myself a bit better in that.

**Mr Barr:** You are saying that if the kindergarten class had six kids but the year 2 class had 30—is that what you are saying?—how would that—

**MS BRESNAN:** I am just looking at some of the schools here. Lyons has 12, I think, in year 3—I am sorry; a four-year-old at preschool. I will put it in more detail on notice so that makes it easier to understand the question.

**Mr Barr:** Okay, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Bresnan. I have a couple of questions and then I will move to Mr Doszpot; he has been waiting. Just in relation to the AEU and what they had to say to the committee, we have touched a little bit on what they had to say on the competitiveness of wages. They also have been critical of the average class size across the system. Obviously, you would be aware of that. They said:

We believe that, rather than an average of class sizes across the system of 21, the government would have made a more effective contribution to easing the pressure in class sizes if it had looked at a maximum of 25 across the system or an average of 21 across a school.

They went on to say:

We believe very strongly that when the community hear statements like “an average of 21 across the system” they do not understand “across the system” to mean the same thing that we and the government understand it to mean. I think they believe that they would have the opportunity to not see classes of 30, or indeed in excess of 30, as we have had in some schools.

They go on to say, essentially, that that will still happen, and you seem to have confirmed that. Do you want to respond to that criticism? In some of the media comments as well they have indicated they believe it is a bit of a fudge and they are not very happy with the way it is going to work.

**Mr Barr:** They are welcome to their view; I disagree. The government’s position is the government’s position. End of story.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it not a reasonable criticism—

**Mr Barr:** No, it is not a reasonable criticism.

**THE CHAIR:** that ordinary parents would look at it and would think that, under this plan to lower class sizes, when they go to a government school in the ACT their child will not be in a large class, whereas essentially they may well be?

**Mr Barr:** The government’s policy was to reduce average class sizes across the system in primary schools and high schools to 21 and in colleges to 19. The government’s policy extended this average class size reduction to all levels of schooling. That was the contrast between the parties. At the last election you focused on primary schools or, more to the point, years 4, 5 and 6. We extended our provision in this area from years 4, 5, and 6 through to 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

**THE CHAIR:** Just to clarify that: there was not an exclusive focus on primary schools because there were also an extra, I think, 35 teachers in the high school system under our policy. Just on that point, though, the point I think Ms Gilmour was making was that essentially people are not getting quite what they thought they were getting. You said “average class sizes” in your policy—no-one disputes that—but there was an impression given that everyone’s classes would be smaller, whereas that is clearly not the case.

**MR BARR:** That is your opinion.

**THE CHAIR:** That is Ms Gilmour’s opinion and I am putting it to you.

**Mr Barr:** Ms Gilmour’s opinion. There is no research; there is no basis for that opinion. If a media outlet or polling company wants to ask 1,000 Canberrans what they thought a reduction in average class sizes across the system to 21 means, they are welcome to do that. The government’s policy was clear. It was in all of our advertising—all of our television, radio and print material—system-wide, an average class size reduction to 21. It is in our education policy.

**THE CHAIR:** Was that in all of the advertising or did some of it just say “smaller class sizes”?

**Mr Barr:** Some of it did say “smaller class sizes”.

**THE CHAIR:** So it did not all.

**Mr Barr:** Many of the ads—and I am happy to play them; I am happy to distribute them again if you would like to see them all: I am sure you saw them a lot last year—talked about average class size. That is in black and white in our education policy and through a range of education material.

**THE CHAIR:** So some of the ads were honest and some were not. Some were clear and some were not.

**Mr Barr:** All of the ads were honest, Mr Seselja, because some of the material also referred to previous government achievements as well. That clearly included, as Mr Smyth has acknowledged, smaller class sizes in the early years.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, but you just stole it from Liberal government policy.

**Mr Barr:** I think we—

**MR SMYTH:** So was there no significant election education achievement since that government commenced?

**Mr Barr:** I do not think anyone has disputed that. Equally, no-one has disputed that the Labor government extended that provision. We are in furious agreement then on that point.

**MR SMYTH:** I think a plan was already in train. But the point is some of your ads did not say “across the system”; they just said “smaller class sizes”. It is very important that people are clear on what they are getting. They are not getting what they thought they were going to get.

**Mr Barr:** Well, that is your view. I do not agree with that.

**THE CHAIR:** It is also the Education Union’s view.

**Mr Barr:** That is the Education Union’s view. I do not agree with that. I am not obliged to agree with everything the Education Union says.

**THE CHAIR:** Indeed, you are not.

**Mr Barr:** Just as you are not obliged to agree with everything the Education Union says.

**THE CHAIR:** Certainly I am not. We have somewhat less affiliation though.

**Mr Barr:** I have no affiliation with the Education Union. They are certainly not

affiliated with the Australian Labor Party.

**THE CHAIR:** Just going back to salaries—and this might need to be taken on notice. This would be a ballpark figure—obviously it would vary—but for every one per cent increase in teacher salaries, what is the rough cost in recurrent costs for government?

**Mr Whybrow:** A one per cent pay increase for teachers equates to approximately \$3 million per year. There is also a one-off impact on our carrying employee entitlements, which are around \$700,000. Due to the nature of accounting standards in the first year, you double that.

**MR SMYTH:** And what is that? What is covered by that \$700,000?

**Mr Whybrow:** To explain that, currently on our books there is \$70 million worth of employee liabilities—long service leave, annual leave—so when you increase the pay, you increase the carrying costs of those liabilities.

**MR SMYTH:** Right. We had a discussion previously about the expert teachers. How much reliance is there or an assumption that the federal government will carry some of that extra cost?

**Mr Barr:** In terms of national partnerships, there is none, because they are not able to. The national partnerships cannot go to salaries, but we have to recognise, of course, that there is a commonwealth contribution to the territory government for the provision of education.

**MR SMYTH:** Sure.

**Mr Barr:** And we are free to use that in any way we want. Just for the background of the committee, it is worth recognising around 70 to 75 per cent of the education budget goes on salaries, so of course any commonwealth money that comes in, you would expect, will be directed towards salaries.

**MR SMYTH:** So that would just come out of the standard money that comes from the commonwealth, or would you seek extra to cover this?

**Mr Barr:** We cannot seek extra. We have an agreement with the commonwealth for the four-year funding period, 2009-13. That has provided extra money.

**MR SMYTH:** And that is the money we see in the employee expenses line in the operating statement on page 376?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** That already includes any federal money that has been agreed to over the forward estimates?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**MR SMYTH:** So that is the pool you will be playing in. It does not strike me that

there is significant growth in that employee expenses line, from what you are saying?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. This will be a difficult balancing act around what the global percentage increase will be, versus how much you can devote to the extra and the higher paid positions.

**MR SMYTH:** So this is a second appropriation or an act of grace from Mr Rudd?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** That is the moneys that you have got to accommodate your new scheme?

**Mr Barr:** Or productivity offsets—all of the things that go into an EBA negotiation.

**MR SMYTH:** What productivity offsets were achieved in the current EBA?

**Mr Barr:** A significant number in relation to the increase in face-to-face teaching hours in the secondary sector. There were a couple of others. Mark, you might need to add to that—or not. I am sure we can take it on notice and get you a full list of all of that, but the most significant one was the increase in face-to-face teaching hours. But there are a range of other things that can contribute to productivity. For example, what level of professional development is undertaken during stand-down periods, rather than during term time, and the number of teaching days in the year.

We recognise, for example, in the college sector that college teachers have 26 fewer teaching days in the year than do high school and primary school teachers. That is a provision that is put in place around continuous assessment and moderation days and those sorts of things. Again, it goes to the heart of teaching conditions. If you are a college teacher in the ACT, you teach 26 fewer days than your high school and primary school counterparts and significantly fewer than if you hop across the border to Queanbeyan.

**MR SMYTH:** So what productivity would we be looking for in the coming year for that?

**Mr Barr:** I am not really in a position to discuss that at this point. There are a number of options. We have clearly a position from the union around what they will and will not accept. It is my preference that we do not have a prolonged dispute like we did in 2006.

**THE CHAIR:** Just before I move to Mr Doszpot: just going back to what you said in terms of market research on smaller classes and views on it, has the department done that kind of market research in relation to smaller classes?

**Ms Davy:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** There has not been any done.

**MR SMYTH:** Does the department do any market research on expectations or what

the community wants?

**Ms Davy:** Yes. We conduct twice a year what we call a school movement survey which allows us to track those students that leave our public schools and also track those students who come into our public schools and to ask their parents: why? We do that as a matter of course and you can find the last few years of school movements up on our website. Essentially, high-level analysis of that research—which confirms national research—tells us that parents make decisions about schools based primarily on the culture of the school, the types of relationships within the school, the reputation of the school and, to a lesser extent, the physical facilities that are offered by the school. Last year we wanted to delve into that data a bit more so we got a consultant to run some very small focus group discussions with some parents who were willing to talk to us that had completed that survey and confirmed the high-level analysis.

**MR SMYTH:** Is the focus group information also on the web?

**Ms Davy:** No, it is not.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that available to the committee?

**Ms Davy:** I think we have an executive report which we could provide, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you. Apart from the school movement survey of people coming and going—and you track them by the fact that they have moved—does the department do any general market surveying amongst the general population about their expectations of education in the ACT or indeed any other survey?

**Ms Davy:** We also conduct annual satisfaction surveys in which we ask staff in schools and teachers and kids and also parents in the school community a number of questions around their satisfaction with the schooling we offer. Up until this year, we had conducted those satisfaction surveys with a third of our schools every year, because it was attached to our external validation school improvement cycle. From this year we are going to conduct those annually in every school and look to improve, obviously, the scope of the survey and the information we can provide back to the school and to the school community about what the various elements of the school community are saying about the school.

**MR SMYTH:** And they are on the web as well?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. Page 368 of the budget papers gives you some information on that.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, we have seen that. But they are on the web?

**Ms Davy:** Are the results on the web? Is that what you are asking?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** The results of the satisfaction survey are reported in every school's annual board report and they are on the web.

**MR SMYTH:** Apart from the movement survey and satisfaction survey, does the department do any widespread surveying of community expectation or community desire from the education department?

**Ms Davy:** Not in a broad market research way. We tend to target our research in pocket areas where we want to find out some particular information, like the school movement survey and the satisfaction survey. For example, we also run a school destination survey, which tracks some students who leave year 12 to find out a couple of things—where they have gone, if they have had some satisfactory post-school pathways? Again, that is tracking at around—in the last couple of years about 92 per cent of year 12 graduates were either in full-time study or employment in the year leaving school. That survey information also allows us to ask questions about whether they were satisfied with their college education and the nature of that. Again, those reports are up on the website.

**MR SMYTH:** Anything else?

**Ms Davy:** You are testing my memory now.

**MR SMYTH:** Do you want to take it on notice and provide us with a full list of all the surveying and market research the department does?

**Ms Davy:** Happy to take it on notice. Yes, sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Doszpot; then I will go to Ms Burch.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, I guess it is quite evident that a lot of us are a little bit sceptical and concerned about your own commitment to classes of 21—

**Mr Barr:** You are opposition politicians, so I am not surprised; that is your job.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We are quite sceptical about your own commitment to the small class sizes. In a period of one month you went from total opposition to it to it becoming a major Labor Party policy. What consultation was done for you to have this change of direction?

**Mr Barr:** There was no change of direction. I refer you back to a question I was asked—

**MR DOSZPOT:** It was a total change of direction from what you were saying.

**Mr Barr:** I refer you back to a question I was asked—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I can refer you back to a number of things as well.

**Mr Barr:** I was asked by Mr Gentleman on 17 October—

**MR DOSZPOT:** You cannot rewrite history. It is in *Hansard*.

**Mr Barr:** It was 17 October 2006, yes—that four factors consistently affect student

achievement. Where we had a policy disagreement was over what emphasis you would put on class size reduction. I have never said that it was not a factor; I just did not think it was number one. Number one is teacher quality.

**THE CHAIR:** You said it was not significant.

**Mr Barr:** Number one is teacher quality without a doubt.

**THE CHAIR:** So is it significant or not?

**MR DOSZPOT:** So did you discuss this with—

**Mr Barr:** It is one of four factors, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Did you discuss this with the Education Union?

**THE CHAIR:** But it is not significant.

**Mr Barr:** No. The Education Union does not set Labor Party policy.

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, but the Education Union would represent its members' views on some of these things which you are talking about.

**Mr Barr:** But the Education Union does not, and will not ever, set Labor Party policy.

**MR SMYTH:** Is it a significant contributor to raising education outcomes?

**Mr Barr:** It is one of four factors.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is a significant contributor?

**Mr Barr:** It is one of four factors. The most significant is teacher quality. The second most—

**MR SMYTH:** It is a significant factor in increasing outcomes.

**Mr Barr:** The second most significant factor is a rigorous curriculum. The third most important factor is around school size and having—

**MR SMYTH:** So it is a significant factor?

**Mr Barr:** It is one of four factors, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Four significant factors.

**Mr Barr:** But it is not the most significant—or the second most or even the third most significant.

**MR SMYTH:** But you said it was the third most. You said it was the third factor.

**Mr Barr:** No. I said No 1 teacher quality, No 2 rigorous curriculum, No 3 school size, No 4 class size.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is a significant factor?

**Mr Barr:** I refer you back to my statement in 2006.

**MR SMYTH:** But it is a significant factor?

**Mr Barr:** It is one of four factors, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Are there only four factors?

**Mr Barr:** There are more than four.

**MR SMYTH:** How many more are there? Tell me the list.

**Mr Barr:** There is a whole range of other factors.

**MR SMYTH:** Could you provide a list of all the factors?

**Mr Barr:** I am happy to do that.

**MR SMYTH:** In order of effectiveness and merit.

**Mr Barr:** I will not.

**THE CHAIR:** I am not even sure if Mr Doszpot has actually asked his question today.

**Mr Barr:** I will provide it in order in terms of—obviously there are some that you would put together. I am happy to provide the committee with a list of a range of factors that influence student outcomes, but number one, with a bullet, is teacher quality.

**MR SMYTH:** In order of significance.

**Mr Barr:** Number one, with a bullet, is teacher quality. I will take the question on notice.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We have gone around in circles on this, Mr Chair. Can I ask—

**MR SMYTH:** No; we have not had an answer.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. Mr Doszpot, please.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, a couple of days ago the Treasurer came out with a statement about a revised budget bottom line and an updated budget plan in response to variations in commonwealth grant funding. She said:

The ACT's National Special Purpose Payments (SPPs) have also been revised

down by about \$20 million, however, \$12.5 million of that reduction is in funding to non government schools and therefore has no impact on the Territory's Operating Balance.

Can you explain that to us?

**Mr Barr:** I will get Mr Whybrow to do it.

**Mr Whybrow:** I will start by pointing out that the commonwealth payment to non-government schools is provided to the ACT government as estimates. They are included in our budget papers. They are determined by a number of programs by the commonwealth. What has happened here is simply that it is an update to the estimates. I have spoken with some contacts from DEEWR who determine those estimates; they have confirmed that there has not been any movement in the entitlement.

So this is simply a revision to the estimate. Non-government schools themselves will not be receiving any less money. What the ACT government does is receive that money on behalf of the commonwealth and on-pass it directly to schools. It is effectively a post-box arrangement from the ACT government. It is money in; it is money out. The ACT government's bottom line does not get affected.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Was that a significant enough statement to be made by the Treasurer? Was that really relevant in any way?

**Mr Whybrow:** Without going into her statements—I guess from a financial position it is a correct statement in saying that there is not an impact on the ACT government's position. That is a correct statement. Revenue in and revenue out to another source does not impact on the financial performance of the territory.

**Mr Barr:** In the context of this debate, it is just worth noting that there is a long history of the commonwealth overestimating the amount it actually provides to non-government schools. This occurs for all jurisdictions. Let me just run through the data. In 2005-06 their estimate for the purposes of ACT budget papers was \$102,563,000; they actually provided \$91,889,000, so there was a variance of nearly \$10.6 million in the 2005-06 financial year. In 2006-07 the estimate from the commonwealth was \$106.5 million; the actual was \$97 million, so again a variance of about \$9.5 million. In 2007-08 the commonwealth budget estimate was \$112,956,000; they actually provided \$103,526,000, again a variance of about \$9.5 million. And in 2008-09 the commonwealth budget estimate was \$121,818,000; they provided only \$108,507,000, a variance of \$13.311 million.

So this has occurred every year. The commonwealth provide an estimate; we just simply report. In the context of the total allocation to non-government schools, it is interesting that, if you go to page 363 of the budget papers, even if you remove the overestimation, the amount of funding for non-government schools increases significantly from both the commonwealth and the territory government.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question was really that—the statement by the Treasurer simply states that there is no impact on the territory's operating balance, leaving it open for people to think that there is a cut to the non-government schools. Has anyone

reassured the non-government schools and—

**Mr Barr:** Certainly, yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Has that happened?

**Mr Barr:** That has happened, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So, just to wrap that up, there is no impact at all on the money coming to non-government schools as a result of that change?

**Mr Barr:** No. In fact, the money coming to non-government schools from the commonwealth, with their revised estimate, is an increase of something like \$30 million, and from the territory government it is an increase of about \$3 million. So they are about \$33 million better off than they were the year before.

**THE CHAIR:** We are due to take a break. I know Ms Burch is keen to ask questions. Do you want to come back?

**MS BURCH:** There are a number, so I am happy to come back.

**MR SMYTH:** I have more on this, so if we could come back to it.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, we can come back. We will adjourn for 15 minutes.

**Meeting adjourned from to 10.29 to 10.49 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Before I move to Ms Burch, who has a series of questions, Mr Barr has an update for us.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, Mr Seselja. Ms Le Couteur asked what the median class sizes were across each of the primary, high school and college domains. The department has calculated this during the break. I am pleased to advise that the median class size in primary schools is 21, compared to the mean of 22. In high schools, the median and the mean are the same, 24. And in colleges, the median and the mean are the same, 20.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Barr. Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** There have been some comments around AEU and class sizes, but you have also made mention around the principals—key principal groups. Can you tell us clearly what their views are on the 21 average class size in schools?

**Mr Barr:** I will not claim to speak for the principals association, but I can relay to the committee the discussions that I have had with them and seek to characterise my understanding of the position that they have put to me. In our discussions yesterday, they did welcome the flexibility that has been provided in the department's approach to allocating the additional staffing points. They did also indicate that they understood that the challenges they face, particularly in the primary school sector during the course of the year if additional students arrive after the initial allocation of classes—that mandatory maximums do create some challenges for them. Some schools are able

to deal with that through having multiple year level classes in those early years. Other schools, for whatever reason, have a more traditional single year level model—a straight kindergarten class or a straight year 1 class rather than combining.

The principals certainly have a view that the maximum amount of flexibility that is there for them the better. They do recognise that there are some government policy parameters that have been established. They also recognise that it is not just the additional points that come into the system around this initiative—that there are other additional staffing points. The one thing I would say is that staffing points are a currency in and of themselves. It is remarkable within the ACT education system how much a staffing point is worth. I did not fully appreciate how much bargaining went into the issue of staffing points. It is very highly valued—each and every staffing point that a principal can get his or her hands on.

**MS BURCH:** Because that is a direct resource to them, isn't it?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed. So the fact is that there are more points available through this initiative, the literacy and numeracy initiative and the ESL initiative—a whole range of additional opportunities that are there for principals. We are conscious that we want to target additional resources towards some of our overarching policy goals around raising literacy and numeracy achievement, around bridging the achievement gap, but there are requirements in the new literacy and numeracy strategy for schools to have individual plans and to report and be accountable against those plans.

There is no doubt that, as we progress further into the national transparency and accountability agenda, there is going to be a huge focus on this. Principals are wary of the threats and opportunities that come with this national transparency agenda—and so are we, but my view is that the ACT has a good story to tell and we should not be afraid of some spotlight on this area. And in virtually every other area of government there are accountability measures that are in place, and we should not shy away from this.

**MS BURCH:** And those conversations with the principals would have been across those four priority areas of quality education.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed.

**MS BURCH:** Before the break, there was mention around teacher salaries and conditions. I was just interested to know around what professional development opportunities and what support structures around their own career development we offer to our teachers.

**Mr Barr:** Sure. There are a large number of programs; I will get Ms Davy to outline them. There are some ongoing that have been there for quite some time and have evolved and then there are a range of specific targeted initiatives over the last few budgets as well.

**Ms Davy:** Specifically for principals and school leaders, last year, in last year's budget, we got some additional funds to do some further work on a school leadership strategy. We have now completed that work, so we have a school leadership

framework, which identifies leadership capabilities for aspiring leaders and current leaders.

We have seconded a principal to work in central office for the next year to do some work around populating some professional development specifically for the different needs of leaders at different points in their career. Experienced principals need different support than a firstly appointed principal does. For teachers, there is quite a range of professional development opportunities across a broad spectrum of activities., If you want to have a look at the broad spectrum, probably the best place would be to have a look at our professional learning calendar, which we have enhanced over the last 12 months, where teachers can see what is available for the whole year and book in and log in.

**MS BURCH:** Is that on the website?

**Ms Davy:** That is up on our website. In terms of bottom-line funding for professional development, we have a professional learning fund which was agreed with the union in our 2000-03 agreement, which provides \$1.25 million each year specifically for teachers. Half of that we allocate direct to schools, so it gets allocated on the basis of FTE allocation to schools; with the other \$500,000 of that, we work with principals to allocate on strategic initiatives. We might run a program of professional development to support a new policy initiative.

The other \$250,000 of that goes to a scholarship program; again, we look in a different way around that scholarship program. We provide half of it for individual applications, so individuals who want to do some further degree work can apply through a submission process twice a year; the other half of those funds go to what we are calling a targeted scholarship program where we are agreeing with schools around where we might put our priorities. For example, last year we put, I think, 32 people through a graduate certificate in quality teaching and pedagogy through the University of Newcastle. That was funded on the basis of that targeted scholarship program.

The other element around that professional learning fund, just to quickly finish off, is that part of the agreement also is for one per cent of the total of principals' salaries to go each year into targeted principal professional development. Again, we work with the principals about the best way of allocating those funds each year.

**MS BURCH:** But there is the flexibility for teachers and principals to do something in their own interests, rather than being directed by programs or policy initiatives that are coming up? My other question comes back to numbers of classrooms. Earlier, you made mention that in colleges we are looking at 19 in years 11 and 12 and you made mention of some innovation in process of classrooms from small tutorial groups to larger groups. Is that in the thinking stage or is that in the practice stage? I would be interested in hearing a bit more on that.

**Ms Davy:** We could get you some specific examples if you wanted to have a look at that, but again my understanding is that colleges are doing this in different ways for different subjects, for different opportunities and for different student cohort groups. Again, the allocation for the average class sizes will not impact on that, because it is going towards a contribution to a system average, not a school.

**MS BURCH:** Anecdotally, does that prepare the year 11s and year 12s for the university sector should they move into that—given that that is more the environment of the tertiary sector?

**Ms Davy:** One of the benefits that we are hearing from people around our secondary college system is that it is dealing with year 11 and year 12 students outside another context and giving them different study opportunities, learning opportunities and social opportunities, which better prepares them for universities. Again, anecdotally we hear about students who have been through our college sector who feel much better prepared for their first year at university than some other students from other jurisdictions.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Just for the information of members, I will work through a couple of the committee members before moving on to others. I will go to Ms Le Couteur and then Mr Smyth; then I will move on to Ms Porter and others.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you very much.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** On page 353 of budget paper 4, we have got “enhancing the literacy and numeracy performance of all students with a focus on indigenous students”, but if you move over to the next page, 355—

**Ms Davy:** Which page is it?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Budget paper 4, 355 and 353. The first one has the commitments with enhancing literacy, but then you go to the next page and it is heartening to find that the ACT in fact is slightly above the Australian average for reading and numeracy and pretty much dead on the Australian average for writing. Given that, why has the government come to the conclusion that enhancing literacy and numeracy for all students is one of our highest priorities—not that we are against it, but why is it so high compared to other priorities?

**Ms Davy:** There are a number of reasons. Firstly, we all know, and the research is showing, that literacy and numeracy are the most important foundation skills for everything else that a student will do in their later education and in their later life. So as educators we all have to put it as a high priority for what we are doing in terms of teaching and learning in our schools.

Secondly, the ACT has signed up to the national education agreement, like all other jurisdictions, under the COAG reform agenda, to ensure that we enhance the literacy and numeracy of all students across Australia, and particularly that we close the gap in terms of the literacy and numerous achievements of our Indigenous students across Australia.

Thirdly, yes, the ACT does very well in national assessments, and that is shown on page 355 of the budget papers, but we still know there are areas in which we can improve. If we drill down into this data, which we have done, and if we drill down

into our trend data over the last five years, we do know there is more we can do, particularly in terms of supporting students' writing ability. We know we are pretty good at reading but we need to do better at writing. We also know that we are not extending as much as we can our top-end students, our brighter kids. We need to target some resources and look at those areas. And we know there is ongoing support for some ESL students.

Nationally, we have committed to supporting a greater agenda around support for literacy and numeracy. Locally, we know we can still do more and, as educators, we believe that these literacy and numeracy skills are the most important foundation skills and we should be giving them their due and proper attention in our schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Putting aside for a moment the comparison with the national average, how has the ACT tracked over the last few years in terms of this indicator in numeracy and literacy?

**Ms Davy:** I cannot give you a perfect answer to that question because we have a hiatus. You will notice, when you go to the performance indicators on page 367, that until last year we ran the ACT assessment program. So we ran what was called ACTAP, New South Wales ran their basic skills test program and every other jurisdiction ran their own program. We then statistically moderated them and all contributed to a national benchmark. From last year, all jurisdictions are now undertaking the same test, the national assessment program literacy and numeracy test. NAPLAN is the new acronym. Therefore, 2008 is the start of a new time series for data under NAPLAN.

**THE CHAIR:** What was the data we had before 2007 showing in terms of how we have tracked over the past few years? Have we been improving, have we been static or have we been going backwards?

**Ms Davy:** A mixture of all those. What it was showing at a high-level analysis is that, in terms of any national comparisons, we were still at the top, in the main. It was indicating, as I said, that we had some issues around doing better around year 3 writing. We also looked particularly at our Indigenous cohort, and we needed to look at our Indigenous cohort very carefully because they are so small and so mobile, but there is certainly more that we can do for our Indigenous students, as is the case with every other jurisdiction.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur is still going on this, and I know Ms Bresnan and Mr Doszpot have questions in this area.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And I have got a supplementary on that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Still looking at literacy and numeracy, Mr Barr, a couple of times you have gone through the four most important factors as you see them for educational development. But it seems to me—and I am not claiming great knowledge of this—that what you are actually talking about is only the four factors within schools, whereas everything I have heard suggests that a student's home environment is a very significant factor. Possibly you should have said they were the four most significant within schools. Given that the point of my question was with respect to

literacy and numeracy, how are you reaching out to students who are in less well-endowed, more disadvantaged home environments?

**Ms Davy:** Perhaps I will talk about Indigenous students and some of the work we are doing with our Indigenous students around literacy and numeracy. First of all, we have a team of literacy and numeracy officers that only work in schools with small populations of Indigenous students around literacy and numeracy. We also have, as part of that program, a transitions officer who works with the students and their families around supporting particularly the year 6 to year 7 transition into high school.

We do know that, as you have indicated, particularly with Indigenous students' achievement, we have to get them to school and we have to keep them in school. So a lot of that is about working with the families of those Indigenous students around encouraging them to do that. We have some Indigenous education officers and workers based in our high schools and our primary schools whose job it is to work with the families of Indigenous students and to encourage them to come to school and to stay in school. That is just one example of a number of activities that we do to engage with families of Indigenous students.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are you doing similar things for our non-Indigenous communities? I am thinking particularly of the links between schools and the community. There are older retired people—and I am aware of some of them—who volunteer in schools.

**Mr Barr:** There was a terrific expo yesterday on that very subject.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So we are promoting this?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Good.

**Mr Barr:** The former Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery, and I were at this expo yesterday. It was fantastic.

**MS BRESNAN:** On the literacy and numeracy strategy which has been put out, you have listed as a strategy valuing the importance of partnerships between home and the school. I could not see in that strategy—and I know you talked about Indigenous students—how that is going to be incorporated in the strategy. I appreciate that you have given the Indigenous example, but what about other students? If it has been listed as one of the key areas that you will be incorporating into the strategy, how will you be doing that?

**Ms Davy:** I can give another example which relates to our national partnership with the commonwealth around low SES school communities. We have four primary schools that will be the recipients of commonwealth funds around that particular national partnership. Key elements of the work in those school communities will be about engaging with the parents, engaging with the whole school community, doing some sort of wrap-around services. So we are starting to talk to DHCS about what other programs are running that they can bring into those school communities. We

will put into each of those schools a specialist literacy and numeracy officer who will work on the literacy and numeracy results of students in those schools and the capacity of teachers in those schools, and will also link with the parents.

With respect to the literacy program I mentioned before with the University of Canberra, we will prioritise to ensure that parents within those four school communities get access to that program. I guess we are taking a strategy of trying to find out where our greatest needs are and targeting our resources in those areas, and targeting them in ways that we know have been shown to make a difference in terms of really building teacher capacity and engaging with the parents.

**Mr Barr:** I bring to the committee's attention the availability of the schools equity fund, which provides additional resources to schools with low socioeconomic status, and the extension of that through an initiative in this budget into the non-government system.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Given the success of the literacy program, I received a lot of complaints from parents and teachers about the abandonment of the reading recovery program—something that was very successful and we have given it away. Can you answer why?

**Mr Barr:** Revisit this one for about the sixth time.

**Ms Davy:** Reading recovery is a very specialist program that requires one-to-one tuition and requires us to have highly trained teachers. We have been supporting that over a number of years in ACT schools. What we have found, as other states and territories have found, is that, with respect to school interest in taking up the reading recovery program, as it is certified and as it has to run under its pure form, it is resource intensive and does not have the flexibility for them to support a greater number of students.

The take-up in ACT public schools over the last couple of years has dramatically decreased. I think we have only got two or three schools that are currently wanting to continue with their reading recovery trained tutor. We used to fund a full-time position in central office as a reading recovery consultant who would support those teachers in schools as reading recovery tutors. Over the last year or two, we have not been able to find somebody to fill that position and we have not believed that one position to support two or three schools who want to continue with the program is a sensible use of resources.

We have, however, ensured that, for students at those schools who still want to continue with reading recovery, we have engaged the New South Wales department of education to provide the ongoing training services that are required to keep the reading recovery tutors trained, and that will continue to occur.

With redirecting the funding that has gone in previous years to the reading recovery position, we have redirected it into an early literacy and numeracy program, which takes the effective, quality strategies in reading recovery but allows us to train more teachers in their use and to mainstream it so that schools can have more teachers who are able to use these strategies and therefore are able to use them with more students

in a greater way.

**MR DESZPOT:** You said there was a lack of interest and that only a certain number of schools were really engaged in it. The lack of interest is actually a lack of funding, in that they cannot afford to carry the program. There is a lot of interest in it but because of funding, obviously, they cannot continue. That is what is coming back to me.

**Ms Davy:** Again, the funding for reading recovery is part of our learning assistance points system. We have not reduced our learning assistance points allocation to schools. Schools make a decision when they get the LA points as to how they want to use them. Those schools who want to use them for reading recovery make that decision on the understanding that they might need to redirect some of their other staffing resources to support a reading recovery tutor, because it is an intensive full-time position.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand that. What you are saying is that, if a school particularly wants to pursue that, you will give them funding for it?

**Ms Davy:** There has been no reduction in their allocation of points to allow them to make that decision.

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

**THE CHAIR:** There are a number of follow-ups. Ms Hunter?

**MS HUNTER:** Thanks, chair. I wanted to follow up on the Indigenous students. Obviously, with the 2009-10 priorities on page 353, there is going to be an increase in the number of Indigenous teachers and teacher aides in our public schools, which is picking up on the need to target some assistance to our Indigenous students.

Earlier in the week we were talking in some hearings about the community inclusion fund that was funding a literacy and numeracy program—assistance for Indigenous young people at Gugan Gulwan youth centre. We were talking about how, on 30 June, their funding will cease. It is not a lot of funding; it is a very small amount that they get each year. But it has been independently evaluated and has been found to be a very successful program. My question is: have you had any conversations or have you been approached about picking up this program and where might that be up to?

**Mr Barr:** There are two answers to that question. My understanding is that the department was not approached at all. I have, in the last of couple of days, since this has become a media issue, received a letter seeking an urgent last-minute intervention. But when the substantive opportunity was there, knowing that this was a four-year program that was ending, none of that was taken up. There might be a variety of reasons why that has occurred. You are right, Ms Hunter; I think it was a \$35,000 grant out of the community inclusion fund. In the context of a \$6.4 million new literacy and numeracy strategy, with respect to the \$35,000, I think we need to look at the big picture in all of this. However, I have been formally approached now and we will certainly consider what options are available. I cannot commit today to siphoning off money from an existing program.

**MS HUNTER:** You have been approached—

**Mr Barr:** I certainly have had a letter.

**MS HUNTER:** around investigating that as an option?

**Mr Barr:** But I think that the bigger picture is not just one program but what we are doing across the entire education system. Ms Davy might want to go into the detail around the literacy and numeracy strategy, particularly around the focus of Indigenous—

**MS HUNTER:** The department runs a number of alternative programs, too, in other settings. They can be very beneficial for a variety of reasons. I guess that is why I would say that this would be a good one to look at, too—

**Mr Barr:** I am certainly happy to look at it—

**MS HUNTER:** in an environment that can really promote—

**Mr Barr:** but I do not want to—

**MS HUNTER:** that learning and connection to school.

**Mr Barr:** Sure, but I do not want to lose the whole-of-department focus and the whole education system focus around a new \$6.4 million strategy over a \$35,000 program.

**Ms Davy:** I would add that we have not been formally approached but my understanding is that the \$35,000 funds a part-time teacher to support up to about 10 kids that are disengaged from the high school sector. As you know, we certainly have a number of other programs within the department that we have established over the last 12 months to try to address that same sort of target group of students starting to disengage from schooling, with our three achievement centres for years 7 and 8 and our three connect 10 programs for years 9 and 10. We are certainly happy to work with the centre, DHCS and any others if there is something that we can do about trying to either bring them into our current programs or see whether there is something else we can do in terms of supporting that particular program.

**MS BRESNAN:** Are any of those programs you mentioned Indigenous specific?

**Ms Davy:** They are not Indigenous specific, but I would imagine we may have some identified Indigenous students as part of those and—

**MS BRESNAN:** Because I think Gugan Gulwan was saying the reason their program had been so successful—and I do not want to lose sight of the fact that obviously you are saying there is a strategy here—is because it has been Indigenous specific, and for those students it gives them that sense of community as well. I know there is assistance in schools but it is for those for whom school is not actually working, and that is why it was useful as well.

**Ms Davy:** As I said, I am very happy to work with the centre and talk through how we might be able to bring—

**MS BRESNAN:** We asked community services yesterday and they said there had been ongoing discussions with the department of education about finding them alternative sources of funding, and that had gone on since, I think, October last year. So that is not the case?

**Ms Davy:** Again, I am not aware of that but—

**MS BRESNAN:** Is it possible to find out if that had happened?

**Ms Davy:** Sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** Just on the same issue which, to remind people, started with figure 1 on page 355, and reading, writing and numeracy results, Ms Davy, you made the comment—and quite rightly so—that reading, writing and numeracy underline everything else that happens. But before that is, perhaps, the preschool, and even before that are the zero to threes. Reading and writing are underlined by fine and gross motor skill development and things like that. What role does the education department have in those years before preschool, or is it all left to family services?

**Ms Davy:** No, it is not. Actually output 1.4, I think it is—4.1, sorry. I knew it was something like that, a one and a four.

**MR SMYTH:** It was close.

**Ms Davy:** Page 370, in terms of the output classes, 4.1, which I believe is this afternoon's topic of conversation, talks about some of our early intervention programs. I am happy to talk about them now. We have got quite a lot of early intervention programs that we run.

**MR SMYTH:** Are the early intervention programs run for children that are assessed with a need early on or are they there for all children to access?

**Ms Davy:** In the main, they are for children who are assessed as needing something early on.

**MR SMYTH:** So the question would be: what percentage of the zero to preschool population are those children and what is provided for the kids who are not assessed as special needs, to prepare them? I have got a three-year-old. We are going through Gymbaroo, swimming, music, singing, a whole range of programs, playgroups, mother's groups, reading groups. Is there data about how effective that is and how many of our kids are participating in that early learning? Minister, do we have a strategy to help with participation in all of those things? Clearly, gross and fine motor skills are critically important.

**Mr Barr:** We are bordering on the children's portfolio that we will come back to estimates on next week. I think it would be best to deal with it when those officials are there. They will talk with a little bit more certainly about the pre—

**MR SMYTH:** I am interested in the education department's side of this equation.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there is clearly an involvement, and that is strengthening through the new ministerial council satellites. The Ministerial Council on Early Childhood Development is meeting in Canberra later in the month. That is a relatively recent innovation through MCEETYA; so it is perhaps fortuitous for the ACT that the ministerial responsibility now sits with me as one minister across this whole agenda. That is important, although there are still two departments, clearly.

We obviously do a lot of work on trying to accommodate the needs of playgroups, both in schools and through DHCS. There are a number of other programs that are supported through childcare provision that are supported largely from the commonwealth or through community-based programs.

It is probably best, in terms of going through the detailed list, that we deal with the bulk of it next week in Children and Young People.

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. But could you tell me what percentage of our children from zero to, say, preschool are considered special needs or with an early learning difficulty that are in your programs?

**Ms Davy:** I am happy to take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** I am happy for it to be taken on notice but can we find out what participation there is in all the various programs? The impact of music when started early is profound in things right through maths and schooling.

**Mr Barr:** I am happy to do what work we can. There might be some difficulties in data collection for groups that are run privately.

**MR SMYTH:** If it is not collected, it is not collected.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. We will see what information we have got. Certainly the things that we can measure within education have been the take-up of preschool education for three-year-olds and four-year-olds. We run some three-year-old preschool education programs. It would be fair to say that the combination of increased preschool hours from 10 to 12 and now 12 to 15 has seen a significant increase in participation. I think I have some figures in front of me.

**MR SMYTH:** I do not see it recorded here.

**Mr Barr:** To give you an indication—and this is in the school census from this year—for example, the kindergarten cohort this year is 4,566 students. The preschool cohort is 4,306. So my expectation, on the demographics for the last couple of years, is that there would appear to be about 200 students who are not enrolled in a government or non-government preschool but who might be enrolled in a preschool

program in a childcare context. We can capture as much data as we can through the school census, which indicates a very high take-up. Certainly, when compared to other Australian jurisdictions, I think we are well above the average because of that provision.

There is no doubt that the trend has been away from preschool education in a childcare context into preschool education in a formal preschool setting. But the increase in hours from 10 to 12 to 15 is leading to a trend of more formal engagement in preschool education in the schooling system. That is, I think, a desire of the commonwealth through this particular national partnership initiative.

**MR SMYTH:** See what information you can find.

**Mr Barr:** For the committee's information, in terms of market share, the public system has 88.1 per cent of preschool education provision in the territory.

**MR SMYTH:** Why is that?

**Mr Barr:** Because we run an outstanding preschool program and we have—

**MR SMYTH:** Or is it that the other sector perhaps does not provide as much?

**Mr Barr:** They have got about 11.9 per cent. They do not have as many preschools. Yes, that is correct.

**MR SMYTH:** If you put your child in a non-government preschool, what funding goes with that child?

**Mr Barr:** That is a good question.

**Ms Davy:** None.

**Mr Barr:** None.

**MR SMYTH:** None?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Will the government look at providing assistance to parents who put their children into non-government preschools?

**Mr Barr:** The ACT government, no.

**MR SMYTH:** Why not?

**Mr Barr:** Where would I get that money from? I would have to conjure up some more money somehow.

**MR SMYTH:** But if they all turned up, if the other 11 per cent came back to the government system, you would have to find the money to cover it there?

**Mr Barr:** Not necessarily.

**MR SMYTH:** What, you would just grow the classes and provide less per student?

**Mr Barr:** It would depend on where they went. Of course there is commonwealth funding too, through universal access.

**THE CHAIR:** There has been some commonwealth funding, I think, for non-government preschools, has there not? There is confusion about whether that is going to be ongoing?

**Mr Barr:** As part of the national partnership, we did provide \$400,000 to the CEO, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And has that come to an end, do you know?

**Mr Barr:** That has only just started.

**THE CHAIR:** But this is for preschools, is it?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. This is an initiative for the Catholic Education Office. They are trialling a preschool in one of their Tuggeranong schools—Gowrie, I think, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** That money is coming now, is it?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter had some questions.

**MS PORTER:** Yes, thank you. I have a comment before I go to my question. It is about the reading recovery program. I was fortunate to be able to attend one of the public schools the other day and observe the spark program in process, which is a reading program which uses trained, I believe, mentors that are sourced from the corporate sector. It is in nine of our schools, I believe, and could grow. I thought that was a fantastic program. I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed that opportunity.

Going back to my initial question, when you were talking about literacy and numeracy, you were talking about the various types of support that are needed and the various cohorts of young people that do need assistance. But one that you also mentioned when you made your introductory remarks—and I have been sitting on this question for a while—was the gifted and talented children. I know that we have talked about a lot of other children. We talked about the Indigenous students and the ones who have various difficulties or backgrounds which mean they need some additional support.

I have a particular interest in this area, having had one of my children go through schooling and who did experience some disadvantage at that particular level. He is now 40-something, with three children of his own. This was a long time ago. I know things have improved greatly. There is an amount of money in budget paper 3,

page 90, that is allocated in this budget for the gifted and talented.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, for the gifted and talented.

**MS PORTER:** I wonder whether you could talk about that. They are important. You did mention that they do need additional assistance.

**Ms Davy:** Last year the department released a new gifted and talented policy, after much time in consultation. The policy provides some very clear guidelines and responsibilities for schools about having in place some explicit procedures on the identification of gifted and talented students and the provision of education for gifted and talented students. I guess the 2009-10 budget, with almost \$1 million over the next four years, is going to help us increase our support for the implementation of that new policy.

Our intention at this stage, in terms of the allocation of that money, is that there is a component there to support parents. There is a component of funds there. I think the minister's indication has been that there might be a \$30,000 grant to a local parent group in support of gifted and talented parents.

We are also taking responsibility for funding any psychological testing that might need to occur for any students who are identified as gifted, for early entry into kindergarten, which is a new element of our new policy. Some of this budget will allow us to fund that, whereas in the past parents have had to fund that.

There is an allocation in here to allow us to actually recruit a gifted and talented consultant who will be able to provide expert advice to schools about how to implement the policy, which is all about better procedures for identifying gifted and talented children and then putting in place different types of programs to meet those particular needs.

A large element of the budget allocation we will actually use to fund different schools, to give schools additional funds to do different things in terms of trying to give greater provision for gifted and talented children. At the moment we have got a bit of a range of schools trying to do different things, sometimes in a coordinated way, sometimes in a bit of an ad hoc way, with all best intentions. What this will allow us to do, with an identified consultant for gifted and talented and some additional funds, will be that we will be able to coordinate all of that and bring that together and try to identify where we might be able to strengthen the provision of gifted and talented education in our schools.

**MS PORTER:** I see the link to the parents. I think Ms Le Couteur was talking about that concern about the parents being involved and how important that is. This has a strong connection with the parents.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and it certainly builds on a couple of other initiatives. I point obviously to the ANU secondary college as another example of where we have sought to provide it within the public education system but also extend to non-government school students some real enrichment activities and the opportunity to undertake university-level study during years 11 and 12 and get credit towards a university

degree.

There is the broader theme here that we want to encourage excellence in the public education system. We want there to be clear and identified pathways for young people who exhibit gifts and talents in a range of fields. We want that encouraged and supported. We have had some analysis done also of the territory's results in recent times.

Whilst there has quite rightly been a focus on reducing achievement gaps, we are willing to ensure that our lowest performing students are doing better. And they are doing better than the lowest performing students anywhere else in the country. Our entire performance is at a level above everywhere else. But I think one of the areas where we can do better and where our performance has not been as good as it could have been has been in extending our best and brightest students that little bit further.

So this initiative, combined with a couple of other initiatives in the past, really does drive that agenda home to ensure that our public system is doing, and is seen to be doing, well by students who are gifted and talented.

**MS PORTER:** I am glad the consultant is going to be gifted and talented!

**Ms Davy:** Is that what I said?

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter has a follow-up on this.

**MS HUNTER:** It was about reporting.

**THE CHAIR:** There are a number of other people waiting. I think Ms Burch is waiting for a question. I will come to you after Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Yes, on this initiative. You made mention of the centre at UC, a national capital literacy and learning centre. Again I am trying to work out what the link is to parents and what resources for parents will be offered through that.

**Ms Davy:** The national literacy and learning centre, as part of that literacy and numeracy budget initiative, as I said earlier, will get an additional staff member. What it does is that it runs the "you can read" program which was previously titled "parents as tutors" program. Basically, it offers services to both students and parents of the students in terms of how they can support their literacy and numeracy development at home. What the centre will be able to do in the future, with the additional position, will be to extend those provisions to more parents and more students.

**Mr Barr:** The partnership with the University of Canberra extends also into research. It is a wider, a greater, evidence base for our policy making. Earlier this year we signed a partnership with the university.

I cannot speak highly enough of the reforms that have occurred at the university under Professor Parker's leadership, particularly in terms of the work that is being done in the education faculty there. The fact that their enrolments are up nearly 40 per cent in the primary sector and around 20 per cent for secondary school teachers is testimony

to how that institution and that faculty are working so well.

It is critical for the territory in terms of our broader agenda on quality teaching that we have a leading-edge education faculty at UC. The task that the vice-chancellor has set that faculty is to be the leading education faculty in the country. There is some radical thinking. They are prepared to engage in a serious, evidence-based public policy discussion to work closely with government, and I think it is an exciting opportunity for the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter?

**MS HUNTER:** I want to go back to page 355, where it talks about student performance. Obviously that plan is discussed there. Then it goes on to talk about a couple of other assessments that we participate in here in the ACT. One was the year 6 and year 10 students who have triennial assessment on science, civics and citizenship and so on. I want to focus on the civics and citizenship because there probably needs to be more of an emphasis there. You may be able to update us on some improvements that have been happening in that area. But how do we rate on all of those—the science, civics and citizenship and ICT? I suppose I have a particular interest in the civics and citizenship.

**Ms Davy:** In the latest ICT national assessment we were the highest in the country. That is an assessment of year 6 and year 10. In terms of the civics and citizenship, it is also a year 6 and year 10 cohort. Again, we are showing the highest or as high statistically as other states and territories. You have got the 10s data in there.

We do not believe, as some other jurisdictions might, that we have any concerns about whether we need to target ICT and civics and citizenship in particular in terms of supporting our students and our teachers. Civics and citizenship will be strong elements of the new national curriculum. There is already work commenced on elements of the four subjects in that national curriculum. Certainly the National Curriculum Board's paper, which identifies some very specific principles about the development of a national curriculum for all subjects, has, as one of its principles, that what we are calling the general capability, which should be built into all subject areas, will be an emphasis on civics and citizenship.

**MS HUNTER:** Does that curriculum get developed at the national level and then you have to roll it out in the ACT or is there any flexibility that you can put in that local flavour of what—

**Mr Barr:** Yes, this is as relevant for history as it is for civics and citizenship.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr Barr:** Certainly a flexibility that we have sought through this process is there must be room for local content. It is particularly relevant in the context of civics in the territory in that we do not have three tiers of government, for example; so it is important that ACT students understand the nature of our democratic system.

Similarly, with history, we want local history content: Canberra, the home of the

Australian story; our Indigenous history as well. All of that needs to be part of our curriculum, and that certainly will be. Of course, the balance that must be struck between national objectives and local objectives is always a matter of tension for state and territory education ministers, it would be fair to say. But in my view, that is not a reason not to go national.

It is about how we implement a national curriculum. That is why the ACT has been a very strong player in ensuring that the national curriculum has that flexibility. But we are very strong supporters of it. I find it, certainly in the context of the ACT, a bit hard to argue that the bureaucrats in Canberra should have no role in the development of a curriculum in that we are the home for that. I do not play a silly states rights argument that we perhaps see from some of the outlying states on this national curriculum debate or maybe we have seen in the past. It is a bit less so now.

The ACT has a seat at the table of both the National Curriculum Board, which winds up shortly, and then we will have a seat at ACARA, the Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority that will be established in Sydney and kicks off, I think, on 1 July this year.

**Ms Davy:** There are some transition arrangements.

**Mr Barr:** Some transition arrangements kick off from 1 July this year.

**MS HUNTER:** So there are ongoing discussions about what percentage and how much flexibility, but—

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there will be flexibility and there will be—

**MS HUNTER:** Right. Just how much is still under discussion.

**Mr Barr:** local content and certainly we have no intention of seeing that lost to the ACT system.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. The other one was around the next bit of assessment and that is around the program for international student assessment, the PISA assessment. How have we gone in the last round of that assessment?

**Ms Davy:** The last PISA was actually in 2006, which is why we do not report the results in this budget. We reported them in the last budget papers.

**MS HUNTER:** But how were we tracking in that and when is the next one coming up?

**Ms Davy:** I think it is 2009.

**Mr Barr:** So it is this year, yes; it is every three years.

**Ms Davy:** We are actually undertaking it this year, so results will be out next year, I guess.

**MS HUNTER:** Also what my question goes to is: how were we tracking at that time, if you are able to answer it, and what do we take from those sorts of assessments? We obviously participate in it for a reason, so that we can see how we are tracking, where we might need to do improvements. What were the results? We got our results. Did some things change in how we delivered our education?

**Ms Davy:** Just to go back, in terms of PISA again, overall our results were highest in the country et cetera. What we did last year in leading up to the new literacy and numeracy strategy was to ask the Australian Council for Educational Research to do a whole meta-analysis, if you like, around all of our results in terms of PISA, in terms of the TIMSS research that is in here, in terms of our earlier ACTAP data, to do a bit of a trend analysis and to give us a bit of a meta-analysis about where we were tracking well and where we might not be tracking so well. That was the information that we used and that I mentioned—it might not have been here—earlier in terms of where we might focus our literacy and numeracy strategy.

So, again, the main trend was, overall, we are still highest performing around the country. We could do some more work certainly with our Indigenous students as a total cohort, as can every other jurisdiction. We could do some more focus work in terms of writing as an element of literacy and there are some elements around numeracy, not in the primary school but in the high school sector. As our students move from year 7 into year 9, we need a stronger focus on some of the numeracy elements. So we took that to focus some of our work in terms of the literacy and numeracy strategy.

**Mr Barr:** Just for the committee's benefit, if you want a little bit more research in this area, we commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research to do a paper for us on our performance in PISA and that is available on the department's website. It was discussed extensively in the media when it was released, I think last year, but it is certainly available for people if they want to do some more background reading.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister.

**MS BRESNAN:** Just on the numeracy and literacy issue, I was wondering how students can be engaged in other ways through building social skills, community connections and all those issues that go with that. Also students who might not be engaging with the system can be drawn in, I guess, through other programs, whether it is arts, sports, music or other such programs. I am just wondering how those sorts of things are going to be linked to the numeracy and literacy. I guess you are bringing them in through other ways if they are not in fact engaging with existing processes like numeracy and literacy.

**Mr Barr:** Sure. I will start with that and then throw it to Janet. A clear commitment and statement in the literacy and numeracy strategy is that all teachers are teachers of literacy and numeracy. You are right: there are many different contexts in which those basic skills can be imparted. We really do have a wide variety of alternative settings and programs to engage with students who are perhaps finding that mainstream education settings are not for them. We have talked a little bit about some of them today. What I will do anyway is provide the committee in a written form with a full list of all of those programs.

**MS BRESNAN:** That would be helpful, thank you.

**Mr Barr:** But I might just get—

**MS HUNTER:** Is it possible to have funding amounts against those programs as well?

**Mr Barr:** I presume that would not be too difficult to achieve, yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** That would be good.

**Mr Barr:** It might mean a little bit more work for Mark, but I am sure we can do that. Janet, was there anything you wanted to add?

**Ms Davy:** Only probably, on the back of the minister's statement, that we do say in the strategy that all teachers are teachers of literacy and numeracy. One of the significant pieces of work that we started last year was implementing the teacher quality model into all of our schools. It very much identifies student engagement as a key element of a teacher's pedagogy. There is a lot of research around that and that is why it is built into the model, and there is a lot of professional development that we are providing for teachers around that whole model of teacher quality and the elements around it, of which one is engagement.

**MS BRESNAN:** Okay. So you will provide that list?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS BURCH:** I am just looking through the teaching indicators and the graphs across pages 356 and 357 which seem to bring in some international comparisons.

**Ms Davy:** They are the results from the TIMSS study. The TIMSS study is an international study and what you are seeing there is a snapshot of the mean scores, showing the confidence levels for all of our states and territories and the position of Australia and some of the highest performing people. So you can see there that in the main the ACT is always performing at or above the national average and at or close to no significant difference with other jurisdictions.

**MS BURCH:** And is this a comparison you use regularly within—

**Mr Barr:** It is important, but I want to stress that this is a sample. Unlike NAPLAN that nearly everyone sits, this is a small sample so that is why you do have such—

**MS BURCH:** That is right. So we are best to look at NAPLAN data.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. It is another important indicator. We do not dismiss it; we would not report on it if we did not think it had some relevance. But I just caution that, as you see from the graphical display, the confidence intervals, given the sample size, are quite wide for the ACT. You have got to be aware that the number of students who are sitting this particular test each time it goes around is not the same as every student

in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 undertaking NAPLAN. So there are different confidence intervals. You need to be aware of that. But there is still a confidence interval associated with NAPLAN. That is not to say that it comes without it, but it is much smaller, given the sample size is significantly larger. So if you are into statistics, performance and measurement, this is the absolute bee's knees, I think.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Minister, I asked you a question on notice, which you answered on 12 January, in relation to the use of departmental or school resources for ALP advertising. The question was: were any departmental school or CIT premises used in ACT election advertising and, if so, who gave approval for government facilities to appear in this advertising. You do not answer the question; you just refer us to the caretaker conventions and say that they were complied with. Are you able to now answer the question as to whether any departmental school or CIT premises were used in any ALP advertising?

**Mr Barr:** Am I able to? I have had no involvement in ALP advertising so I cannot confirm that matter. But whether the Labor Party—

**THE CHAIR:** Well, the department know if their resources are used.

**Mr Barr:** approached the department—

**MR SMYTH:** You are the minister responsible.

**Mr Barr:** But I had no role in that.

**MR SMYTH:** I am not asking if you had a role. Were any facilities used for ALP advertising—a very simple question?

**Ms Davy:** I can certainly answer from the Department of Education and Training's point of view that we gave permission for no filming to occur on any of our school sites for any political advertising, as per the caretaker conventions. Whether there was any outside-the-school-gate photography occurring, I am not aware of that, but we would not have necessarily been approached.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, so you—

**Mr Barr:** I certainly stood on the footpath outside schools during the campaign, to launch policies.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. I think that is a different category of thing. I do not think anyone is going to be particularly critical of that. But I am interested in why the question was not answered. It now has been answered and you have said in your answer, Ms Davy—

**Ms Davy:** It is no.

**THE CHAIR:** that it is no, but also that it was as per the conventions that that was why. We have seen a different approach in Health, minister. The health minister did request it and the ALP did do advertising there in the hospital. Is it your reading of the

caretaker conventions that advertising should not go on on departmental or school premises—premises which otherwise would not be accessible to the public?

**Mr Barr:** My view or the department's view?

**THE CHAIR:** Is it your view?

**Mr Barr:** I have no view on it.

**THE CHAIR:** You have no view on the caretaker conventions?

**Mr Barr:** No, I am not going to—

**THE CHAIR:** What is the department's view in terms of if a request had been made?

**Ms Davy:** It is the department's view that we would have not given permission, because we would believe it is a potential conflict of interest—

**THE CHAIR:** Potential conflict of interest.

**Ms Davy:** as public servants under the conventions.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you for that. I appreciate that, Ms Davy. That is a very different approach to what has been taken in the department of health and by the Minister for Health. Do you have anything further on this, Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** No. I think Ms Davy has adequately covered that.

**MS BURCH:** Now let us go on to something else.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, Mr Doszpot was waiting and then I will come to you, Ms Burch. Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would like to ask leave to put on record an email that I received from a very concerned parent regarding additional school costs.

**THE CHAIR:** It is up to the committee. I do not have a problem with it personally. Mr Doszpot is asking if he can read part of an email from a concerned parent and I imagine then put a question to the minister.

**MR DOSZPOT:** About additional school costs.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not have a problem as long as it is not excessively long. We have seen ministers read various things into the *Hansard*—

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is about a page; thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** With the leave of the committee, yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It reads:

I am writing to express our concerns regarding additional school costs that we are having to endure on a regular basis.

My three children have been involved in the—  
a general Tuggeranong school—

... High School Band program since 2001, each one with a different instrument. My wife and I have enjoyed watching them through all the highs and lows, I must say mainly highs. We believe that this band program is one of the best in the Canberra school system. We have even bought ... her own instrument so that the school could lend out an additional instrument.

Recently we have been asked to pay a fee of \$8.50 for transport to the “Public Education Day” for our daughter ... to attend this event as she is member of the Senior Band at ... High. Last year the fee was approx \$3.50 (why the over 100% increase?) I presume that this event is not ‘voluntary’ and a black mark will show up if ... does not attend. Is this activity compulsory? If so why is the school or government not paying this cost? Surely the Rudd Government has given enough money with extra grants to schools. Or maybe the ACT is not important enough for this current government. It seems to be the general opinion of most of the parents that we know and we are tired of being made to bear these additional costs.

This event is for the Government and Education Department Public Relations exercise. We are constantly being asked to contribute additional costs for our children to attend these Government school organised events and whilst we support most of them, in these harsh economical climate we like most parents are finding it harder and harder to contribute. We, unlike a lot of parents have always paid our compulsory and elective fees for both band and general school subjects and yet the school keeps trying to make us pay more. It’s almost as if we don’t pay these additional costs our children will be disadvantaged in some way. We are made to feel guilty if we don’t and feel guilty if we do as something else or someone has to lose out. We do not want ... to miss out on opportunities for the band but all these additional costs, not just for ... but our son who is attending College, are making an impact on our limited budget.

We are told that education is so vital and supposedly free for each child and that no child will miss out if they can’t afford it, yet the notes that parents receive continually imply that if additional fees are not paid, then events and even school courses will be cancelled. This is emotional blackmail on each parent who wants the best for their child.

Over the years my wife was able to assist with the transport and help out the school (including P&C), but now she is in full-time work and finds it more difficult to help out. This also makes it more difficult not to pay for these events as we wish to do all we can so that our children can get the best education that they can. If transport can’t be provided by the school, my daughter has to make her own way to some of these events, often in different suburbs, which is of concern to us. The school does its best to provide private transport but cannot always guarantee this will happen. We know that ... High is trying to do its best but has its hands tied with its limited budget but it does not exclude the fact that children are missing out and we know that our daughter has not told us about events, as she feels that it will cause us some anxiety.

Are we the only parents querying this payment? I think that the point is that the government has made it “Public Education Day” and yet they aren’t coming to the party by providing transport thus helping with the costs. This has been the straw that has broken our faith in the education system and we feel betrayed by the government that we elected.

So the question is, Mr Barr, on the additional costs that parents are being asked to bear: is there any relief in sight for some of these concerned parents?

**Mr Barr:** There are a couple of errors of fact in the email. The event that I think is being referred to was a concert or a band performance in Civic yesterday. That is not a government event; it is an Australian Education Union event called Public Education Week. It is not a government or departmental event in the first instance. In relation to support for students, the student support fund is there and available for just the sort of transport assistance that the constituent refers to. That is available at a school level, on application, if there is any hardship being felt by students. That fund is there specifically to support things like transport costs, participation in excursions and other things for students. It is a half-a-million-dollar-a-year fund that is available. In terms of the specifics of the event, it is not a government or department event. I understand the position you are trying to put. I think there are just a couple of errors of fact in relation to the event that is specifically referred to in that email.

**MR DOSZPOT:** All I am doing is representing the point of view of the constituent.

**Mr Barr:** I understand. I received the same email, Mr Doszpot, and I am aware of the content of that.

**MR SMYTH:** Does the school or the department have to give permission for the event to occur?

**Mr Barr:** Sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** Does the school or the department have to give permission for students to—

**Mr Barr:** The school does not have to give permission for the AEU to run an event.

**MR SMYTH:** No, that is okay, but for students to attend in school hours does the school or the department give permission?

**Ms Davy:** The school certainly. The school principal would certainly—

**Mr Barr:** And so would the parents.

**Ms Davy:** And the parents, because it would be a normal excursion. Certainly the department is supportive of Public Education Week and it has been working with the union around that. I would imagine that in this instance the union would have invited a number of schools that they knew had band programs, singing programs or whatever to take part in that particular event. So it would have been a school-based decision to determine whether they wanted to first of all participate in the event and then they

would have followed the normal procedures in terms of getting parent permission.

**MR SMYTH:** Why should students and their families carry the cost for an event run by a union and auspiced by the school or the department?

**MS BURCH:** Because they choose to participate.

**Mr Barr:** That is a matter for them whether they choose to participate or not. There is no compulsion for anyone to have been at that event.

**MR SMYTH:** Well, we all know that if you do not go—how can a band operate if half the band does not turn up?

**Mr Barr:** That is a matter for the organisers of the event and for the school band, but there is—

**MR DOSZPOT:** One further question on that.

**Mr Barr:** But I am happy to follow up the details of this individual case. I have received the same email so I can investigate that, but there certainly would be no compulsion on any individual to participate. It was not an ACT government event and there is the student support fund to assist students with costs such as transport.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I guess that is the question we are asking. For past events, this particular individual quotes \$3.50 as a normal cost. It has gone up to \$8.50.

**Mr Barr:** Sure. I have no idea what the rationale was. It is not my event. I have had no involvement in it. I will seek some information from the union as to whether they put a transport charge on, what role they had, whether they have subsidised transport costs in the past. But it is their event, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you very much. I would appreciate some action on behalf of the constituent in terms of—

**Mr Barr:** Yes, sure.

**MR DOSZPOT:** what funding there is available as well for that—

**Mr Barr:** Yes. The constituent has written to me. I will respond to the constituent and copy you in on my response.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would very much appreciate that.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Thank you, Mr Doszpot. Ms Hunter had a follow-up on this, I believe. I do not know if there are any other follow-ups.

**MS HUNTER:** I was just wondering because, as you say, there are funds that are there for those families who are finding it hard to pay for excursions and so on. Is there a standard text that goes on notes that go home to parents? Is it a standard text that all schools are applying to every note now?

**Mr Barr:** There is a policy in relation to excursions and there is a section of that system-wide policy that makes specific reference.

**MS HUNTER:** Certainly I know it comes home in my notes.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** But I just wondered if that was right across the board.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. It is a policy requirement, and if members are interested they can look at the excursion policy on the department website. There is a specific section that refers to the existence of this fund and the requirement or principles to make parents and students aware of its existence.

**MS HUNTER:** And put on the permission notes, I guess.

**MS BURCH:** So, are you saying that nearly every parent, as it stands, is aware of the fund?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** It is an important fund to ensure that there is equity, and it is half a million dollars a year, so it is a significant amount of money that is provided.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Burch?

**MS BURCH:** I have got a question on something different, but I think Ms Porter has got a comment on this.

**THE CHAIR:** I will call Ms Porter on this and then I will move to Ms Burch on another line of questioning, and then Mr Smyth.

**MS PORTER:** I just wondered, through you, Mr Chair, whether or not the cost of the bus fare is probably something to do with the bus company that was hired or something like that, rather than, I would think—

**Mr Barr:** Possibly. We will do some investigating.

**MS PORTER:** I was just thinking that that may possibly be the case.

**Mr Barr:** It may well be.

**MS PORTER:** It may be to do with the particular hiring arrangements this year.

**Mr Barr:** I am not sure. We will make some inquiries with the union and with the school and find out what the story is with this transport cost.

**MS BURCH:** On a completely different thing—ICT initiatives within schools—ICT is an important part of education—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Which page are you on, Ms Burch?

**MS BURCH:** It is peppered throughout, but I am looking particularly at budget paper No 5, page 73, but noted elsewhere. So just a few comments around the investment, firstly, and what benefits that will bring to students and into the classrooms, and then will that give more flexibility or innovation towards online learning?

**Mr Barr:** As I indicated in my opening statement, the focus of this particular ICT investment in this budget is on primary schools. We recognise the massive investment from the commonwealth government in secondary school ICT, combined with the investments going back to 2006-07 from the territory government in broadband rollout for all of our public schools. There is a need now for further investment in ICT provision for the primary sector—and that is where those extra resources will be targeted—and there is a need to have that provision across government and non-government schools in the territory, as the commonwealth program for secondary schools extends across all schools in the territory.

We have sought to provide flexibility for primary schools around the implementation, recognising that there are different contexts. Some primary schools will want to have more interactive Smartboards; others will want to look at laptops and at other sorts of ICT provisions. Janet, do you want to add anything to that?

**Ms Davy:** Yes. What we are trying to do is use the same methodology or the same approach that we have been using with the national secondary schools computer fund, so we will start by replacing old computers; we will use the same definition of “any computer older than four years”. We will start with our primary schools and try and replace all of the old equipment that they have in terms of PCs and move to provide some new PCs.

What we would like to try to do under this \$5 million initiative for public schools is to try to get to an aspirational goal, I guess, of a ratio of about one to six—one PC to every six primary school students. We believe we could do that within this strategy. We would also like, as a baseline, to try to move to increasing the number of interactive whiteboards in all our primary schools, and we believe we can get to a ratio of about one whiteboard into every two classrooms, on the understanding also—and we will certainly talk to our primary principals in detail about this—that some schools may have some of those ratios already in place, in which case we would provide them with greater flexibility in terms of over and above that using some funds to either increase their pool around some of those things or to identify other technologies that they may well require.

The funding will also allow us to put a whiteboard into every preschool site, with a PC to obviously run the whiteboard. We will look at our special schools differently. They do not necessarily need whiteboards and PCs, although they might want to have some of those, but they want to use some of the funds for software, adaptive technologies and those sorts of things. So that is where that particular program is.

**MS BURCH:** All right. With the replacement of PCs, will that come with the set-up and the training, retraining of new equipment as well?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS BURCH:** Good.

**Mr Barr:** We have a little bit more experience than the commonwealth, perhaps, in the nature of these things.

**MS BURCH:** That is good. I just wanted to make sure we do it the smart way. In secondary, students have their own student number and they log in and they can produce work and follow their work. Perhaps not at a preschool level, but will you start to introduce that as the children move through middle schools and higher end primary schools?

**Ms Davy:** I believe that our primary school students already have their own login.

**MS BURCH:** That is scary.

**Ms Davy:** I would have to be corrected. I cannot see my IT person at the back. But, yes, that is true. Lorraine, is that correct?

**Ms Nicol:** Yes, that is correct. We endeavour to secure the work that the students produce, even down to the kindergarten level. We try to protect the privacy of their work, the security of their work. They are required to have an identity, a single identity, not a generic access to the system. It is important for them to start at a very early age to understand what the implications of that might be.

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome to the 21st century.

**MS BURCH:** So the term “online learning”, can that then be applied to group interactions so that they can work on a group piece?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS BURCH:** Goodness me! You can tell my children are way beyond school.

**Ms Nicol:** Certainly collaborative learning is the way. We are trying to promote that through the virtual learning environment, and teachers will be engaging their students collaboratively in that space and also opening it up to the parents as well after hours.

**Mr Barr:** I can provide one example. When I visited Wanniasa Hills they were producing their own news bulletin and interviewed me. Then they were doing the editing, and these are primary school aged kids. I think the old joke when I was growing up was that the average five-year-old in the house was the one who could program the VCR. These days they are the ones who can do the multimedia productions and the rest of us are catching up.

**MS BURCH:** So there will be standard equipment, given preferences of schools, but

if children were to move within the public education sector from school to school, they would be exposed to the same standard and level of software and equipment, pending school preferences, of course?

**Ms Davy:** What we have done with the rollout is to move to a standardised operating system with a centralised procurement model and a centralised IT technical support school model. What we are intending to do with this primary school budget initiative is to follow the same sort of procedure. So we will standardise. It will allow us to standardise the student network across all our schools, which we currently do have for teachers, but we have not got at the moment for students—with some flexibility in terms of additional things that they may well want, but they will certainly meet our specifications.

**MS BURCH:** And just following on from that point, because it seems that some of these children are probably or could be more PC savvy, dare I say, than some of the teachers, is there a teacher-to-teacher element of this ICT revolution?

**Ms Davy:** As part of our professional learning program we run, I believe, a very strong program of professional learning for our teachers around ICT. We have a learning technologies unit as part of our professional learning directorate whose sole job is to run professional development for teachers around all the different technologies that are occurring at the moment. Similarly, Lorraine and the people at InTACT will also be looking at the technical side of things in terms of how we continue to provide technical assistance, IT techos, in terms of being able to maintain and support the system.

**Mr Barr:** We may even be able to extend some of the school-based apprenticeships into this area.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter?

**MS PORTER:** Thank you, chair. I was just going to say, with regard to Harrison school and the extension of what is happening at Gungahlin College, I guess because this is a green field, more or less, the Harrison school, there will be a particular allocation that will go to that school but they will be flexible within that as to that, or will there be just a blanket allocation to Harrison school? How does the CIT component of the college tap into this ICT share, or is that a different budget?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. This particular ICT program that we are funding in this budget is targeted at primary schools, so the new Harrison high and Gungahlin College would not be part of that. They would be part of the commonwealth program.

**MS PORTER:** The commonwealth money. Terrific.

**Ms Davy:** But certainly in terms of the establishment of any new schools we would put in some baseline IT as part of that anyway. So if you go to Kingsford Smith school, for example, I think there is an interactive whiteboard in nearly every classroom—

**MS PORTER:** Yes, I observed that when I was there.

**Ms Davy:** —so it is part of the establishment of new schools.

**MS PORTER:** Thanks.

**MR SMYTH:** Just following on some of the federal money, some of the uses for the schools, the capital work at the schools—

**Mr Barr** The building the education revolution—the BER funding, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Whatever you want to call it.

**Mr Barr** That is what the program is called, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** That was for security? I asked you a question, which you took on notice during the Appropriation Bill in March, on the number of incidents in the 2008 calendar year at schools. The answer is comprehensive, I think. Something more than 250 incidents occurred at almost 70 schools in the ACT and involved things like break-ins, attempted break-ins, broken windows, incidents of theft, arson or vandalism. Is there data on whether or not that is a good year or a bad year? Is there a trend to more activity at schools or less?

**Mr Whybrow:** We do have that data over time. Generally we have a look at, I think, a school-by-school arrangement. Where there have been a number of incidents, we then work with the school putting in things like security fences in these places. We have found that that has had a significant impact on the number of incidents in those schools. I do not know how our trends are over the last three years from a system-wide position, but we can get you that information.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. All right. That would be kind. Is there any comparison with other jurisdictions? Do we suffer more attacks or less than other jurisdictions?

**Mr Whybrow:** I do not believe we have that data at the moment, but I can also look into it.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, Torrens primary school had 21 incidents; Stromlo high had 20; Southern Cross primary school had 11; Melrose high school had nine; Lyneham high school had nine and Ainslie primary had eight incidents of various kinds. Is there a government program to make our schools more physically secure?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly funding is provided, as Mr Whybrow has just indicated, around site-specific issues. That can be a variety of things, be it perimeter fencing or particular types of glass that are put in in areas that might be accessible. There can also be additional security screens; I have seen that at dozens of schools I have visited, particularly around computer labs, multimedia equipment and other areas of high value in a school where there is stuff that you want to protect. So yes, there are budget allocations made through things like the capital upgrades program and ongoing capital works.

We look through a range of different programs to protect assets. An example relates to

the new Kingsford Smith school and the synthetic grass surface that is on one of their playing fields there. There is a perimeter fence going in around that to protect that asset. So yes, it does occur. Any incident in terms of vandalism of a school is regrettable. We work closely with the police. On a number of occasions there have been people apprehended and prosecuted for those sorts of illegal activities; we do have programs in place.

In any of these sorts of circumstances you have to balance what is an appropriate level of security with what is an appropriate level of community access to facilities. We do not want our schools looking like high-security prisons. That is not the sort of outcome we want. When you look at the sorts of solutions that we have found, particularly around perimeter fencing and around the security measures—they are effective but low key.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Whybrow, what was the cost of those incidents to the education department in 2008?

**Mr Whybrow:** I will have to take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. Minister, will we access the federal money that is available for this to upgrade security glass, fences, perimeter fences—CCTVs, I understand, are included in that funding?

**Mr Barr:** Some of the projects that schools have put forward will include elements of each of the things that you have spoken about. I do not think CCTVs have been put forward; no school has wanted that and put that forward as part of—

**MR SMYTH:** No school has asked for that?

**Mr Barr:** Not as part of this commonwealth program, that I am aware of.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that because of the general policy? I think you indicated to us in a briefing that there is a general policy that you do not have CCTVs.

**Mr Barr:** We certainly have had a preference not to use CCTVs in schools, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that why the requests would not have come in—because that is the general policy?

**Mr Barr:** I could not be sure on that; you would have to follow up with individual schools. I certainly have not had repeated representations from any school demanding CCTV.

**MR SMYTH:** But there have been principals who have expressed some—

**Mr Barr:** Not principals. I have had some community members suggest it from time to time, but there has been no push from principals or their association for widespread use of CCTV.

**MR SMYTH:** Why the policy against it?

**Mr Barr:** There were a range of factors that we discussed around privacy issues—what sort of coverage you could provide across school grounds. There are a range of protocols that would need to be in place. As well, you are talking about people under 18 being recorded. You have a range of things that you would have to consider. The department's view, and I do not disagree with this, is that on balance there are other methods of security provision that should be pursued well ahead of things like CCTV.

**MR SMYTH:** But a child going to and from school or a student going to and from school will be recorded, potentially, on a bus. All our buses have a CCTV.

**Mr Barr:** Possibly, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** They are recorded at interchanges, which all have CCTVs. If they go into a large shopping complex, they have cameras. If they go into a department store, they have cameras. What is the difference? Apart from vandalism or catching those that perpetrate crime, they do add to a certain sense of security.

**Mr Barr:** I do not think that there is much evidence that it would stop vandalism. Certainly you could have a better prospect of identifying offenders if they were not—

**MR SMYTH:** Doesn't that eventually stop the crimes happening, though?

**Mr Barr:** Potentially. But it is not something that there is overwhelming demand for, and I am just not pursuing it as a policy objective.

**MR SMYTH:** But is it chicken and egg? The department said no so nobody asked—

**Mr Barr:** You can quibble or think that, but at this point in time we are not interested in pursuing a blanket rollout of CCTV across the ACT public education system.

**MR SMYTH:** But Torrens primary school with 21 incidents, Stromlo high with 20 incidents, Southern Cross with 11 incidents—

**Mr Barr:** Without knowing the details of each of those incidents, it is questionable as to whether CCTV would have an impact on that. There might be 20 other things that would have stopped those sorts of incidents, and perhaps you would look at those, even on a straightforward cost-benefit analysis, as being more effective measures to address those issues.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What about bullying? Would preventing bullying not be assisted by having more security in this sense?

**Mr Barr:** Unless you were live monitoring and you could have a squad of—what?—police to come in to intervene, no, I would not have thought that it would have a major impact around bullying.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay.

**Mr Barr:** I think there are a range of other issues that go before it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is an interesting take on it.

**MR SMYTH:** Ms Davy, has the department had any work done by properly trained security individuals as to how to make our schools more secure or is it more a response that “Something happened so we will replace it. Then we’ll put bars up on windows or armoured glass”?

**Mr Whybrow:** We are currently in the process of a security audit through all our schools. That is happening this year. My understanding is that that is a regular recurrence within our process.

**MR SMYTH:** It has been or it will be?

**Mr Whybrow:** It has been, I believe.

**MR SMYTH:** Are copies of previous security audits available to the committee?

**Mr Whybrow:** I will have to see if they are available and provide you with that advice.

**MR DOSZPOT:** While we are on Kingsford Smith school, can I ask a question on Kingsford Smith?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, you were next anyway, so if Mr Smyth has finished with this one—he has one or two more.

**MR SMYTH:** I will finish with the last one. Minister, is there a formal statement of policy that there will be no CCTVs in schools either for monitoring or for security reasons?

**Mr Barr:** No, there is not.

**MR SMYTH:** There is not. Why is it not a formal policy then?

**Mr Barr:** It is just not a policy.

**MR SMYTH:** It is just not a policy?

**Mr Barr:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a security policy for schools?

**Mr Tardif:** I am sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a security policy?

**Mr Whybrow:** Is there a security policy? There would probably be a range of policies covering different elements of it.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there would be more than one. We will make available to the committee a range of policies that would be relevant in that context.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister Barr, we were talking about Kingsford Smith school. Are you satisfied with the Kingsford Smith school at its current position of completion? Are you happy with everything that has been completed at the school?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What about the issues relating to the size of the staff room there? There is only about half the capacity at the moment, and I understand that the staff room is already not big enough to hold all of the staff?

**Mr Barr:** The staffroom was not designed for whole-of-staff meetings; it was designed as a staff lounge. There are other rooms in the school for whole-of-staff meetings.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So all the staff cannot congregate together?

**Mr Barr:** All of the staff would not, in the usual course of business at the school, congregate together in terms of interaction in a staff lounge. It is a bit like the members lounge in this place; there is a small room that was available. There are other parts of the building where all staff can assemble. There are a number of large community meeting rooms, in fact.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So this is a planned point, you were saying?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** This is not an oversight?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, it is my understanding that, in the design of the school, the staff lounge was never designed to accommodate every single member of staff at once, and that whole-of-staff meetings would take place in other, larger meeting facilities that have been built for the school.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What about in terms of students? I believe there is a similar situation with the capacity of the hall, in that the school hall cannot accommodate all of the students. I should imagine there would be a requirement for that, as one of the biggest halls available?

**Mr Barr:** I will leave that one to you.

**Mr Bray:** No, the large hall at the school is not large enough to accommodate all of the students. Again, that is normal practice because it is a preschool to year 10 school. The times that you would have the whole school community required to be in one place at one time would be very infrequent. I do not know if it would even occur once a year. To build a hall that size would be very expensive, so the primary school has a

hall and then there is the large combined gymnasium-hall that typically the high school cohort would use.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am echoing the concern of people who are actually experiencing some of these issues within the school. There was a feeling that this was an oversight in terms of both the staffroom and the hall.

**Mr Bray:** No, it was not an oversight; it was a definite design decision. That is the way we designed it—

**MR DOSZPOT:** So it was a designed oversight?

**Mr Bray:** Yes. It is value for money. We cannot build big spaces that are used with low frequency. That is just not smart spending of money.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter?

**MS HUNTER:** I just wanted to go to page 374, which is around capital works. With the technical adjustments, there are quite a number of rollovers that are appearing in this list. With the education revolution funding coming down, there are tight time frames around that, and also there are ongoing renewal and maintenance-type programs. How are we able to get through all of this? There are quite a few rollovers happening from this financial year to the next and I am quite concerned about the amount of work that is going to have to be carried out in quite tight time frames.

**Mr Tardif:** We are actually very well placed to be able to deliver the full capital injection from the commonwealth under building the education revolution, as well as maintaining the ACT government's capital works program. In fact, we have to maintain the ACT government's capital works program; it is a condition of receiving the BER funding.

In terms of the rollovers in this year, there were essentially two large items in that. One was the Gungahlin college, with a rollover of \$29 million. That resulted from a number of factors—the decision to integrate the public library with the college library, so that it needed a repositioning of the college within the precinct, and there was suspension of the design work for around six weeks so that the preliminary sketch plans could be altered.

Having done this rollover—and we are not expecting any further issues with that, and the school will still be opening as scheduled at the beginning of 2011—the other significant rollover there was \$24.6 million under the schools infrastructure refurbishment program. That has essentially shifted out one year. The original announcement was that it was \$90 million over four years. Because of a number of factors, including the overheated construction market at the time and the difficulty in getting some of the consultants in on this, we have essentially shifted out the completion date by one year.

Just working through all of the things that we have underway, we have got a lot of confidence that we will be able to deliver everything we are doing. The Tuggeranong P-10 school project is on program; Gungahlin college is on program; Harrison high

school, again, is on program; the Kingsford Smith school was delivered ahead of time and under budget; the gymnasiums for Belconnen and Stromlo high schools are on budget and ahead of program. So it is not just a matter of when the money gets spent; it is a matter of the ability to be able to deliver the project on time and under budget, and we are very confident we are able to do that.

**MS HUNTER:** So you have got the workforce there. If you look right across departments, there is also other money coming down.

**Mr Tardif:** Yes. There has been a significant ramp-up in the ability of the schools capital works team. We have significantly increased the number of people working in that, largely as a result of the BER funding coming on board. We have employed five ex-principals to work with the schools to make sure that the program happens on time and very smoothly. These are people who understand how a school works and the unique challenges that you face there. Obviously, the changes to the planning regulations will help us to deliver the programs on time. Also, we have been working very closely with the schools. This additional funding is going to mean, in a lot of cases, that we will be building during term time. Often we have tried to deliver programs on weekends, at night, during term break—

**Mr Barr:** That is probably the most significant change.

**MR DOSZPOT:** You mentioned there have been budget blow-outs. With Harrison high, when it was originally mooted, the expected cost was expected to be \$37 million, but I believe the revised estimate is now \$43.5 million. What has caused the \$6.5 million blow-out?

**Mr Tardif:** I am not sure. I think the first time the funding was provided for Harrison high was in this budget, and that was \$43.5 million.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It was \$37 million, as stated in a press release in the previous 12 months, in the previous budget.

**Mr Bray:** When the Harrison project was first identified, we did not have a lot of detail about the scope of the work and the costs we would be faced with in terms of building physical facilities. We provided some advice to the minister's office; it was very notional at that stage. We qualified it by saying we did not have a design brief to give them good advice on that, but that advice was all that we could give at that stage.

Subsequent to that, we gave further advice because we had developed the design brief and we had more information available. That was basically when the budget or the amount that is now set was determined. Now that the design has progressed to the preliminary sketch plans phase, the quantity surveyor has confirmed that we are on budget for \$45 million.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is a fairly significant amount of money. Can you elaborate as to what the differential is?

**Mr Bray:** Between the \$37 million and the \$45 million?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Bray:** Just the scope of the work. We finally got a clear scope of how much we were building, the size of the buildings, the special features, because we are catering for special needs children there. We had to respond to an environmental requirement to retain trees for the superb parrot. That resulted in a building becoming a two-storey building, so there was a car parking impact. It was a matter of having a detailed look at what work was required.

We had to respond to the construction of the district playing fields next door, which meant we had a bit more pressure to provide additional recreational facilities within the school grounds. We could not use the high-level grounds immediately adjacent to the school because the very nature of those grounds would not allow wear and tear on them as a normal playground activity site. There have been a lot of issues that we have had to resolve, and that is what has been resolved over that period of time with respect to the \$37 million and the \$45 million figures.

**MS BURCH:** From an earlier thinking phase to a detailed plan?

**Mr Bray:** That is right, yes. We try and give advice as best we can when people ask us, “What do you think it’s going to cost?” We usually base that advice on previous projects of a similar character, but you have to look at the specific nature of the project and heritage issues may develop. There was a track through there, there was an environmental issue and there were the district playing fields. It then starts to build a picture more accurately.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We will break for lunch soon; we can come back to this after lunch. Ms Hunter, do you have a quick question?

**MS HUNTER:** You talked about five ex-principals who were taken into the capital works team to help. What was it about their experience and skills that was going to help to get the projects moving? What did they add?

**Mr Bray:** One of the big issues in carrying out works quickly at the school site was the fact that we had to decide that the work would have to be done during occupied times. We could not deliver \$150 million worth of work based around school holidays; it just was not going to happen. So there was a recognition right from the start that we needed to work with the school principals very closely on how they were going to manage the impact of all of this building activity.

**MS HUNTER:** So that was about school liaison and how you were going to work out your program?

**Mr Bray:** Yes, that is exactly right. We decided that if we went out to the central office and sort of pushed our way in, there would be a natural reaction to say, “Who are you, coming in and telling us to move aside when you don’t understand the problems that we have?” We accepted that right from the start, and we put up to the executive that we engage five principals. They are quite highly respected principals.

We actually scanned the ones that are highly respected within the ACT educational community, and they have got experience across primary schools, high schools and colleges. They also had extensive building experience, having been through that process themselves.

The idea was that they could go out and speak in the language of the principals at the schools, they could bring back the issues and translate them to my people, to make sure we addressed those properly. Since then they are now able to offer advice and assistance to the principals at schools on how to clear spaces—how we can move areas clear of that. So it is a basic communication link. They carry with them authority from my directorate. They understand the scoping of the works, the budgets and the flexibility we have got within that. At the same time, they go out and listen to what the principals and teachers are saying, they bring that back and we work between those issues to make it nice and smooth, to hit the ground with builders at 84 sites concurrently.

**Meeting adjourned from to 12.34 to 2.14 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back, minister, and officials.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, chair. Over lunch I have been collecting some more answers to—

**THE CHAIR:** More statistics for us.

**Mr Barr:** More information.

**THE CHAIR:** Fantastic; I will get you to go ahead.

**Mr Barr:** We took a question on notice in relation to the number of teachers in the system. As of today, I am advised it is 2,480 permanent positions. The question then was: how many were at the top of the range? A total of 1,230 of the 2,480 or 49.7 per cent so, roughly speaking, 50 per cent.

**THE CHAIR:** Roughly 50 per cent.

**Mr Barr:** I understand Ms Davy has some further information.

**Ms Davy:** Thank you, minister. I would like to correct the record, if I may, regarding something I said before lunch. It was in relation to the discussion around filming on school sites during caretaker conventions. I believe I indicated that there was no filming on any school sites during that period of time. Given I was not chief executive at the time, I asked my officials over lunch to make doubly sure that my memory was correct. It was not. We did find on record a response to a request from Liz Lopa on behalf of the Australian Labor Party to the chief executive at the time, Dr Michele Bruniges, seeking a request to use a classroom at Amaroo school on Tuesday, 2 September 2008 between 7 am and 9 am to film a commercial to be screened as part of the ACT election campaign.

I am trying to get copies of the letter, but there is one. There are other copies coming

at the moment. The letter clearly indicates that Dr Bruniges put some very clear caveats on the nature of the filming to occur at that time in terms of ensuring that no public servants were involved in the filming of the commercial, that the filming would occur before 9 o'clock and any evidence of such would be removed before the start of the school day, and the use of actors rather than any children or public servants or teachers as part of the ad.

The other important element to indicate in the ad is that, as chief executive, she indicates that she would consider, as would be right and proper under the caretaker conventions, any other applications by any other candidates in any other parties in a similar way.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for that correction. You said that you believed it was a potential conflict of interest. Obviously you were not the chief executive then. Mr Barr, when we asked you before you said it was a matter for the ALP. Why is it that your chief of staff was making this request?

**Mr Barr:** My understanding from the letter is that my then chief of staff sought advice on behalf of the Labor Party from the chief executive's department, but that advice was sought on behalf of the Australian Labor Party, not on my behalf.

**THE CHAIR:** Well, she has written to us—to “Chief of staff, office of Minister Andrew Barr”.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and the opening line in the letter says:

You have sought advice on behalf of the Australian Labor Party (Australian Capital Territory Branch)—

**THE CHAIR:** Correct, but she was doing it in a position in your office.

**MR SMYTH:** Why was she using official assets then? Why is it addressed to a member of your staff?

**Mr Barr:** That is the person who made the request seeking advice from the chief executive.

**MR SMYTH:** And you knew nothing about it?

**Mr Barr:** No, I have had no involvement in the ALP ads.

**MR SMYTH:** It is news to you?

**Mr Barr:** Sorry, what is news to me?

**MR SMYTH:** It is all news to you that this filming occurred?

**Mr Barr:** I knew that the Labor Party was filming election ads. I was not in them so I had no role in relation to the approach to the education department. It would have been improper for me as minister to have sought advantage for my political party in

relation to such a request.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is improper for a minister to approach his or her department to get an advantage?

**Mr Barr:** A political advantage that would not be offered to any other political party, yes, and most particularly during the caretaker period, but I would extend that. My personal view is I would extend that beyond caretaker periods. There are obviously a series of guidelines in the caretaker conventions and also in the Public Sector Management Act.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is your personal as well as your ministerial view that it is inappropriate for a minister to approach the department which they are in charge of for political purposes?

**Mr Barr:** No, to seek a political advantage over any other organisation. It is entirely appropriate for any political party to approach—and that is made quite clear in the guidelines—but it would be inappropriate for a minister to intervene and make a decision on behalf of the chief executive, most particularly during a caretaker period.

**THE CHAIR:** What about to make a request? This is a—

**Mr Barr:** I am not making a request. I have not made a request.

**THE CHAIR:** I know you did not, but there are two issues here. One is Katy Gallagher did, which we have covered in another hearing. This is your chief of staff. When a chief of staff writes a letter and—

**Mr Barr:** No, the chief of staff did not write a letter.

**THE CHAIR:** How was the request made? I am sorry, we are still getting through this response. How was the original request made?

**Ms Davy:** We had no record of any written request on our files—we are pretty good at our record keeping—which—

**THE CHAIR:** So just a phone call then?

**Ms Davy:** suggests that there was probably a phone conversation and the chief executive at the time organised the response in that way.

**THE CHAIR:** So there is a phone call from the minister's chief of staff to the chief executive which is then responded to in this letter. I suppose we can at least be thankful that there is something in writing in this case. Again to you, minister: is that appropriate? Are you suggesting that your chief of staff was not acting on your behalf when she made that request?

**Mr Barr:** My chief of staff was seeking advice from the chief executive of the education department on behalf of the Australian Labor Party.

**THE CHAIR:** Why would it not have been done by the party secretary?

**Mr Barr:** That is a matter between the party secretary and my chief of staff. I cannot answer that.

**THE CHAIR:** And you had no discussions with your chief of staff in relation to this letter?

**Mr Barr:** No. I certainly did not direct my chief of staff to make these inquiries with the chief executive.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you know she was making the request?

**Mr Barr:** Not at the time. After the approach had been made, I may have been made aware that an approach had been made and that advice was being sought. But, as I say, I had no role in the Labor Party advertising. I did not appear in any of these ads.

**MR SMYTH:** So why did you not reveal that knowledge this morning that you knew your chief of staff had approached the department?

**Mr Barr:** Sorry, why? I simply had no role in the Labor Party advertising.

**MR SMYTH:** No. You just said you were aware that your chief of staff had approached the department.

**Mr Barr:** No. The information that I have relates to what has occurred, and that was my chief of staff sought advice and received a written response. So I am aware of that, yes. It is here in front of you.

**MR SMYTH:** Were you aware of that before this was in front of you today?

**Mr Barr:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** I do not think that is what you said earlier.

**Mr Barr:** No. I was not aware of the written advice and I was not aware of any of the approaches around at the time, but I was aware that the Labor Party was filming election ads.

**MR SMYTH:** So when did you become aware of your chief of staff's approach to the department?

**Mr Barr:** Today.

**MR SMYTH:** Just today. You did not know of it before?

**Mr Barr:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** At all?

**Mr Barr:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** No knowledge?

**Mr Barr:** Of my chief of staff's involvement?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** No. I found that out today.

**THE CHAIR:** And you believe that it is appropriate for your chief of staff to be acting without your knowledge as chief of staff—because she is clearly written to as “chief of staff” here—on behalf of the Labor Party?

**Mr Barr:** It is appropriate for my chief of staff to seek advice on behalf of the Labor Party, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Why is it appropriate for your chief of staff rather than the Labor Party to seek that advice?

**Mr Barr:** It is appropriate for the Labor Party to do it as well. It would be appropriate for any member of the Labor Party to seek advice. I think there is an important distinction to draw between seeking written advice from a chief executive and directing a chief executive, and there is quite clearly a difference there.

**THE CHAIR:** Does that not bring a certain amount of weight of your office, though, to the request? Ms Davy expressed concerns, when we put it to her this morning, about the potential conflict of interest and through your chief of staff making the request as your chief of staff. Does that not add to that difficulty for the chief executive at the time in responding because it is essentially the way she would see it, her minister asking—

**Mr Barr:** For advice on what the appropriate provisions are. Because that is what the request was—a request for advice that is then provided.

**THE CHAIR:** It is advice as to whether or not you are able to use it. It is asking to use it. It says—

**Mr Barr:** Asking for advice on what the provisions are.

**THE CHAIR:** Well, no. I mean if you go to the first line of the letter, it says:

Dear Ms Lopa,

You have sought advice on behalf of the Australian Labor Party (Australian Capital Territory Branch) to use a classroom in Amaroo School on Tuesday 2 September—

They are asking if they can use it. They are not asking for a general advice. Your chief of staff went—

**Mr Barr:** And then the letter goes on to say:

I have liaised with the Chief Minister's Department and would like to bring the following points to your attention for consideration.

As it is close to the period by which the Caretaker Conventions for the 2008 ACT elections are operational, I have decided to assess your request to use public school facilities for the stated purpose in accordance with part 4(i) of the conventions. This section states:

“There may be occasions where agency premises can be appropriately used during a caretaker period by political parties for public events, such as media conferences, or where they are the obvious place for a function (for example, the opening of a building by a Minister.) In the cases of official functions involving the use of agency resources, it would generally be appropriate for the Opposition spokesperson, member or candidate to be given the opportunity to be present.

It is not appropriate that the use of agency premises extend to such activities as engaging public servants in political dialogue, or using public servants for logistical support for political functions. Nor should the use of the premises unreasonably disrupt the normal operations of the offices concerned.”

In accordance with this advice, and your decision to use hired talent instead of students, I am prepared to allow the ACT Labor Party to use a room at Amaroo School for filming, provided that the premises are not used to engage public servants in political dialogue and that no public servant is used for logistical support for filming. In addition, the ACT Labor Party is to ensure that filming and removal of equipment and talent from the school premises concludes prior to the start of the school day at 9 am and that the hire of the students does not breach section 13 of the Education Act 2004 that provides conditions on the employment of children under school-leaving age.

In allowing the ACT Labor Party to use public school facilities for this filming, I would therefore be required to consider an application by other candidates for the ACT election to use public schools for political purposes in a similar manner.

The letter goes on to say:

I note that the ACT Labor Party has indicated it will use hired talent to represent the classroom teacher during filming, and that this talent is currently employed as a teacher at Amaroo School. Section 4(m) of the Caretaker Conventions states:

“Public employees must consider numerous ethical issues during the pre-election period with regards to their operations and conduct. These issues might relate to real or perceived conflicts of interest, the public perception of impartiality in their operations and conduct, and the participation of individuals in political campaigning.”

The Commissioner for Public Administration has provided advice to assist public officials on these matters during the pre-election period. Paragraph four of the Guidance on obligations of public employees during the pre-election period states:

“While all elements of section 9 of the PSM Act apply, the particular focus in the context of an upcoming election is whether political involvement places the public employee at risk of an actual or potential conflict of interest ... In accordance with the PSM Act, public employees must disclose to their Chief Executive and deal with any conflict of interest, either real or apparent. Active campaigning (including for another person or a party) has the capacity to raise a real or apparent conflict for most public employees.”

I am particularly concerned that a public school teacher appearing in a political commercial could be mistaken for tacit Departmental support for the filming or undermine the public’s confidence that the teacher or Department has the ability to carry out their functions fairly and impartially.

Under the guidance, public employees must disclose to their Chief Executive any real or apparent conflict of interest and Chief Executives are responsible for resolving any issues about the status of public employees who are taking a politically active role.

Section 23 of the guidance states:

“Public employees must not use official facilities for promotion of any political party. The use of official facilities includes use of meeting rooms ... Electioneering activity or other political activity that involves expense to the Territory is likely to constitute a breach of section 9 of the PSM Act.”

Should a person currently employed as a teacher in an ACT public school seek to appear in the proposed commercial, given the circumstances I could not agree to that teacher’s participation. As the ACT Labor Party is recruiting talent to act as students, I recommend that an actor also be sourced to appear as a classroom teacher.

Now, I have sought some clarification from the ACT branch of the Labor Party in relation to this matter. An actor was hired to perform that role on the advice of the chief executive.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a couple of questions flowing from that. Where in part 4(1) of the convention does it talk about advertising being allowed? The way I read it, it talks about public events, political parties’ public events, such as media conferences or where they are the obvious place for a function. It states:

In the cases of official functions involving the use of agency resources, it would generally be appropriate for the Opposition spokesman, member or candidate to be given the opportunity to be present.

Now, filming of an ad is not a public event. We were not invited to attend, obviously. What part of 4(1) allows an ad to be filmed?

**Mr Barr:** I would have to take that on notice. I do not have the conventions in front of me. But it is not a decision, again, I make. It is one where a request is made to a chief executive, in this instance.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Davy obviously took a different view and took probably the view

that I have taken, which is that this does not allow for advertising. Is that the conclusion you came to? The answer we had in respect of part 2, I am not sure that these answers are now correct; we need to check the questions on notice. This was signed off by you, minister, on the 12th. I think that is incorrect, that answer, now.

**MR SMYTH:** It is, indeed.

**THE CHAIR:** Well—

**MR SMYTH:** No, it is not. Minister you were asked a question on notice:

(2) Were any (a) departmental, (b) school or (c) CIT premises used in ACT election advertising; if so, who gave approval for Government facilities to appear in this advertising.

The answer is: we complied with the caretaker conventions. The question was not: did you comply with the caretaker conventions. The question was: were any assets used? Yet we have been given a nil return. In fact, the answer to the question on notice is misleading, at best. What is the process that led you to sign this letter that is now inaccurate?

**Mr Barr:** Well, advice by the department.

**Ms Davy:** It would have been advice from the department and, as you have discovered today, I have discovered this in my records. It was probably my sign-off at the time to provide that advice to the minister's office in regard to a nil response because that is what I believed at the time.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Davy, as a departmental head, then, what part of this 4(1) of the convention can you point to which allows use of a government building for advertising?

**Ms Davy:** Well, I did not sign this letter. The chief executive who signed it indicates that she did seek advice from the Chief Minister's Department, so there must have been a long conversation about her making that decision. I would need to probably take the same sort of advice before I was able to answer your question.

**THE CHAIR:** Indeed. I note that there is a slight difference here to what happened in Health in that the chief executive insisted that no staff appear. I think in Health nurses actually did appear off duty, so there is a difference. We may come back to this. We are obviously just going through. We will go through that—

**MS BRESNAN:** Mr Chair, can I question the relevance of this line of questioning to the budget hearing?

**THE CHAIR:** Well, it is relevant. It is relevant to the use of government resources, and it is particularly—

**MS BURCH:** Prior to the election or during the election prior to the budget?

**THE CHAIR:** Well, we review what is happening in this financial year as well as what is going forward. We have had this discussion. If you look at the terms of reference of the committee, it is very broad ranging. I am not clear why you would want to shut this down, but I think we are about to move on.

**MS BRESNAN:** I am not. I am just questioning the relevance. I am not trying to shut it down.

**MS BURCH:** Yes, because there are a range of other areas in the budget we would like to get through.

**THE CHAIR:** Indeed, and that is why we allowed so much time. But it was Ms Davy and Mr Barr who came back to this point and I think it is reasonable that we ask them some questions, given we had a lengthy exposition from the minister of what was in the letter. We will finish up on this area. We may well come back to it but, Mr Smyth, just a quick follow-up.

**MR SMYTH:** From your inquiries, how was the initial contact made by Ms Lopa?

**Ms Davy:** I believe it was a telephone conversation.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. Are there any other documents apart from this letter? Is there a paper trail of how they were allowed into the school and what happened?

**Ms Davy:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** What about seeking of the advice of Chief Minister's? There would be some documentation of that, presumably.

**Ms Davy:** Not that I am aware of. I can go and check the records, but I can imagine there would be—

**MR SMYTH:** Were they required to get insurances of any kind?

**Ms Davy:** Again, I do not know.

**MR SMYTH:** If you could inquire, that would be good. How are these requests normally handled? If somebody wanted to come to the school property or department of education property, what would be the normal process?

**Ms Davy:** Normal requests, requests to the chief executive, could be via—there might be a direct request to the principal of the school, who would then provide that request or provide that person with advice to seek the permission of the chief executive. They may well come through phone conversations. They may well come through email requests. They may come through mail correspondence. We recently had a request from a book company to use a school site to launch an educational publication on the use of interactive whiteboards in schools, which we have looked at positively because we—et cetera, et cetera. So yes, there is a variety of ways.

**MR SMYTH:** Would an individual, not a political party, be requested to have insurance?

**Ms Davy:** Again, I would need to check that. I would need to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** All right.

**MS BURCH:** Have we exhausted that now?

**MR SMYTH:** Probably not. We will see, Ms Burch.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, you had some questions before lunch. Did you want to come to those?

**MS BURCH:** I most certainly do. There were a number of questions that I had before lunch. They are around school-based apprenticeships, so budget paper No 3, page 92. I am looking at the line that refers to employing new Australian school-based apprenticeships in schools each year through group training arrangements. Can you tell me how this is building on existing work, or is it a new initiative?

**Mr Barr:** It does build on some existing work. A large part of this, Ms Burch, I think we deal with when I next appear in vocational educational training.

**MS BURCH:** Okay. Can I go back to the other question?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. I am happy to read it now, but it might be better to save that for later.

**MS BURCH:** Before lunch we were talking a lot around schools and capital infrastructure. Budget paper No 5, page 74, refers to a good swag of money for capital expenditure for building the education revolution. I know we started on that just before lunch. I would be interested to know what sort of benefits the ACT will get from that injection of funds.

**Mr Tardif:** Thank you for that. There are three components of building the education revolution. There is the primary schools for the 21st century, which is for building and renewing large-scale infrastructure—classrooms, libraries, assembly halls. There is the national school pride program, which is for smaller scale infrastructure—minor refurbishments. There is the science and language centres for the 21st century. That is a competitively based \$1 billion allocation that all states are bidding for.

Out of that, ACT public schools will receive about \$145 million—\$13.7 million for national school pride, \$131.5 for primary schools for the 21st century. There is a very tight time frame on completing each of those. For example, yesterday, national school pride, the second and final round, was announced. We have to have all of the national school pride—this is works done in all schools—completed by February next year. And for round 1, it is December this year; so it is a very tight time frame.

We have been working closely with the schools. Obviously, consultation and close consultation is really important, to have this run smoothly and on time. All of our

proposals we have had signed off by school principals, by school boards' chairs and the P&C president from each school.

So far, we have put in all the proposals for national school pride. They have all been announced and we have been glad to receive the full allocation in every one of those cases.

**MS BURCH:** Before you go on, these were thought up and driven by the school?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes.

**MS BURCH:** These are what the school community saw as priorities?

**Mr Tardif:** Our capital works team was working in collaboration with the schools. It is even the case that we have done condition assessments before. So everyone had a pretty good idea of what was feasible within the funding that was available. The amount available depended on the size of the school. It was driven by the commonwealth guidelines.

There are three rounds under P21, primary schools for the 21st century. We are a month ahead of the game on that in that we were able to submit round 2 and round 3 all in the second round; so we are actually ahead of that, which is terrific. Round 1, which was 20 per cent of schools, 14 schools, was announced recently. Again, all of our proposals were successful. We are expecting announcement of round 2, which for us is round 2 and 3, in early June. Again, all of those projects have to be built and completed, I think, by the end of next year.

**MS BURCH:** Can you give us a sample of what some of these projects are?

**Mr Tardif:** I sure can. In terms of the national school pride announcements, Ainslie North primary, refurbished classrooms; Bonython primary, upgrade front entry; Calwell primary, shade structure—there are a lot of shade structures in this—Garran primary, refurbish the assembly hall. Those are school pride. They are the refurbishment types of things.

P21—these are the larger projects—some of the 14 that have been announced to date are Macgregor primary, multipurpose buildings; Miles Franklin primary is getting a new library; Stromlo high, a covered outdoor learning area; Turner school, new library. It is that sort of range.

**MS BURCH:** And it is a tight time frame. You were saying you were on target. And do we have the skills and workers to actually get on and build it on time?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes, we do. Rodney might like to add to that.

**Mr Bray:** Yes. We have already engaged seven building companies. They were contracted about two to three weeks ago. We have been issuing to them a copy of the design briefs for each of the projects. They are still going. There are two stages to the sign-off by the schools. The first one, which Phil referred to, was the initial project title. It is a two or three-line descriptor. "We want a library, we want a hall."

Since that time, we have prepared detailed design briefs which involved us engaging what we call start-up architects and other consultants. Then we met with each of the school principals and we captured all their needs and recorded that in a formal design brief. That also then allowed us to get some estimates on the cost of each individual project; so we have maintained a fairly good control or management of the budget because there is no contingency in this program. The money the commonwealth allocate is the money. There is no topping up; there is no contingency to fall back on; so we have got to manage within the budgets that are allocated.

We completed these detailed design briefs. They have all been issued out to the principals to sign off. We did not ask that they seek the signature of the school board or the P&C president because we found that it took time to get those signatures. But we have asked that the principals sign off but to show it to the board chair and the president as soon as they can.

**Mr Tardif:** That is the second phase.

**Mr Bray:** The second phase. At the moment we are actually collecting all those documents back. We have got a handful, literally, to come back, only between five and 10 still to come back to us. We expect those back in the next couple of days. We have been handing those on to the builders. The builders at the moment are developing their programs on commencement and rolling out the work and they are in the process of engaging architects to do the full documentation right now. We are very much in the design documentation phase and that is what we will be driving at over the next couple of months.

**Mr Tardif:** I should mention too that we will be submitting our proposals for the science and language centres next week.

**MS BURCH:** I was going to come back and ask you about that. But with the five construction companies—

**Mr Tardif:** Seven.

**MS BURCH:** You made mention that there are a number requesting shade structures. Whilst there may be different companies operating at different schools, will there be group purchasing or some synergy across that?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes. Most of the shade structures, if not all of them, have all been done by one of the builders and his architectural team will develop three or four options where the schools can choose the style that they want. It will have to be massaged a bit to fit on the actual school site because all the school sites are different. But we will try to have typical-type designs that will make the process of doing the final documentation and construction easier. But we have tried to get that efficiency where most of them are being done by one company.

**MS BURCH:** In regard to the science and language centres, you are saying that that is competitive; that is something we have to compete against other jurisdictions for?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes, other jurisdictions, and then it is based on need. That is socioeconomic disadvantage as well as other demonstrated need.

**MS BURCH:** We need to identify those pockets of schools and then work that bit up?

**Mr Tardif:** That is right, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Just as a supplementary to that—

**THE CHAIR:** There are a few supps. Ms Porter and Mrs Dunne are waiting and then Mr Smyth.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you, Chair. I want to clarify—and I will come back to it if it is not in this area; I assume it might not be—whether the water tanks and the solar initiatives are being funded through the education budget itself, not through commonwealth money.

**Mr Bray:** Yes, that is right.

**MS PORTER:** We could explore that in a little while?

**Mr Bray:** I should point out that the commonwealth will be happy for us to include those sorts of items in the BER program as well, but we have an advantage in that we are already funded for those. So our designers will look at, if we build a new building, whether the roof is appropriately orientated. We can look at putting the ACT government funded solar panels on that roof. That is one of the things that we will be making sure our designers consider in the design of any new building.

**MS PORTER:** And other sustainable schools initiatives along that line?

**Mr Bray:** That is right. We engaged an independent environmental sustainable design consultant to actually provide individual advice for each school project and that is included in each school's design brief. A lot of the advice we got is generic because there are not that many different types of buildings. But the reason why we did that was to make sure that, when we go to the next design phase and the architects pick up the design brief, because they will be new architects or may be new architects, we actually got the ESD advice prepared individually for each school so that there is a very clean transfer of information and there is no sense of "How do we deal with this," or "How do we take this forward?"

We have tried to make it as easy as possible for the next designers to pick up the information and take it forward to the next level, without going back to square one and revisiting it. So we had an ESD consultant as part of the start-up consultants, and we will be engaging another ESD consultant, who will then assist all the design teams during the next phase of design, to provide advice and to check that what they advise as being appropriate is actually incorporated into the documents. We will engage them again as an independent consultant.

**MRS DUNNE:** I want to follow up on that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Sorry, I want to follow up on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. Ms Le Couteur and then Mrs Dunne.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you. You mentioned at the beginning what I would have asked. It is great to hear you have got an ESD consultant. Have you got some figures of how much less energy per square metre or per hundred metres your new facilities are going to use compared to the old ones?

**Mr Bray:** No, I do not have that sort of detailed information. We could try to find it but it would be very theoretical at the moment. They would compare a typical design without any ESD and then what you would gain from—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Did you have some goal? Did you say, “The government has now set a zero net greenhouse gas emissions target; therefore, that is the target that we have set”? I assume that would be the target that you would have set. What target did you set?

**Mr Bray:** Ultimately, the buildings are going to have to be heated, which means that you will not get enough energy out of solar heating to heat a building; you have to have some sort of probably gas-fuelled heating system in a new building.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I think I could find people who would argue that point.

**MRS DUNNE:** I think I could give you that argument as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, we could find some people that would argue that point with you.

**Mr Bray:** Okay.

**Mr Tardif:** In all of the new schools we are building, we are aiming for a five-green-star rating from the Green Building Council.

**Mr Bray:** But that is not the building the education revolution projects.

**Mr Tardif:** No.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You said that was for new schools, but the stuff that you are doing is not getting five green stars?

**Mr Bray:** No. When you go for a green-star rating, that has to apply to the whole site; you cannot do it by building. You cannot have a green-star rating for a single, standalone building on the site. The star rating, as I understand, applies to the whole site.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am not sure whether that is so; you could be right. You did not actually have any targets, though? That is the point.

**Mr Bray:** No. We have instructed the ESD consultant to give us advice on what are

the most appropriate and realistic initiatives to apply to each nature of the building that we are looking at constructing. One of the exclusions that we have done is that we are not including double-glazing because double-glazing is very expensive. It is expensive to install but expensive to replace if it is attacked by vandals. If you end up putting double-glazing in, then you have to protect it. It is just another cost on top of installing the double-glazing. That is a decision we have had to make to control the costs of doing this work.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And from a water point of view, have you done anything to reduce the water use?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Your standard water use reduction things?

**Mr Bray:** Yes. All the water-saving devices will be installed. Typically, rainwater tanks will go onto buildings. There will be the dual-flush, low-water-flow urinals. That is all, in a technical sense, quite easy to do in a building. We will be doing all the really obvious things in terms of energy saving. There will be ceiling insulation, wall insulation, the orientation of the building—they are all fairly straightforward. That is the sort of advice the ESD consultant will make sure happens in the design.

**Mr Tardif:** And the commonwealth guidelines specify that the buildings have to be built on ESD principles and they will be requiring that we report back on that as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne?

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. I want to go back to a couple of matters. I do not know whether it was Mr Tardif or Mr Bray who mentioned this before. What you have said was that there was a lot of energy going into the rollout of this and you recruited more staff in the form of five principals. I know that the \$145 million is a lot of money coming from the commonwealth, but how much is being expended by the territory to roll this out?

**Mr Tardif:** The commonwealth has said that, on top of the \$145 million, there is a 1½ per cent allowance that they are providing to us for administration, which is essentially putting together the proposals, the monitoring, the reporting.

**MRS DUNNE:** So that the territory will not be bearing an undue burden to blow out the commonwealth money?

**Mr Tardif:** No. On top of that, they have set a cap of four per cent in terms of project management for the build as well. Again, the territory is not wearing that cost.

**MRS DUNNE:** And is that included in the \$145 million?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Or is it on top of the \$145 million?

**Mr Tardif:** No, it is included within that.

**MRS DUNNE:** So the 1½ per cent and the four per cent?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is right; they are both included.

**MRS DUNNE:** Are you sure? There seems to be some—

**Mr Tardif:** Certainly the four per cent is. I thought the 1½ per cent was as well.

**MRS DUNNE:** Can you get back to the committee about where that is?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** I know that there are a variety of things but are there any particular criteria? You said, Mr Tardif, that the science labs and language labs stuff was competitive on a needs basis, amongst other things.

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Are there assessments of the educational value that has been added to the school? For instance, what is the educational value of a new front entrance?

**Mr Bray:** Just to maybe look a bit closer to it, there were three essential criteria. One was disadvantage—socioeconomic status in simple terms—and other criteria that relate to disadvantage. The second was need, and that is where it comes to what you are really asking about, I think: the educational need for that facility. The third one is that there is a commitment that we actually can complete construction by June 2010. So we will only have, in essence, 12 months to fully design and complete each of the facilities at the schools that we are submitting. We are lodging the applications in accordance with the requirements next week, and we are hoping the commonwealth will make their decision to give us approvals by no later than the end of June. Then we start in July and we have got to finish within 12 months.

Coming back to the educational—that is, the need criterion—in the case of science rooms, we have evidence to show that the school population and the curriculum of the school supports the need for additional science rooms or refurbishing of existing science rooms to a good standard, and the same applies to the language centres as well.

**MRS DUNNE:** Mr Tardif read out a list of projects that had been approved, which included updating front entrances and things like that. When you are putting that together, what is the educational value of a new front entrance to a school?

**Mr Bray:** Well, without knowing the particular school, where that could come in is if a school was looking to do an ESD initiative they could look at putting in an airlock, which is saving energy. The national school pride program, as the words say, is about school pride. There are a lot of schools that see their front entries as being quite plain or unattractive or uninviting, and for a lot of schools that is obviously a fair concern, so they have decided, as is their right under the program, to do a front entry upgrade, being a canopy or an airlock. When it comes to our involvement at central office, we

provided advice and a second view on maybe what projects they should look at. Ultimately the decision stayed with the school, and that is how the commonwealth wanted it. It was their decision, in consultation with central office.

**Mr Tardif:** And that is not competitive. That was every school.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you, for instance, provide the committee for the criteria for each of those three programs?

**Mr Bray:** Yes, sure.

**Mr Tardif:** Certainly, yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thanks.

**Mr Bray:** That is already available on the website.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay.

**Mr Barr:** [buildingtheeducationrevolution.com.au](http://buildingtheeducationrevolution.com.au).

**MRS DUNNE:** It is not a place that I visit often.

**Mr Barr:** Well, I know you would have no interest in it. It is good money after bad, isn't it?

**MR SMYTH:** Just in regard to the first round, there were only three government schools. How many were actually eligible to apply for assistance under the first round?

**Mr Tardif:** Sorry, which round of—school pride or—

**MR SMYTH:** School pride.

**Mr Tardif:** Of school pride, it was 60 per cent in the first round.

**MR SMYTH:** Sixty per cent. How many submissions were put in? Were all those eligible?

**Mr Bray:** Sorry, I will just correct that: 20 per cent; national school pride, 60 per cent. That is 50 schools.

**Mr Tardif:** And we put in a submission—

**MR SMYTH:** And all 50 put in applications?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes, a submission for every school, and every school was funded to the amount that was submitted, which is the maximum amount.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay. And all those were 100 per cent successful?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay. You said the second and third rounds have been merged?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes, that is right—four P21, the primary schools for the 21st century.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. How many of our primary schools are eligible to apply for that?

**Mr Tardif:** All of them.

**MR SMYTH:** All of them? And will all be submitting—

**Mr Tardif:** Yes, they have been.

**MR SMYTH:** They all will. Okay.

**Mr Bray:** It should be noted that that also includes special schools—

**Mr Tardif:** That is true, and combined schools.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Mr Bray:** Black Mountain, Cranleigh and Woden schools. That includes the four special schools. It also includes the P-10 schools, the primary component of those. They also accepted Stromlo high school, which has a year 6 cohort. The commonwealth actually funded again in accordance with the funding tables for that year 6, so Stromlo high actually got money under the P21 program.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I will go to Mr Doszpot and then Ms Bresnan.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, on 19 May there was an advertisement in the *Chronicle*, a full-page advertisement, under your signature, I guess; your name certainly appeared in it. Now, it appears that there were—

**MS PORTER:** Excuse me, Mr Doszpot. Did you say the north side *Chronicle* or south side *Chronicle*?

**MR DOSZPOT:** South side *Chronicle*, I think. I do not know.

**MRS DUNNE:** The *Chronicle*. They are probably in all of them.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The *Chronicle*. It has probably gone in all of them.

**MS PORTER:** We do not know.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can I ask how much such an advertisement would cost?

**Ms Davy:** I will have to take that on notice. It will be a very quick turnaround, but I am not quite sure.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. And can you tell me, what was the date that this advertisement first ran?

**Ms Davy:** The *Chronicle*? It went in this week's *Chronicle*.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The 19th. So that was the first time the advertisement ran? Okay.

**Ms Davy:** No. The advertisement ran in the *Canberra Times* last weekend.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. The same advertisement?

**Mr Barr:** No.

**Ms Davy:** No. If you are getting to the mistake that was made—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** The advertisement for enrolling in public schools first ran in the *Canberra Times* last Saturday. It was to be repeated in the *Chronicle* this week. Unfortunately, there was a mistake at publishing services in terms of providing to the *Chronicle* the old template, rather than the new information, so what ran was the 2009 ad rather than the 2010 ad. The *Chronicle* is running the—

**MR DOSZPOT:** the 2008 ad, I think?

**Ms Davy:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** The *Chronicle* is running the enrolling for 2009 ad.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes, sure.

**Ms Davy:** Next week we will put the correct ad into the *Chronicle* and this weekend in the *Canberra Times* we will also repeat the information. We have yesterday and the day before provided all media outlets with radio advice about alerting parents to the fact that the ad in the *Chronicle* this week was incorrect and directing them to the information in last week's *Canberra Times* and also to the information on the department's website.

I have also sent out an alert to all principals alerting them to the mistake that was made in the *Chronicle* and indicating that they need to manage any issues that might come up, arise in terms of their parent community. I also spoke to all principals and alerted them to the fact that the alert was coming out. We have also talked to the parents and citizens association and to the union and indicated that the mistake was made and if they hear anything they should correct it in the following way.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. And the second advertisement, that is at the department's cost again, is it?

**Ms Davy:** No. Publishing services are going to pay for the second ad in the *Chronicle* because it was primarily their mistake.

**MRS DUNNE:** So who are Publishing Services?

**Ms Davy:** Shared Services.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The 19th is the first time it ran in the *Chronicle*, but there were dates around 5, 6 and 7 May that are indicated in there, so why wouldn't it have run earlier in the—

**Ms Davy:** The dates?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Why would we advertise—no, I mean the dates—

**Ms Davy:** No.

**MR DOSZPOT:** There are correct dates. I have got the correct dates as well.

**Ms Davy:** Okay.

**MR DOSZPOT:** There are dates earlier on in the month that are publicised, so what I am saying is: why does the ad come out, say, halfway through when already there have been some meetings held on 5, 6 and 7 May?

**Ms Davy:** I would need to check what dates you are talking about. In terms of the correct dates, the correct dates were in the ad that ran last weekend in the *Canberra Times*.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is correct, which has got 5 and 6 May in it.

**Ms Davy:** And the dates in the *Chronicle* ad this week were the incorrect dates, because they were 2008 dates.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am not trying to be pedantic here. I am simply saying that there were dates 5, 6 and 7 May in both the correct and the incorrect versions, okay?

**Ms Davy:** All right.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And I am simply asking: shouldn't an ad like this run prior to the first of these meetings?

**Ms Davy:** I am not aware of the detail in terms of the actual dates in the *Canberra Times* ad, which is the correct ad. If that is the case, I would need to find out why we would delay it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have got the website ad, which has all the correct dates, yes.

**Ms Davy:** Okay.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So I do commend you for that. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Doszpot. Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you, chair. My questions relate to budget paper No 3, page 91, the moving forward with English as a second language program. I want to ask just a couple of questions around that. In particular, will there be particular cultural linguistically diverse groups who will be targeted or part of that program? Has there been, I guess, a decision about where the support staff will be based in particular schools or how it would work across the system?

**Ms Davy:** We now provide ESL points as a staffing allocation. The way that we do it is that we provide it in terms of a student's language proficiency rate, which is their LPR. Schools assess students. All schools assess students that they believe are identifying as ESL students, and each year in August we ask schools to provide information about students and their LPR rates. A normal language proficiency rate is 4 and it is a matter of how many resources we have got in terms of providing ESL support for students.

What this additional budget initiative will do will be to, in effect, increase the staffing point allocation. We come back to staffing points. It will increase the staffing point allocation to an equivalent of 8.4 full-time teachers, which will allow us to increase the pool of staffing points that is available to fund students with an ESL background. Currently we fund students with an ESL background at an LPR rate of 1.75. We have not got the numbers in yet—we will not have them in until August—but we believe that with this increased injection of funds we will at least be able to fund all ESL students with an LPR rate of 2.

**MS BRESNAN:** With the number of teachers that you do have—as you said, there is a points allocation system—I guess there are not enough to go across each of the schools. Are the points, then, to allocate the time that they can spend in—

**Ms Davy:** The points are allocated on the basis of the student's need.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes. But I am just thinking about them working across the school system, how that then works?

**Ms Davy:** I might ask Ms Wilks, who knows more details about the ESL program than me, to come forward and explain in detail.

**MS BRESNAN:** That would be great. Thank you.

**Ms Wilks:** In terms of the ESL points, they are allocated, as Ms Davy has said, through a moderated process. Then it is the schools' decision as to how they use those points to meet the students' needs.

**MS BRESNAN:** How is the program evaluated in terms of the outcomes that are

being achieved for those students requiring the language assessment or teaching?

**Ms Wilks:** We use NAPLAN and ACTAP to drill down into the ESL students and their literacy and numeracy outcomes as one of the tests. Because it is a moderated process, we also look at how their LPR is changing over time.

**MS BRESNAN:** How are we performing here in the ACT in terms of that?

**Ms Wilks:** As a general statement, we are performing quite well. The issue in the ACT is the number of ESL students. We are a very multicultural society and the number of ESL students is increasing. That is an issue that we are addressing in other ways. We are now running very intensive training for classroom teachers as well, to supplement the ESL support teachers.

**MS BRESNAN:** I imagine there would be some particular cultural groups given the influx of certain populations here. Is there any work being done with the communities as well about engaging with them? That probably goes to that sort of family-type engagement as well.

**Ms Wilks:** That is right. That depends very much on the schools. For instance, our intensive English centres—we have four primary ones and one secondary one—do a lot of work with their parent communities. These are the students who have the least English background; of course, generally their parents have very low English backgrounds too. So it is working with them to support them; it is making sure that, as part of the community, the parents are aware of the programs at CIT, for instance, that they can access to improve their English ability.

**MS BRESNAN:** Just quickly, are the language centres introductory English centres or are they intensive?

**Ms Wilks:** Yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** They are one and the same, are they?

**Ms Wilks:** They are one and the same—intensive English centres.

**MS BRESNAN:** And they are still operating?

**Ms Wilks:** They are.

**MS BRESNAN:** So there will be, as you said, a bit of integration between the ESL program and those centres as well?

**Ms Wilks:** Yes, that is right.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch and then Mrs Dunne.

**MS BURCH:** Underneath that line on ESL, there is a non-government schools equity

fund and then over the page there is classroom ICT to non-government schools. I am interested to know about the support we give to non-government schools. Are these built-on initiatives or new initiatives?

**Mr Barr:** These are new initiatives that were election commitments that go to add to the total that the ACT government provides to non-government schools. The non-government school equity fund provides money for two key elements. One is an increase in the amount of funding that is available for students with a disability in non-government schools through the SCAN model. That increases the amount available up to \$7.2 million over the next four years—a \$1.6 million increase to a \$7.2 million fund, so that is a pretty significant increase in the amount of money that is available through that process. There will also be an additional \$2.4 million to non-government schools through the existing needs-based per capita funding model. That targets support to lower socioeconomic non-government schools. We had a very clear political directive here in that we were not seeking to provide extra money to our high-fee independent schools but—

**MS BURCH:** Who determines that? The department of education?

**Mr Barr:** There is a funding formula that dates back prior to the Howard government. We have explicitly rejected the Howard government's funding model for schools and we have continued to operate on a model that pre-dates that. We recognise that there is a significant amount of work being undertaken by the commonwealth over the course of this current funding agreement to look at this issue of equity and provision of funding to non-government schools, and we will look closely at that. But we are keen to see increased funding from the ACT government go into the Catholic system and into low-fee independent schools rather than, shall I say, the blazer, high-fee independent schools, which, you could fairly argue perhaps, do not need additional financial support.

**MS BURCH:** And you are in contact with those schools and they are factoring into these programs?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly the comments on budget day from Mr Irvine on behalf of the independent schools and Ms Najdecki on behalf of the Catholic Education Office were recognising this new initiative and the ICT initiative, together with the funding for P&F associations for non-government schools, as this government having met its election commitments in relation to the non-government school sector.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could I just follow up on the classroom ICT initiative, which is on page 92 of BP3. This is not my question; it is a follow-up question. I just want to make that clear.

**THE CHAIR:** We do not run the committee like that, though, Mrs Dunne. Mr Gentleman is not in the chair anymore.

**Mr Barr:** Is this the question you have when you are not having a question, Mrs Dunne?

**MRS DUNNE:** Could someone explain? There is a \$2½ million expense this year,

but that is offset in the outyears by changes to the interest subsidy scheme. Could somebody explain the comings and goings of that money? It seems that in 2010-11 and 2011-12 there is actually less money going into it. Is the money being front-loaded?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. The interest subsidy scheme was closed to new entrants in probably—

**MRS DUNNE:** A long time ago.

**Mr Whybrow:** Quite a while ago.

**MRS DUNNE:** In the life of the Stanhope government.

**Mr Whybrow:** As those particular programs come to an end, further funds are available through the interest subsidy scheme because, as a program of supporting interest costs on the school ends, those funds have been held in reserve and are building up over time. The net impact here is that those funds, as they progress over the next three years, will be used to offset the cost of this one-off \$2.5 million payment in 2009-10.

**MRS DUNNE:** So you have actually had a bucket of money left over from the interest subsidy scheme which you are now applying.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes, exactly.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. Can I ask my question now?

**THE CHAIR:** It is a bit sneaky, but yes, with the leave of the committee.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** We will note that you have allowed sneakiness there.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, you will know that I have had a longstanding interest in the operation of the young mothers program at Canberra college at Stirling.

**Mr Barr:** CCCares.

**MRS DUNNE:** CCCares. Could you tell the committee, please, how many students are currently involved in the CCCares program and how many of their children are in care there as well?

**Mr Barr:** Mr Whybrow must know the answer to this question.

**Mr Whybrow:** I have had a little bit to do with the program of late; I believe the current enrolment is in the order of 129 students.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is students. How many children of students are there involved in the program?

**Mr Whybrow:** I do not have that second—

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you take that on notice?

**Mr Whybrow:** I can, definitely.

**MRS DUNNE:** There has been an incremental increase in the facilities there over time, which was much needed. It has moved from being a program of 20 or 30 girls to being a very large program, as Mr Whybrow said. What ongoing work is being done to resource that facility—not just for the students but for their children, who would be an at-risk class of children for early intervention? What early intervention programs accompany the CCCares program?

**Mr Barr:** That are provided outside the education department?

**MRS DUNNE:** I do not care who provides them.

**Mr Barr:** I will need to take it on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay—and would it be possible to visit the program again?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, certainly.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** You can get your office to write to mine and we will arrange a time.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, I have a question on staffing. We see the estimated employment level of 4,565 for this budget. I think we heard earlier that there are roughly 2,500 teachers or thereabouts. Are you able to give us a breakdown of the number of teachers versus the number of other staff and departmental staff?

**Mr Tardif:** Yes.

**Ms Wilks:** Happy to do that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** On notice; great. When you do that, are you able to also give us a comparison over the last four years in terms of numbers of teachers and numbers of other staff employed by the department of education? Thank you. Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you. Minister, as you will be aware, your colleague Mr Corbell announced that the government is going for zero net greenhouse gas emissions, which is a wonderful target. What is the education department doing to meet it? I notice that you do have it as one of your priorities—reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing sustainability—so clearly you are on the case. What are you doing?

**Mr Barr:** Mr Bray may be able to help.

**Mr Bray:** As was committed to by the minister, there is a commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2017. The government made a commitment for \$20 million to head towards that target. In terms of investment, currently the money is coming through various programs. To date, \$4 million was allocated out of the schools infrastructure refurbishment program, generally referred to as the \$90 million program. There is \$1 million a year to be allocated out of an annual budget called the capital upgrades work; that, obviously, totals \$14 million. There is \$1.6 million that the minister allocated in last year's budget which related to providing grant funds to non-government schools over a four-year period; that is \$1.6 million. There are the new budget initiatives of \$2 million for the solar schools program and \$2 million for the water tanks. Water tanks are not energy, but it is part of the overall ESD initiative.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can I possibly correct you, I suspect, or correct my hearing? You said carbon neutrality by 2017.

**Mr Bray:** That is right.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Carbon neutrality—that is a wonderful goal. What is going to be carbon neutral? It is not going to be the whole education department.

**Mr Bray:** Schools.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** If it is, I would be delighted to hear this.

**Mr Bray:** My understanding is that the minister's commitment relates to both government and non-government schools.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So, net, there will be no CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from any school in the ACT?

**Mr Barr:** Net. He said net.

**Mr Tardif:** That was in weathering the change, the climate change strategy. I cannot remember which—

**MRS DUNNE:** One of the 64 initiatives.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Have you got any idea how much of that is going to be done by offsets?

**Mr Bray:** No, we do not have a figure on that yet. You are correct in saying that—the objective at the moment is to reduce our energy consumption over the coming years. Then we will reach a point where we just cannot, in effect, reduce the energy level any further, because buildings do consume energy. When we get to that point in working the strategy forward, we will know that we will have to look at some carbon offsets. The solar panels will obviously generate some electrical power that will feed back into the grid, but there would not be enough panels to go on a school building to recover the energy that schools would consume.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This might be something that you will have to take on notice, but in calculating the CO<sub>2</sub> what areas are you covering? Are you going to be covering the kids getting to school? Is that going to be part of it? That may be something you need to take on notice, but I would like to know what you are looking at in terms of what you mean.

**Mr Bray:** That policy—you are right. I think the government is yet to take advice on that policy decision. You are right: there are ways of measuring. It can extend to even demolishing a school—you count the materials: when you take the energy used to demolish a school, you count that. And, as you said, there is the energy used by parents or by people transporting kids to school. Our base view was that we were thinking of energy within boundaries of the school, but when you move towards the pure theoretical objective those other energies can come into the equation. It is really about how the government chooses to consider that, and I think it is yet to take advice on that matter.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Could you take advice on whether you have taken advice and, if you have a got a view as to exactly what you are measuring, get back to me.

**Mr Bray:** No. I can say that we do not. We do not have a position on that. We do not have any policy position. We have not received any direction from the minister or DECCEW. They have not issued advice to the education department—or I certainly have not been told about it. I think it is one of those things that are yet to be clarified.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch has a supplementary on this. Then I was going to move to Mr Smyth, but I might move to Mr Doszpot.

**MS BURCH:** With the water tanks and solar panels going on schools, the children will obviously see that activity. I was just wondering whether we are taking the students on a journey of learning around ESD as well and how we are going about doing it?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. Part of the new curriculum framework provides some tremendous practical opportunities for children of all ages. In fact, there are some more technical aspects in the senior secondary years around building performance and monitoring and all the rest as part of education programs in a high school and college context, but that can be done at a primary school level as well.

**MS BURCH:** So it will be how they learn? There will be practical things, like disposing of their paper and all that?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, certainly. I am just trying to remember the schools. Bonython primary in your electorate, Ms Burch, had solar panels installed and they have a monitoring system for how much energy they are generating, and it is something that the primary school kids follow very, very closely and are very interested in.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, just in the nick of time.

**MR SMYTH:** I just want to clarify something on this morning's question on CCTV.

You said this morning that there have been no requests for CCTV cameras this morning?

**Mr Barr:** I did not say there had be no requests, but I said there had not been consistent—

**MR SMYTH:** So have there been any requests for CCTVs?

**Mr Bray:** I can say that in the time I have been at the department, which is about 18 months, we had a formal request from the board chair of Canberra high school, I think, which had suffered a couple of bad vandalism attacks.

**MR SMYTH:** About 10 incidents I think.

**Mr Bray:** The board chair wrote, I think, and I believe he asked that CCTV cameras be installed. I then discussed that with the executive at the time and the decision was made that it was still considered inappropriate to install them. But we have initiated other actions. We are very close to starting the construction of a security fence around the school. There are other devices that we have installed as well, what are colloquially called screamers, which are motion-activated devices that literally scream at very high volume.

**MR SMYTH:** There are so many lines there.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But you won't go near any of them.

**Mr Bray:** Basically we have what we call hardened the building. We have put up some stainless steel mesh that cannot be cut. We have put that on the windows and we have also put some special film on the glazing at the front entry which cannot be broken. The glass can be cracked, but it cannot be broken through. So we have what we call hardened the building, and when the security boundary fence goes around, that is the sort of level of security we have moved to.

**Mr Barr:** I think it has started; I saw it as I was driving past the other day. So it is underway.

**MR SMYTH:** So the hardening of the building is the approach for Canberra high. Were any other schools requesting CCTVs?

**Mr Bray:** Yes, we work with Mark's directorate. Mark's staff monitor the vandalism attacks on schools, and we talk between directorates. They identify schools that for some reason seem to be attacked or targeted by vandals. Belconnen high was one that seemed to be subject to as much vandalism attacking as Canberra high school. So at Belconnen high, again, a security fence is being installed and we are hardening the building. As Philip said before, the difficulty is trying to find the balance—not turning them into buildings that look like prisons and trying to balance security against making them unattractive buildings. That is where the hard balance is at.

**MR SMYTH:** So requests for CCTV were from Belconnen and Canberra high?

**Mr Bray:** Well, no. My memory is the request came from the board chair of the Canberra high school.

**Mr Barr:** I think earlier this morning I indicated that there were not requests from principals, but there were requests. There was the odd parental—

**MR SMYTH:** A very tricky way of answering the question, Mr Barr. The answer to question on notice No 135 says that there were two requests made for CCTVs in 2008. Do you recall which the other school was?

**Mr Bray:** Not offhand. I will go and find out who the second request was.

**MR SMYTH:** All right.

**Mr Bray:** But I do not remember which the other one was.

**MR SMYTH:** So if a board requests it they do not get it, but if a principal requests it, would that be considered, minister?

**Mr Barr:** No, I would not change my view on the matter. I would look to a range of other solutions before I would look to CCTV. I do not think it is the panacea that people think it is in relation to school vandalism.

**MR SMYTH:** So the hardening at Canberra high is underway now?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

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

**THE CHAIR:** Okay—

**MR SMYTH:** Now, that was just a quick one. Can I do a major—

**THE CHAIR:** Are you doing a sneaky as well?

**MR SMYTH:** Can I do a sneaky? Rollovers. I understand we got to rollovers just as we got to the luncheon break. I notice that on page 374, budget paper 4 there is a swag of rollovers, some of which are explained on page 108 of budget paper 5, starting at the bottom of the government list, the older schools refurbishment, \$1.2 million. The excuse is unforeseen delays caused by equipment lead times and consultant and contractor availability. What sort of equipment are we running foul of?

**Mr Bray:** I will answer that question, if that is all right. Generally, what has happened with the capital upgrades program is that the program was typically what was the whole capital works budget in my directorate prior to my arriving. I understand that the attempt was to try to do the bulk of the work during school holidays. When the SIR program—the schools infrastructure refurbishment program—commenced, the \$90 million, my directorate staff integrated both the SIR projects and the capital upgrade projects into one coordinated program. So there was the \$90 million, plus the notional \$12 million or \$13 million each year which would be allocated in. Whilst it is

a separate funding stream, the works are integrated because it is more efficient, but it was slow to basically get going.

By the time that they had gone through the procurement processes of engaging the project managers and the design teams, progressing the designs and the approvals for the development application and getting the approvals from the schools and the head office, that whole momentum at the start of the projects took longer than what was expected and basically has resulted in the SIR program going into a fifth year. Because the capital upgrades work is an integral part of that, that in turn has also dragged on.

So what you are really seeing here is that after three years of the SIR program being delivered, there is an accumulated rollover basically caused by the initial sort of slow start-up on that program. We have been looking at this work particularly with going forward with this budget, which is also the last budget of this program. We will catch this up now because all the works are in action. All the project managers have been working away on the sites. The schools are used to us coming onto the sites now and working during occupied times. So we are actually going faster at what we are doing. The SIR program and the works from the capital upgrades component will be completed by June 2011.

**MR SMYTH:** The new Tuggeranong P to 10 school, a \$1.2 million rollover reflecting a delay in related demolition work.

**MRS DUNNE:** Not enough big trucks.

**Mr Bray:** Again, that is just basically getting through the procurement process to get the project going. It is getting the machine going. As to the design, we are on target, and we are about to start demolition at the Tuggeranong site in a couple of weeks. The builder has been engaged and the documentation is progressing rapidly. Again, a slow start. We suffered a delay in the cash flow, but the work now is moving much quicker and our end target does not change. The facility will be completed and ready for the start of 2012.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. You have already spoken to the next one: school infrastructure refurbishment, \$24.6 million, the delay caused by scoping of work consultant and contractor availability.

**Mr Bray:** Yes, that is essentially—

**MR SMYTH:** Was it just too ambitious at the start if there was a delay caused by scoping of the work?

**Mr Bray:** I was not employed at the time, but I think that basically there was a big shift in the amount of work going through the department. The staff were normally only dealing with a budget of \$10 million or \$12 million, and when the SIR program got approved and allocated, it was really a quantum shift in the level of work to be done, and it just took longer than expected to get it going.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, it was \$90 million when it started?

**Mr Bray:** The sum of \$90 million was allocated originally.

**MR SMYTH:** Over three years.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, it is \$90 million for SIR, and then the usual capital upgrades that went at about \$11.5 million to \$12 million a year.

**Mr Bray:** That is right, yes.

**Mr Barr:** So that the total amount of works was \$130 million-something.

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** Just back on the Tuggeranong P to 10, that is 2011. I believe that it is Harrison that is 2012.

**MR SMYTH:** Who is right? Does he win just because he is the minister?

**Mr Bray:** It is 2011.

**Mr Barr:** It is 2011.

**MR SMYTH:** Right, okay.

**Mr Barr:** Hopefully I do, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** I reckon that is your style—"I win because I'm the minister." I am sure that *Hansard* has got that. Of course, I know that Mr Seselja has been interested in this one: the new Gungahlin college at \$29.2 million, the delays are due to planning difficulties. What are the planning difficulties?

**Mr Bray:** Again, we hit a couple at the stage where the design had to be finalised or resolved. It just took longer to get through that process of resolving those initial design concepts than we expected. We just lost time with that. But the end date for the project does not change. We still have to finish that job by the end of next year, and we are on target to do that. We are going to tender tomorrow.

**Mr Barr:** There are big trucks out there now, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Good, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So it is not the planning process itself?

**Mr Barr:** No, it is not ACTPLA; it is the planning of the project.

**Mr Bray:** Sorry, no the design process, not the—

**MR SMYTH:** So we are not going to blame the planning minister?

**Mr Barr:** No. It has got nothing to do with ACTPLA.

**MR SMYTH:** Not today.

**Mr Bray:** No.

**MRS DUNNE:** So this is not the parrot one? There were delays because of—

**Mr Bray:** No, that is Harrison.

**Mr Barr:** No, the parrot is Harrison. It will now be known in the future as the highly inconvenient parrot.

**MRS DUNNE:** The parrots, I have got it, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** We have done this a number of times. I mean, Erindale and Tuggeranong colleges have joint libraries and other facilities. What were the particular difficulties that have caused this delay?

**Mr Bray:** With the Gungahlin joint library, the design brief took longer to get resolved with ACTLS, which is part of TAMS. The design brief just took longer than we expected. It dragged behind a couple of months. That basically has continued to flow through the detailed documentation; so whereas we had completed a level of documentation for the college component, the library was always four to six weeks behind that, simply because the functional design brief took much longer to resolve with TAMS.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. Has there been a cutback on the scope of the library?

**Mr Bray:** No, its actual scope increased. Last year's budget allocated \$5 million to recognise the size that the library had to be, because it is a joint facility. It also includes the CIT flexible learning centre.

**MR SMYTH:** When will the big trucks and the bulldozers be hitting the ground?

**Mr Barr:** The big trucks are out there now, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** The big trucks, okay.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. There is furious pushing of dirt and all that sort of stuff they do before. I saw that the other day too.

**MR SMYTH:** And you are confident that we will have it open on time?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** We are not going to pay a premium for the delays and pay more to do that.

**Mr Bray:** No, we have got a few strategies. One was what we call the early works contract, which is the awarding of that earthworks contract. That is what is happening on site right now. That allowed the work to actually commence about three or four weeks ago. While that is happening, the actual detailed design of these college buildings is being completed right now. It is at above 95 per cent complete.

Again, while that is still being completed, we are going to tender tomorrow, literally, for a project manager, which is the builder. The builder will be engaged about 10 weeks after tomorrow. Five weeks for them to prepare their tender document and a five-week assessment, negotiation and contract award so that when the earthworks are completed, the builder will then be available to start straight away. We have got some other strategies, which we are also doing.

**MRS DUNNE:** Sorry, but if it is going to tender, don't you have to have all the drawings completed?

**Mr Bray:** No, with a project management delivery model, the project manager lets the contracts on a trade basis. His first contract, for instance, will be doing the subdrains, the sewer and the storm water pipes underground. When he is appointed, the consultants will give to him—

**Mr Barr:** He or she.

**Mr Bray:** He or she will be given the relevant—

**MRS DUNNE:** I expect it to be a company, actually.

**Mr Barr:** Good point, yes.

**Mr Bray:** They will be given the trade packages and they will then tender those progressively. It is a way of actually having more flexibility about how you can build a building quicker.

**MRS DUNNE:** It used to be called fast tracking.

**Mr Bray:** No, it is not fast tracking in the pure sense. Fast tracking is when the design is done at the same time. We have actually finished the design.

**MRS DUNNE:** You have finished the design?

**Mr Bray:** The design, yes.

**Mr Barr:** You are bringing too much Friday afternoon to this.

**MR SMYTH:** The final rollover is not included on 374 of BP4. West Belconnen school, Kingsford Smith, there is \$201,000 rolled over into the 2009-10 year. What is that for?

**Mr Bray:** We always set aside a few hundred thousand dollars at the end of a job, just

to respond to not so much defects, but issues that would require a bit of bedding down in the school. It is a bit of money that the school can come back to the department through my directorate and say, "Look, we have got a problem with this particular item or facility. Can you come out and just make some adjustments?" That is just standard sort of work you do after you finish a new building, because until you get people into the building, you do not quite know how well it is going to work. If you have a few hundred thousand dollars to do that work, it is not a case of then trying to find the money. We sort of plan that. That two or three hundred thousand dollars is just rolled into what will be the last budget of that project.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you. On 374 there is a whole swag of them that I have not asked about. Is it possible to take it on notice and get a brief description of the delays?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**Mr Bray:** Yes, sure.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**MS BURCH:** On this issue, I just wanted to go back to Woden quickly.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure, and then I will come to Mr Doszpot.

**MS BURCH:** Yes. Canberra College at Woden.

**MRS DUNNE:** Performing arts.

**MS BURCH:** Yes, Performing arts. Is that on the same campus and what are you doing then to sort of harden or anti-vandalise that?

**Mr Bray:** Yes, it is on the Woden campus. At the moment my team is preparing what we call the functional design brief. We have obviously had experience and we have learnt from the facilities at the Lyneham performing arts centre and the Calwell performing arts centre. My team is getting more knowledge and a better understanding of what is needed. This facility will be provided on the Woden campus of the Canberra College.

We think it will happen on the north side, which is where there is a car parking area. We believe, unless the school decides otherwise in our consultation process, that we will be refurbishing the existing dance practice areas and the drama areas. Then we will build a link across to a new building, which will be the sort of performing arts theatre. The practice classrooms will be within the existing two-storey building and then we will build a link to the new theatre. That is our thinking at the moment, but we are only just writing the functional design brief. Depending on what the school feeds back to us and what the community tells us in that consultation process, we will modify the building accordingly.

**MS BURCH:** But it would be open to other regional schools?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** And for out-of-hours use by the community. My purpose in putting that project forward was obviously a facility for the school, but also in recognition of the need for that community facility for the Woden town centre.

**MR SMYTH:** On that facility, did you just say that it would be on the car park or near the car park?

**Mr Bray:** Again, at this stage we believe that it will impact on the car park; so we have made a provision in the budget to provide an additional car park and to possibly realign the access into the car park.

**MR SMYTH:** Where would the additional car park go?

**Mr Bray:** I do not know that level of detail, but what we are acknowledging is that it will impact on the car park and we will need to come up with a solution for that.

**MRS DUNNE:** How many seats?

**Mr Bray:** No, I do not.

**MRS DUNNE:** No idea?

**Mr Bray:** No, but I can check whether the brief has gone that far.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** I will go to Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, can you tell us what total cost savings have been achieved out of school closures in total and also per each individual school?

**Mr Barr:** We certainly will have that data and I can get it very quickly, because I had it for the hearings last week and did not get asked. Certainly, all that was budgeted for after the revisions were made at the conclusion of the consultation process. There were a set figures that were in the 2006-07 budget papers. They were then revised following decisions that were made at the end of 2006 and all of the savings were achieved in full.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And the individual figures will be in that as well?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, it can be made available. Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. I'd love to see that.

**THE CHAIR:** And that is for each individual school, is it?

**Mr Barr:** For each individual, yes, within half a per cent or thereabouts variance between the exact figures for schools. It is just some very simple allocations. There are site points that go with each of the schools in terms of staffing allocations, for

example, and they were simply removed from the department's budget.

**MR DOSZPOT:** In the school closures inquiry, you laid the blame for the problems facing the ACT education system squarely at the feet of previous ministers. Did you include your predecessor Katy Gallagher in that as well?

**Mr Barr:** I indicated during my public statements in that inquiry that there was a collective failure of the Assembly from the period of beginning of self-government onwards to seriously address this issue. There was an attempt, and I acknowledged that, by Mr Humphries in the alliance government in the first term. But that alliance fell apart over this and other issues. We seriously as an Assembly had not addressed that.

I did indicate that the Labor government for a period in the 90s and the Labor opposition at that time did not play a particularly constructive role in addressing this issue, just as was the case with Liberal governments and alliance governments, because there has not actually been a Liberal government, other than in the Carnell years. The first alliance government, then the Carnell years and then the most recent period—the last seven years, eight years, when the Liberal Party has been in opposition—had not sought to constructively deal with this matter. And that is my view.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So your answer is yes?

**Mr Barr:** With those caveats that I believe it was a collective failure of the Assembly. I would not just extend that to Labor and Liberal. There were independents and minor parties who played a role in undermining any sort of serious reform. My view remains that had we, the Assembly, approached this on a gradual basis, the size of the change that was required in 2006 would not have been there had we progressively addressed this issue over the previous 17 years.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Barr.

**THE CHAIR:** Efficiencies going forward: you are going to need to start looking for some. Where are the areas for potential savings you have started to identify in the education budget?

**Mr Barr:** We have not begun that process. We will, like all other departments, all other agencies, be looking at that over the next 12 months. I can certainly rule out that we will not be seeking efficiencies around the number of teaching staff; so we will not be seeking to affect the service delivery through the teaching profession. It would have been counterproductive to increase the number of teachers in this budget and then seek to reduce that in future budgets. Outside of that, everything else will need to be considered over the next 12 months.

**THE CHAIR:** When you say it would be counterproductive, can the same not be said for increasing the number of public servants in this budget and then cutting them in future years?

**Mr Barr:** If staffing matters need to be considered, then it is my view that we should

look in the first instance to natural attrition. The other point I would obviously make is that there are particular staff that are put on for particular purposes to complete particular projects. If that work is no longer required because the project has been completed or we have refocused into another area of policy delivery, for example, then you could look at redeploying resources in that way. But we will need to have a detailed consideration of these matters with key stakeholders. That process will be ongoing over the course of the next 12 months leading up to the next budget.

**THE CHAIR:** So how do you see that process going, because we asked this question obviously of the Minister for Health and it was not particularly clear how she was going to consult or who she was exactly going to consult. She did give some answers on that but I was still a little unclear as to the direction. How do you see that process going in the education portfolio?

**Mr Barr:** I will adopt a consistent approach with other ministers and we will develop that approach and make some announcements about how we will go forward with that in the future.

**THE CHAIR:** But who would you look to consult with? That has been one of the big focuses of the Treasurer in delivering the budget. In not finding a lot of savings in this year, she has said you are going to take the time to consult. That will involve all of the departments presumably and all of the ministers.

**Mr Barr:** My approach will be consistent with that of other ministers and other agencies.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have an idea at the moment as to what that consultation will look like? Will you be talking with parents, will you be talking only with professionals? Who will you be talking to in order to determine where the savings can come from?

**Mr Barr:** We will make a formal statement around the nature of that consultation and then my approach will be consistent with my colleagues.

**THE CHAIR:** When do you anticipate that that statement will be made?

**Mr Barr:** In the near future. That is not a matter I will determine; it will be a matter that will be determined by cabinet.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Ms Burch and then Ms Bresnan.

**MS BURCH:** Budget paper 5, page 75, the very last item, year 12 certificate, phase 2—can you explain what that is?

**Ms Davy:** I will try my best.

**MS BURCH:** Then I do not feel so bad about looking at it and having trouble with it.

**Ms Davy:** I might ask Ms Nicol to come forward just in case I need a bit of help. Essentially, these funds are to rebuild the software and the computer language that are

running our year 12 certification process. The current way that we are able to work out the year 12 results on the year 12 certificate has some old software behind it and some old computer language, and it is built on a lot of different logarithms et cetera. We are going to rebuild that for it to be easier to manage and more robust, so that we can guarantee that the certification process will not fall apart on us in the near future. How was that?

**Ms Nicol:** Well done.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How old is the software and language that you are replacing? I wonder if it was there when I was—

**Ms Nicol:** Yes. The actual algorithm that does—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am thinking it might be what I—yes.

**Ms Nicol:** School calculations are particularly sensitive. The algorithm is about 15 years old. It has been written in a very old code base and has been transferred across many times. It now needs to be revisited, redeveloped and revalidated so that the system continues on without this risk of the code not being supported any more. It is very old.

**MRS DUNNE:** Will the revamping of the year 12 certificate database address some of the issues that have been raised about the comparative disadvantage of ACT students compared to New South Wales students? The minister may roll his eyes, but I think that there is a valid point in the argument made.

**Mr Barr:** It has been tested exhaustively, Mrs Dunne. You are running the Drummond line. Are you a Drummondist?

**MRS DUNNE:** I think there is an argument that it should be looked at.

**Mr Barr:** It has. It has been looked at multiple times.

**MRS DUNNE:** Will there be a change in the assessment, in the putting together of the year 12 scores?

**Ms Davy:** No, there will not.

**Mr Barr:** Not as related to this project, no.

**Ms Davy:** No, they will not.

**MRS DUNNE:** All right.

**MS BURCH:** This is just a straight software administrative process?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** My question relates to one of the priorities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability in schools. The Australian sustainable schools initiative in a sense supports a range of sustainability activities that teachers can pursue. I think in most states it is run through education departments, but here in the ACT it is based with TAMS with some support from the education department. I have a couple of questions around that. I was interested in how much of the cost of running the program is paid for by the ACT government as opposed to the federal government and what contribution the department of education makes to that program in the ACT.

**Mr Bray:** The education department has two areas that contribute to this. There is my area, which deals with the technical side, and Trish Wilks, who provides the curriculum support. Trish's staff prepare some curriculum advice or teaching material for the teachers. In my area, in terms of cost, for instance, at the moment we are working with DECCEW, engaging a contractor to do the energy audits in the remaining schools. We have done a number of energy audits in several schools. I think it is in the order of 10 or 15 schools—I will not guess—and we are in the process with DECCEW of engaging a contractor who will carry out energy audits at all the schools over a rolling program. I think it goes for either 12 or 18 months.

**MS BRESNAN:** How does this relate to the sustainability initiatives?

**Mr Bray:** It is part of the Australian sustainable schools initiative.

**MS BRESNAN:** It is part of that, is it?

**Mr Bray:** One of the activities to make that effective is that you have to first find out what point you are starting from.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes.

**Mr Bray:** As you would know, the AuSSI program is targeted at reducing waste, energy, water and other activities—looking at recycling, for instance: how much waste goes to recycling and how much goes to the land fill. In terms of the energy audits, we arrange for energy audits to be carried out at each of the schools. That is, for instance, where the department is incurring a cost. I budgeted that money.

**MS BRESNAN:** So that is ACT government funding that is doing that?

**Mr Bray:** That is right. It is part of the money that I referred to before, in that we are funding those initiatives to move towards carbon neutrality.

**MS BRESNAN:** What is the federal government contribution to the program?

**Mr Bray:** DECCEW would need to give you the accurate data on that.

**MS BRESNAN:** So I need to ask them that?

**Mr Bray:** Yes. They are managing that side of it. We will be probably incurring an additional cost in outer years, because I will be looking to engage a staff person to have a greater role in working with the schools and the DECCEW staff who are running the AuSSI program. As we start to get very focused on particular activities, I need someone in my team to start working on that finer detail.

**MS BRESNAN:** You may have already answered this; if so, I apologise. Do the teachers that are taking part in this program get time out of their work schedule to be able to devise and develop some of the activities that are part of that, and does the department support them in doing that?

**Mr Bray:** I believe that is part of the funding that comes—

**Ms Wilks:** In terms of sustainability, this is part of our curriculum framework, so all schools are working from that basis. It is an essential part of the curriculum; as such, we provide professional development. We have units of work on these particular aspects, which have been devised in terms of with AuSSI and with other relevant sections. We see it as a very important part of each child's curriculum development.

**MS BRESNAN:** Do teachers get time out of their schedule to be able to take part or is that something that they have to do in their own time?

**Ms Wilks:** In terms of its core business, it is a core part of the curriculum, so no, they do not get any additional time to deliver what is their core business. From time to time—for instance, in writing the units of work where we worked with outside agencies but also teachers—we have provided them with time to come and do that.

**MS BRESNAN:** And the department has provided that support to do that?

**Ms Wilks:** Yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** Okay. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would like to talk about the Birrigai outdoor school, which is a wonderful facility. Does the department know the average cost for students in similar facilities in other jurisdictions?

**Mr Whybrow:** The Birrigai outdoor school does not have any enrolled students, so it is—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, but I understand that students visit it and they are charged an amount of money to go. I understand it is \$15 for a half day and \$30 for a full day.

**Ms Davy:** That is correct, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** There must be comparable facilities in other jurisdictions. How much do they cost? I know that there are no kids actually enrolled at Birrigai—

**Ms Davy:** Happy to take that on notice.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It would be a great place to go to school, wouldn't it?

**Ms Davy:** Happy to take that on notice.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are there any other educational programs or facilities offered by the department which are offered on a cost recovery basis? I guess I am assuming that the fees at Birrigai are equivalent to a cost recovery basis. Can you tell me if I am wrong on that?

**Ms Davy:** That is correct.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is there anything else that you do on the basis of cost recovery?

**Ms Davy:** I would have to take that one on notice too.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This is likely to be on notice too. Given that this is money that parents are required to fork out to send their kids to a valuable program, has the department looked at the equity impact of the decision to charge this, and possibly only this, aspect of our education on a cost recovery basis?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and this was a question I was asked in the Assembly. There is a half-million-dollar student support fund that is available for these sorts of excursions. So yes, the equity issues have been looked at; and yes, there is a half-million-dollar fund that is available should any student be disadvantaged and not be able to contribute to that cost.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is that fund fully utilised each year?

**Ms Davy:** We will take that on notice.

**Mr Barr:** We will take it on notice. I am certainly not aware of there being a regular overrun on that fund. It has certainly never been brought to my attention that there has been a problem with people not being able to access it.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Where I am getting to is the lack of money for some students impacting on their ability to go to Birrigai—if there is not enough money. I appreciate that there is equity funding, but I imagine there are a lot of things that the government schools could use half a million dollars on. There may not be, in fact, significant—

**Mr Barr:** It is a pretty tightly controlled program. There is also another fund that is available, the secondary bursary fund. It is not the only source of equity funds that are paid directly to students or families, but that student support fund is targeted towards those sorts of groups, so particularly around excursions.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Would it be possible to find out how much of the money goes to Birrigai, in effect, via the school?

**Ms Davy:** I will take it on notice.

**Mr Barr:** It could cost more in staff time to calculate the answer than the dollar amount that goes to it. I will seek some advice on that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I do not need it to be exact. If you say that nobody ever does it or half of the money is on it—

**Mr Barr:** What I do not want to do is authorise \$10,000 worth of staff time to get you an answer that is considerably less, if it takes that amount of detail. I will need to take some advice on that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** Let it be known to the committee that the odd request that comes through can involve a huge amount of costs.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. I have something else, which hopefully would not require a huge amount of costs: do you know who is actually using Birrigai these days?

**Mr Barr:** Who uses it?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. Is it mainly public schools? Is it mainly private schools? I have personally been out to Birrigai as a totally non-school activity—

**Mr Barr:** I have seen and participated in activities in Birrigai in that context.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So do you know. You can take it on notice.

**Ms Davy:** I may as well add it all into the list.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You have got those figures, hopefully.

**MR SMYTH:** I have some stuff on Birrigai, if I may?

**THE CHAIR:** Sure.

**MR SMYTH:** I do apologise if this has been done. I understand that there is work to be done to have a new entrance to Birrigai or that there is some consideration of a new entrance for Birrigai. Is that the case?

**Mr Barr:** As in a new road into the facility?

**MR SMYTH:** A new road in. Currently you go down a hill—

**Mr Barr:** You do, and then you veer off on the left.

**MR SMYTH:** You are veering to the right and you have got to turn quickly to your left. I understand there was consideration. It was done, also, in the context that there may be an opportunity to move the Tidbinbilla Rural Fire Service shed. I was told that there may be consideration—

**Mr Barr:** You never let an opportunity go.

**MR SMYTH:** I was told that there may be consideration that both entrances might be co-located.

**Mr Barr:** There may have been, but it certainly never reached my desk. I will have a look and find out.

**MR SMYTH:** Why do you laugh at Tidbinbilla Rural Fire Service shed?

**Mr Barr:** I am not. It is just the sort of information you expect I might be able to retain!

**MS BURCH:** I am quite happy to put my question on notice if we go to a break.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that a bribe? Are you offering the chairman an inducement?

**THE CHAIR:** We will go to a break. We need to have a quick private meeting, so now might be a good time.

**Meeting adjourned from 3.56 to 4.20 pm.**

**Mr Barr:** Mr Chair, I understand we have a couple of things to bring back. These were questions that were taken on notice earlier.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. We will go to that, then we will go to Mr Doszpot's questions.

**Ms Davy:** Just in relation to Mr Doszpot's questions around the ad in the *Chronicle*, first of all, I can verify that, yes, the ads that are running have dates for events that have already occurred. Secondly, in terms of the cost of the *Chronicle* ad, it was \$2,367.07, including GST.

**THE CHAIR:** And the *Canberra Times* ad, do we have a figure on that?

**Ms Davy:** No, but—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, that was—

**THE CHAIR:** You might take that one on notice as well.

**Ms Davy:** Take that one on notice?

**Mr Barr:** The *Canberra Times* ad was the right one.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, confirm that as well.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What was the *Chronicle* ad again?

**MR SMYTH:** You did not yell at anyone to make it happen?

**Ms Davy:** It was \$2,367.07.

**THE CHAIR:** You did not wake up on the wrong side of the bed one morning, Andrew?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. Minister, the ACT Education Act 2004 states that education should aim to develop every child's potential and maximise educational achievement, improve the learning outcomes of students who are disadvantaged for a range of reasons and recognise the individual needs of children with disabilities. The ACT Discrimination Act 1991 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability in the area of education, as does the commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992. So, why does the special needs review that you have initiated specifically exclude children with a disability from the non-government sector?

**Mr Barr:** Well, the Shaddock review goes into the public provision of special education. The review that I am proposing and have put forward a suggested set of terms of reference for the Assembly committee to look at is around disability issues and covers the whole field.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Look, I do think there is obviously a major disagreement on this, but the fact I am trying to bring to your attention is that, in Mr Shaddock's very interesting discussion paper, in the second paragraph, he talks about opening the discussion paper by focusing on the legal basis for the education of students with a disability, and makes one simple point—that is, although it may appear somewhat uninspiring to consider future options in education with reference to existing legal obligations, the legal bottom line is a good place to start. So, taking his statement to underline what I have just been talking about—the requirements of the ACT Education Act 2004 and the ACT Discrimination Act—it does not leave you much room to exclude special needs children from the non-government sector.

**Mr Barr:** You misunderstand the basis—

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, I do not misunderstand.

**Mr Barr:** You fundamentally misunderstand the basis of the two reviews. The Shaddock review is into public education, with a particular focus—

**MR DOSZPOT:** A lot of the issues that happen—

**Mr Barr:** with a particular focus, Mr Doszpot, on issues that the private sector has no role in at all in that the sort of special education provision Mr Shaddock is looking at in particular in his review goes to the provision at the Woden school, Black Mountain, Cranleigh and Malkara.

**MR DOSZPOT:** But are you saying that children with a disability, children with special needs, in the non-government sector have different requirements from the ones in the government sector?

**Mr Barr:** In relation to those schools, very much so.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We are not talking about the schools; we are talking about their needs.

**Mr Barr:** We are talking about the students at Black Mountain, Woden, Malkara and Cranleigh, who have very different needs from students who have a disability in the non-government system. It is a matter of degree, Mr Doszpot—significantly higher needs students in those schools that are special education schools—

**MR DOSZPOT:** If I am misreading the situation, so are the people in the non-government areas, who are also concerned about this neglect of the non-government sector.

**Mr Barr:** If you are concerned about an apparent or an alleged neglect of students with a disability in non-government schools, I encourage you to support me in getting the Assembly committee into education to pick up the terms of reference that have now been sitting and waiting for that committee to take up. It was part of the Labor-Greens agreement that that inquiry would be completed by, I think, November this year. It is of some concern to me that we are now in May, and we will not be able to even get the committee on to it until June, if the admin and procedure committee bring forward to a vote the motion I brought in in April. If you want to see that go ahead, how about supporting me? How about the Liberal Party supports the Labor Party—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am not talking about trade-offs—

**Mr Barr:** to bring it forward, and we—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, I am not talking about trade-offs—

**Mr Barr:** can get on with addressing the issues you want to see addressed.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am talking, Mr Barr, about you having a look at the ACT Education Act, have a close look at it, and I think you will find—

**Mr Barr:** But, Mr Doszpot, that does not preclude the government from looking at its own service provision in any area of education. We are having an SBM review into public school education provision. That does not apply to the non-government system, and you are not quoting the Education Act at me in relation to the SBM review. I come back to the point: if you want to see progress, like me, in relation to issues that are confronted by students with a disability in the non-government system, you can do two things. Firstly, you can vote for this budget, because there is extra money that goes through the non-government schools equity fund directly to students with a disability in non-government schools. Secondly, you can vote with the government in support of the education committee of this Assembly conducting the inquiry along the lines of the terms of reference that I put forward in April that, through admin and procedure, it has been determined not to bring forward for debate.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, I state again what I said at the outset: you do have to look at the ACT Education Act, and I think you ought to get some advice on that from

legal people as to the exclusion of the non-government sector from this study. We are not talking specifically about—

**Mr Barr:** Mr Doszpot, you do not understand—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, I do not understand, okay.

**Mr Barr:** How many times do I have to explain this to you?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Well—

**Mr Barr:** If we are required by the Education Act that every inquiry and every review—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Not every inquiry. We are talking about a special needs inquiry.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** There is nothing in that inquiry—

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and I have one on the table waiting for this Assembly to pick up and go forward with.

**MR SMYTH:** What is unreasonable about Tony Shaddock doing additional work and looking at the non-government sector?

**Mr Barr:** The Shaddock review has a specific purpose that it was commissioned for, and that is to look at—

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. We often broaden reviews. Why not just ask him to take in the non-government schools?

**Mr Barr:** Because he has got a specific task that we want him to undertake.

**MR SMYTH:** Sure, but why not give him two specific tasks?

**Mr Barr:** We have a time line, and we would like him to deliver that.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, but what is wrong with just broadening it?

**Mr Barr:** And we have a parallel process—

**MR SMYTH:** What is wrong with just broadening it?

**Mr Barr:** Well, I am not going to just broaden it, because I want the Shaddock review—

**MR SMYTH:** Okay, we know you are being pig-headed, but why not just broaden it?

**Mr Barr:** I want the Assembly committee to look at these matters.

**MR SMYTH:** But you have not given a valid reason for not broadening it. It is not an unreasonable request, so you have got an expert in the field, he is doing an inquiry into the field of disability—

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and he has got a set of terms of reference, and I would like that work complete.

**MR SMYTH:** Why not look at a broader picture? Surely he can do the additional work as well?

**Mr Barr:** I think that is a statement I cannot agree with.

**MR SMYTH:** Why not?

**Mr Barr:** You are making assertions on what he may or may not be able to do, he and his team.

**MR SMYTH:** I know the man, and I know his team. He is very competent and he is very capable.

**Mr Barr:** He has been contracted for a piece of work. That piece of work we want to see completed. I go back to my original point: if you want to see progress on this matter, there are two things you can do: (1) vote for the budget; and (2) get on with this education committee inquiry.

**MR SMYTH:** Or (3) extend the review as suggested by Mr Doszpot.

**Mr Barr:** No, I am not doing that.

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. That is just being pig-headed: “I refuse to do it, because I don’t want to do it.” There is no logical reason for not extending it.

**Mr Barr:** There is no logical reason to extend it, when we have all these other—

**MR SMYTH:** You have got a review into the field of disability education in the ACT—

**Mr Barr:** Focused on some key special education provision that is not provided by non-government schools.

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. I hear what you are saying. But it does not mean—

**Mr Barr:** The sorts of students that Mr Shaddock is focusing his work on have no option—

**MR SMYTH:** So it is simply because you just do not want to do it that way.

**Mr Barr:** in the private system.

**MR SMYTH:** You want to do it a different way?

**Mr Barr:** We have got a process in train.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, and processes are often modified.

**Mr Barr:** And we are going that way. What I am suggesting to you and to Mr Doszpot is that, if you are so keen on the other work, which I genuinely believe you are, then support us in getting this other inquiry up.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr—

**MR SMYTH:** Why don't you support us in broadening the terms of reference on yours? It is very logical. This has been going on for months now. You could have broadened this. Work could have started by now.

**Mr Barr:** Well, I am not. I have put forward another process—

**MR DOSZPOT:** If you have a look at—

**Mr Barr:** You go with that or you don't.

**MR SMYTH:** Be it on your head.

**MR DOSZPOT:** If you have a look at Mr Shaddock's paper, page 3, continuing the conversation, the paragraph above that heading:

Thirdly, the Standards do not mention 'special education' or 'inclusion' or 'inclusivity'. The Standards simply state and re-state the fundamental right of a student with disability to participate in education *on the same basis* as a student without a disability.

Mr Barr, there is no reason not to have non-government schools included in this special needs study; none whatsoever.

**Mr Barr:** That is your statement.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is my statement, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, just before we move on, and Mr Doszpot has further questions, there seems to be confusion about whether or not the Greens-Labor agreement requires this and in what form. You are suggesting that the Greens-Labor agreement requires a committee inquiry into special needs to be completed by November. Is that your understanding?

**Mr Barr:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** There is no dispute about that?

**Mr Barr:** Well, Ms Bresnan might have a different view—

**THE CHAIR:** I am not putting questions to Ms Bresnan. That is a bit difficult. But there does seem to be a dispute. That seems to be at the heart of it. Your response to Mr Doszpot seems to be, “Well, this is what we’ve agreed, and it’s going to happen in this committee.”

**MR SMYTH:** Apparently we did not agree that.

**THE CHAIR:** That does not appear to be the case. I think from a committee member’s point of view, it is a little confusing as to exactly what is agreed. There is no black and white in the agreement? I have not looked at that particular provision.

**Mr Barr:** That is my understanding of it, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Well, Ms Hunter and Ms Bresnan are here; perhaps we can clarify it.

**Mr Barr:** They obviously cannot in the context of this.

**MS HUNTER:** No, it is inappropriate.

**MR SMYTH:** Of course they can.

**Mr Barr:** I have put forward a suggested terms of reference. The resolution to this is for the Assembly to debate during Assembly business in the next couple of sitting weeks. I think we should do that—

**MR DOSZPOT:** With all due respect to my colleagues in the Assembly—

**Mr Barr:** because we did not bring it on. It was deliberately overlooked for Assembly business in May.

**MR SMYTH:** Deliberately overlooked?

**Mr Barr:** It was.

**MR SMYTH:** So there is a conspiracy?

**Mr Barr:** Well, it was there to be debated, and it was deliberately overlooked.

**MR SMYTH:** You have got a member on that committee. How come you didn’t—

**Mr Barr:** She was outvoted, as I understand.

**MR SMYTH:** It was not deliberately overlooked then.

**MS BURCH:** Can we finish this?

**THE CHAIR:** Unless there are further questions—

**MR SMYTH:** The minister has raised a point. I am just asking for clarification on

whether his statement is true. I would hate for him to be misleading the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** Individual members of the committee are free in asking questions; a lot of people put assertions. If they feel they want to do that, they can. But it seems to me that Ms Bresnan and Ms Hunter do not want to enter into the debate here. So, if they are not going to, we will either—

**MS BRESNAN:** I don't know what is appropriate; sorry.

**THE CHAIR:** Look, you are free when asking questions of the minister to put things to him. You may wish to, but I will leave that to individual members.

**MR SMYTH:** I move they be given leave to make a statement to the committee.

**MS BURCH:** I am on that committee, and I would actually rather not, and your persistence after it was—

**MR SMYTH:** Why is everybody afraid to say where they stand on this thing? I am quite surprised.

**THE CHAIR:** We cannot force individual members—

**MS BURCH:** I find your persistence inappropriate, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** If an individual member wants to make a statement in relation to it, I would consider giving leave, but no-one is asking for it.

**Mr Barr:** Mr Chair, it might clarify things if I read from the parliamentary agreement.

**THE CHAIR:** Please.

**Mr Barr:** Education is 9; paragraph 9.1 states:

An inquiry into programs designed to close the achievement gap, and address unmet need for students with a disability. This should be completed within 12 months.

So, I would say—

**MR SMYTH:** It did not say “committee inquiry.

**Mr Barr:** An inquiry; so I would see—

**MR SMYTH:** So the government could conduct the inquiry.

**Mr Barr:** The government could, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** So what you said earlier is not correct, then.

**MS BURCH:** Chair, could we finish this?

**THE CHAIR:** Well, I do not think we have quite finished. Mr Barr is now clarifying—

**Mr Barr:** I have put forward an option, and we did discuss the best method to deliver these sorts of inquiries. The committee structure of the Assembly is seen as the best way.

**MR SMYTH:** So you are retracting what you said earlier. You said earlier that the agreement demands that there be a committee inquiry—

**Mr Barr:** The agreement demands an inquiry.

**MR SMYTH:** It does not say “committee inquiry”, which is what you said. You said the agreement demands a committee inquiry.

**Mr Barr:** I will check the *Hansard*

**MS BURCH:** I have got questions, and I have had for a few minutes now.

**Mr Barr:** If I have insinuated a committee inquiry, I withdraw that and replace it with the word “inquiry”.

**MR SMYTH:** Good.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, Ms Hunter, did you have a question in this area?

**MS HUNTER:** I have a question.

**MS BURCH:** And I have a question on disability.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, Mr Doszpot, are we finished?

**MR SMYTH:** Well, the minister is going to check the *Hansard* and withdrew “committee inquiry”, but he has been badgering Mr Doszpot to say there should be a committee inquiry. That is the whole basis of the matter.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I still would like an answer from the minister as to why the exclusion has occurred and why it cannot be fixed.

**Mr Barr:** Because I have commissioned the Shaddock work to look at government special education provision.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand that.

**Mr Barr:** Full stop.

**MR DOSZPOT:** But there is nothing to stop you from extending the terms of this inquiry.

**Mr Barr:** There is not, but I have chosen to take another path, and that is—

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is a different matter, okay.

**Mr Barr:** That path is to get the Assembly education committee to examine these matters. I believe it is—

**MR DOSZPOT:** So it is okay for the experts, Mr Barr, to look at one sector but, with all due respect to my—

**Mr Barr:** Are you suggesting that the education committee would not draw on the views of experts?

**MR DOSZPOT:** The education committee and the special needs committee that you set up are different.

**Mr Barr:** Okay, all right. So—

**MR DOSZPOT:** None of us—

**MS BURCH:** Thank you, Mr Doszpot.

**Mr Barr:** In future, Mr Doszpot, the work of Assembly committees is second rate to the work of—

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is not second rate.

**MR SMYTH:** That is not what he said.

**Mr Barr:** All right, okay.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is not second rate.

**MR SMYTH:** That is a dreadful—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am talking about the expertise of individual committee members—

**Mr Barr:** Why could not an Assembly committee draw on that expertise, Mr Doszpot?

**THE CHAIR:** We look forward to the appropriation to give extra resources to committees. I think we have probably dealt with this. Ms Burch has a question.

**MS BURCH:** It is a question on disability. As I was coming in, there was mention of the schools we have for high-need, high-end disabilities—Black Mountain and Woden. Can you talk about resources and numbers? How are those schools faring and responding to our community's needs?

**Ms Davy:** I might ask Dr Collis, who is the director of student services, to respond to that question.

**Dr Collis:** Can I just clarify the question again, talk around the—

**MS BURCH:** Around special needs schools. Just to talk around what sort of numbers of children are there.

**Dr Collis:** Sure, just allow me a little time. We have four special schools across ACT schools. There are two serving primary school students, being Malkara and Cranleigh, and we have two high school special schools, one being the Woden school and the other being Black Mountain school. The student populations in those schools have been fairly static over time, but they do vary. I can give you the exact numbers, but I will have to do that on notice, because they change.

**Ms Davy:** I have got the numbers here, if you would like. I can provide the numbers from the February 2009 census. Black Mountain school has 102 students; the Woden school has 75 students; Malkara has 86 students and Cranleigh has 65 students.

**MR SMYTH:** There are two other units? One at Turner and one at—

**Dr Collis:** Turner primary school is a cross between a special school and a regular school in that 25 per cent of the student population are, in fact, high-need students. The Turner school is quite a unique school in the sense that they work in pairs, so there is a mainstream class and a unit associated with each mainstream class. That is considered like a hybrid, if you like.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What about Duffy?

**MR SMYTH:** And there was another?

**Dr Collis:** No, those are the only ones. We have then a provision within our system for learning support units in all our schools, which also cater for high-needs students as well. So—

**MR DOSZPOT:** And Duffy is one of those schools?

**Dr Collis:** Duffy is one of those schools, yes.

**MS BURCH:** Back to Malkara, Cranleigh, Black Mountain and Woden, are there systems in place for transition out of high school?

**Dr Collis:** Out of high school into post-school options, into colleges and so forth?

**MS BURCH:** Colleges or just what happens to them after school?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, we have a post-schools options person who is employed to work with schools and families to look at developing post-school options into the individual learning plan. Clearly, the significant places there are our colleges, which are getting greater numbers of high-needs students. This a major component of Black Mountain, which deals deal with students to year 12, whereas the Woden school completes its student education at year 10.

**MS BURCH:** Are the programs on offer there comparable with other jurisdictions, and are staffing levels adequate? Is it difficult to get staffing?

**Dr Collis:** Staffing is always a difficulty in specialist areas. However, the staffing of the special schools are made on the basis of two allocations: one is the base allocation for the school and then, on top of that, the students attract an allocation based upon the student-centred appraisal-of-need process. That way the complexity of need that each student brings to the school is reflected in differential resourcing, but there is a base level in there. Now, in terms of comparison across jurisdictions, I think the Shaddock report will actually be looking at this in more detail. The last comprehensive look at that was done in late 2005 by the Allen Consulting Group, and my recollection of that was that ACT schools provision was the highest per capita funding for students in special schools.

**MS BURCH:** What about the link then to other services? How are parents and families supported? Is that part of the curriculum? Is that part of the structure?

**Dr Collis:** We are focusing on special school provision here?

**MS BURCH:** Yes.

**Dr Collis:** Yes, the individual learning plan is required to have a transition plan associated with it as students get older. That increasingly should include the access and networking with post-school options agencies and so forth. There is work just commenced between Disability ACT and the Department of Education and Training to ensure that we coordinate our post-school services much more closely. That work is in its infancy but is hopefully going to yield some outcomes over this career.

**MS HUNTER:** Dr Collis, you were talking about that work that is just commencing with DHCS and Disability ACT. My understanding is that there has been a little bit of a bottleneck at Black Mountain school as far as being able to move people on is concerned. There has not been the range of options that I think a lot of parents would like to see available for their children. What is the sort of time frame on that work, and does it include things like looking at employment in the ACT public service?

**Dr Collis:** It could, but it has not got to that level of detail at this point in time. It is true; the complexities faced by families of students with severe disabilities are quite enormous. The partnership with the community is absolutely paramount in getting the mix of things right. For instance, a family with a severely autistic young person really needs to be exploring whatever the post-schools options are as part of their curriculum quite early in the process. So that means coordination of services between Disability ACT, who have the charge of the broader disability area.

**MS HUNTER:** But there is also, I would assume, a role to play by all government departments if you are looking at employment.

**Dr Collis:** Sure.

**MS HUNTER:** So is that being coordinated through Disability ACT, or is there

another central way of championing to ensure that we are making available those employment opportunities where it is appropriate?

**Dr Collis:** Sure. We have a disability access action plan in the Department of Education and Training. Within that disability access action plan are some targets and figures about the employment of disabled people with disabilities and also a whole lot of outcomes about making the workplace welcoming and friendly to people with disabilities. So that would be one mechanism through that. However, I hope that as we drill down into more detail around the post-school options we will get public service on board in terms of things like work experience for some students with disabilities as it suits their plan.

**MS HUNTER:** What is the time frame on that work?

**Dr Collis:** I would think that there would need to be outcomes around this by the end of this year.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. Has there been a bit of an increase around year 9 at Woden special school, or has it remained relatively static? I can see the minister is checking his figures. I had heard that there was a slight rise in the numbers, and there was a bit of concern about whether there would be places available, for instance, for years 11 and 12 students over at Black Mountain school. Are you aware of this?

**Dr Collis:** I am aware not specifically of that situation, but I am aware of cohort differences. When talking about severe disability, one of the issues in terms of projection is that it is difficult to project ahead because it just does not follow a per capita basis scenario, so you can get big cohorts involved. As the minister mentioned before, the Shaddock team are actually looking at this kind of information and looking at providing advice about how we should position our special schools in the future in order that we may be able to cater for the needs of students in the coming years.

**MS HUNTER:** My last question was around the individual learning plans that are developed for each student and then reviewed annually. They obviously set out the sort of educational goals. Is there any overall monitoring to ensure that each child does have an individual learning plan, that they are being carried out, that they are being reviewed annually and so on? Is there any sort of audit that is done on this? I guess I am thinking that in just the last week we have heard about another ACT agency where plans were supposed to be in place, and, in fact, that has not been the case. I am just wondering how does the education department ensure that this actually happens?

**Dr Collis:** Schools report to us about the completion of all ILPs, and we report in the annual report that particular number. I have not got that number directly on me at the moment.

**MS HUNTER:** So you feel there is a monitoring system in place so that you are confident they are put in place and annually reviewed?

**Dr Collis:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Is there any satisfaction level, for instance, from parents about the plans being appropriate for their children? Is there any sort of testing that is done with parents on the plans set up for their children?

**Dr Collis:** Yes. The other measure we have is the measure of parent satisfaction, especially with services. That is collected in October of each year and reported on in the annual report. Within that, there is a headline question about general satisfaction. But there are also eight questions that sit under that which try to tease out where we are travelling in terms of how parents feel about how they were involved in the ILP process, how they feel the relationship and communication is with the school and so on. So we have that. We report against headline data and—

**MS HUNTER:** But you do have that other data underneath to get more information?

**Dr Collis:** We actually table that data before the special education reference group and also discuss what kind of strategies we might have to improve the survey, because the survey is subject to a reasonably low return rate at the moment, about 23 per cent, I believe. We are trying to get that up. But the special education reference group, which meets four times a year—in this year it will meet something like 10 times because of the review—is comprised of key stakeholders from the community and schools to do with the disability area.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can I just ask a question regarding your numbers. You have mentioned—

**THE CHAIR:** Have you got a supplementary question on this?

**MR SMYTH:** He's just pushy.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, Brendan.

**MR SMYTH:** No problem.

**THE CHAIR:** Go on, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** You have mentioned four schools that, in my estimation, add up to about 328 students from the numbers you have given us. Now, my understanding is that, in addition to those students, there are another 1,456 children with special needs in government schools. Is that correct? And there are 411, by the way, in the non-government sector. So, my question is, are the 1,456 students in the government sector excluded from this study as well?

**Dr Collis:** No. Is this the special review we are talking about, is that right?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Dr Collis:** No, the special education review is looking at curriculum compatibility for students who receive special education provision within the Department of Education and Training.

**Ms Davy:** Which is the total number of the 1,784 students in the census that we have in government schools.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That was my understanding.

**Ms Davy:** One element of it will obviously be the provision in our special schools, but the other important element will be the provision in terms of our early learning units and the mainstreaming of students with special needs in all of our classes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I do understand that. What I am trying to get at is why, then, is there such an exclusion from the non-government schools? If you were talking about the four special schools you have mentioned where there are a significant numbers of people with disability, I can understand that there would be a separation of requirements. But if you are also taking into account the 1,456 students and the pedagogy and all the other things you have mentioned—

**Mr Barr:** Pedagogy.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am sorry, it is my ethnic background, Mr Barr, but thank you for reminding me.

**Mr Barr:** No, that is all right.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am asking—

**Mr Barr:** Dr Foskey called it “pedagoggy” last estimates.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** I just advised her of the correct—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay, any other slurs you want to throw in while you are at it?

**Mr Barr:** Steve, grow up, mate.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I cannot quite see the logic of excluding the non-government schools from the total numbers of special needs children.

**Dr Collis:** The issue as I see it is that this review is about pedagogy in curriculum. As to the capacity to influence pedagogy in curriculum in non-government schools, that is outside my purvey.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** After the Paralympics in 2000, the government purchased six disability buses that were available. Are they still in service? Have they been replaced? Are they still being used?

**Dr Collis:** I would have to take that on notice.

**Ms Davy:** We will take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Budget paper 4, page 365, deals with early learning and development programs. It has been a long day, so we may have touched on this already but, if not, do you want to tell us a bit about how we are progressing in that area and any changes and innovations in the programs we offer?

**Ms Davy:** I might call Kathy Melsom forward. Is it that you are particularly interested in the early childhood schools or in—

**MS BURCH:** Yes, in early childhood schools.

**Ms Davy:** So you would be aware that we have four early childhood schools starting this year at Southern Cross, Narrabundah, Lyons and Isabella Plains. Kathy can give you the details in terms of the services they are providing and the number of students that we have in each.

**Ms Melsom:** The early childhood schools have continued to increase their enrolment. Whilst not to the same extent as earlier in the year, we are still seeing children relocating into those schools, whether it be from other jurisdictions or from existing schools into the early childhood schools. So they are clearly offering an attractive alternative for families. Some of that would be as a consequence of the childcare facilities that are also provided in those schools, and as the schools have been constructed so the childcare facilities have been opening up. At the moment we have childcare facilities at Southern Cross and at Isabella. The childcare facility at Narrabundah is anticipated to open in July of this year. Lyons is expected to open its childcare facility in October of this year. So we might still see that shift, some of that movement.

The enrolments in the early childhood schools I think are particularly positive for schools that are a new model and that have just got underway this year, and especially that is evidenced through the preschool enrolments. That has been quite significant. I think it was mentioned earlier in discussion here that there were some lower level numbers in the other groups of students.

**MS BURCH:** Yes.

**Ms Melsom:** That continues to be the case.

**MS BURCH:** The thinking is that you enrol them in preschool and then they will follow through?

**Ms Melsom:** Absolutely, yes.

**Mr Barr:** Childcare even, and then into preschool and then on.

**Ms Melsom:** So that is occurring already. We are liaising with both Health and DHCS and community service providers to engage with them around meeting the needs of children and families, both within the schools and in surrounding schools and the environment. Health have commenced some parent programs at Narrabundah early childhood school. There are playgroups operating out of these schools, particularly Narrabundah and now Southern Cross. The community is using the facilities after hours as well, and we expect all of those to continue to grow and develop.

**MS BURCH:** You made mention of other services and programs around the broader early childhood development and family care. Can you tell us a bit about those—how they come into the school and how they move through the school environment?

**Ms Melsom:** The school facilities at both Narrabundah and Southern Cross are designed to have clinical consultation rooms for health services. It is the intent to use those to provide immunisation services for children in those settings and other health services, health checks for children and various health programs for community. Southern Cross facility is still under construction, so those rooms have not yet been completed. Narrabundah's are, and, as I said, the nurses are already working out of Narrabundah and making that connection with communities and moving their programs into that environment.

**MS BURCH:** So little ones enrolled in other schools can come in and access—

**Ms Melsom:** Yes, they can. So it is broader than just the immediate school community. Out of Narrabundah we already have a connection with Winnunga Nimmitjiah, who provide hearing checks for Indigenous children, because the Koori preschool is also attached to that Narrabundah school. That is a long-established relationship, and that continues, of course. Marymead have commenced liaison with both Southern Cross and Narrabundah primary schools to look at the provision of their programs from those particular school sites. Those programs are always determined by the need of the community. What we were endeavouring to do here was not to dictate to the community what particular programs would go in, but, rather, harvest that response from the community and, therefore, turn it around the other way, if you like, and work from a community base to meet their needs. So that work is being done.

There is a coordinator within each of the schools, and their role is to carry out that direct liaison between the school and the broader communities and the service providers within the immediate vicinity.

**MS BURCH:** And that could be NGO providers?

**Ms Melsom:** Yes, absolutely.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, with non-government education, there is the money granted to non-government schools and then there is the sort of departmental money, I suppose, or the money spent in the output class. In the output class 2.1 on page 363 of

BP4 we see the total cost and the government payment for outputs going down roughly \$340,000 in both cases from the estimated outcome of this year going into next year's budget. What is the reason for that?

**Mr Whybrow:** Could I point you to page 391. The reason for that is that there is a one-off activity in 2008-09, which relates to the national assessment program, which is worth \$380,000.

**THE CHAIR:** So in real terms it is going up slightly; is that right?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. More broadly, on the funding of non-government schools by the ACT government, what is the proportion now? It has gone up slightly in this year; I do not know what it is in real terms. In terms of the percentages we look at with the ordinary cost of educating a child in the government system versus—we know that the commonwealth contributes, I think, in the vicinity of 50 per cent per student. We have been in the sort of 16, 17 per cent range, I think, and then the rest is made up in fees. What is the current status of that?

**Mr Whybrow:** The current calculation for 2009-10 is 18.7 per cent.

**THE CHAIR:** And that takes into account both that figure in the output class plus the actual grants; is that combining both those two figures?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** If you discount the \$1.5 million, what is the figure?

**Mr Whybrow:** I do not have that calculation.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mr Whybrow:** You are talking about the \$2.5 million?

**THE CHAIR:** I am talking about the money in output class—

**Mr Barr:** I think you are suggesting that if you exclude the amount that the department appropriates for administration—

**THE CHAIR:** Correct.

**Mr Whybrow:** Okay.

**Mr Barr:** and adjust the direct cash grants to schools, obviously it would be less than 18.7, but you would then have to do that by way of comparison in every other jurisdiction to get a like comparison.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. So it is at 18.7, roughly. Minister, what is the view of the government? The government has, in the past, I think, had the view that it would

maintain funding roughly where it is in real terms. Is that still the position going forward?

**Mr Barr:** I think the evidence would be that we have increased funding. We have certainly been asked on a number of occasions to commit to a 25 per cent target. We will not do that, but we have been in discussion with the non-government school sector around looking at the Australian average as an aspirational target.

**THE CHAIR:** Which is standing now at?

**Mr Barr:** I would have to check; it changes every year, obviously, depending on allocations in other state and territory budgets.

**THE CHAIR:** It was in the low 20s, from memory, was it not?

**Mr Barr:** It might have been higher teens—right on about 20 per cent, from memory.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mr Barr:** But it would depend on which year you put in that data. It varies across, and budget by budget, depending on initiatives in particular jurisdictions. That was a more reasonable target to work towards, recognising, of course, that this is one of the more privileged communities in Australia and that the commonwealth government provides differential funding for schools on that basis.

**THE CHAIR:** Just on a more specific issue in terms of non-government schools, I understand there was an issue some time ago around the ability of non-government schools to advertise in government preschools about their enrolments and things. What is the status at the moment?

**Mr Barr:** I understand that there is a possibility for reciprocal arrangements, if brochures can be made available for all sorts of schools in all sorts of settings. My understanding was that, if the Catholic Education Office and the independent schools agreed to have government school promotional material in their schools, the reciprocal arrangements worked well.

**THE CHAIR:** Have reciprocal arrangements been entered into?

**Mr Barr:** I am not aware that—

**Ms Davy:** On an individual school basis there would be.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, certainly in some of the shared campuses that might be the case.

**Ms Davy:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Mr Smyth, have you got a follow-up on this?

**MR SMYTH:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** I am done with this. Unless anyone else has more on non-government schools at the moment, I will go to Ms Le Couteur then I will come to Mr Smyth.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you. I believe there is a lot of research which says that if kids are more active it is better for their health. So I am interested in what the education department does to support this. One program I am aware of is the walking school bus, although, I must admit, I am not sure if it is the education department that funds that or if it is community services.

**THE CHAIR:** I think P&Cs do that, don't they?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was going to say there is definitely some government funding. I am not quite sure who did it.

**Mr Barr:** I think it is DHCS.

**Ms Davy:** It is DHCS.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Given that you are not involved with that, are there any programs along those lines—

**Mr Barr:** Thank you for asking.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** that you are involved with?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, a new initiative last year was the creation of the Children's Physical Activity Foundation, and you will see in this year's budget a further ACT government contribution to the work of the foundation to the tune of \$300,000. The Children's Physical Activity Foundation has provided the support for schools to deliver the first year of the minister's physical activity challenge. I can advise that that program will soon kick off for its second year.

Last year over 13,000 students from 47 different primary schools participated. In its first year I was pretty encouraged by that level of participation across government and non-government schools. That is a particular initiative that is supported by the foundation, providing not only a practical, on-the-ground program for schools but also resources through a grants program that was then supplemented through my sport and recreation portfolio, through the support and recreation grants as well.

We looked at a number of areas: firstly, grants directly to schools to deliver programs, then grants to sporting organisations to deliver programs in partnership with schools, then the third element of our approach here—this goes to some of the Australian school-based apprenticeships that we are offering at a college level—is, in fact, to have college students undertake their certificate II, certificate III work and work with our primary schools in the delivery of these sorts of programs.

So there are a number of things practically that we are doing in terms of programs. We have also supported additional PE coordinators across each of the school districts that provide support in terms of delivering programs in schools and working with teachers in schools as well to train up on the delivery of particular programs, and we

support organisations like Bluearth and others who come in and provide programs.

It has certainly been an area of renewed emphasis. I would refer you to the get a move on policy initiative that is available on the education department website and on my website. It outlines the direction. We are really in the second year of that particular program initiative, and it is a series of exciting developments. I will acknowledge one of my predecessors in this portfolio, Mr Stefaniak, who made a particular move around mandating a minimum time within the curriculum for physical activity. We are seeking to build on that commitment by strengthening the range of programs, but also recognising that it is not just during the school time that kids need to be active. That is why these initiatives are targeted also at lunch times, recess and after-school and weekend activities.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. I am looking at things like the walking school bus. I am looking at targeting activities with a number of aims. The kids have to go to school somehow, so reducing the amount of driving to school and turning it into something that is hopefully enjoyable and good for the environment and good for the kids' health, like the walking school bus. Is there anything that you do—I am hearing there is nothing the education department does on that? Nothing for cycling?

**Mr Barr:** Education itself, no, but through other portfolios there are programs. Obviously, infrastructure is pretty crucial in order to safely get to school. Clearly, that is an initiative that Labor and the Greens are jointly working on around increased bicycle lane provision and maintenance. There are a number of initiatives supported through the schools as communities program, and we have just recently opened another grants round for that this year. So there is the possibility for school communities to apply for funding through that particular model and then through a range of community sector organisations who do deliver programs as practical as the walking school bus, as you have identified. But there is a range of other options, obviously, available.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Just to finish off, do you have figures as to how kids get to school? I assume that you do have figures as to how kids get to school. I do not actually know them myself.

**Mr Barr:** We have some data on bus travel. We obviously have data in relation to whether students live in the priority enrolment area of their school. That would also give you some indication as to the distance travelled to get to a particular school. Otherwise, though, we would not have exact data on the number of trips that are taken in a car as opposed to on a bike or—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you probably could not say, then, what the impact of school closures would be on how kids get to school. Presumably it would be less than it would be if they could walk or ride?

**Mr Barr:** No, given that overall we knew prior to school closures that 50 per cent of students did not attend their local school. We had some pretty sure data on the number of kids who were in the local area of that school who were bypassing it to go somewhere else. We also had data in relation to some schools that closed. In fact, the majority of the student population were not local but were actually travelling to that

school, and Tharwa is the classic example of that. There were more students who travelled further to get to Tharwa; out of its population of 25, about 13 or 14 were travelling past a number of other schools to drive all the way out to Tharwa to go to that school. So, we knew in that context. I think it was—

**THE CHAIR:** You have got a choice in education!

**Mr Barr:** Thirteen or 14 of the 25.

**MR SMYTH:** But they did it for a specific reason.

**Mr Barr:** They did it for a specific reason and they—

**MR SMYTH:** Which is now denied to them.

**Mr Barr:** got a lovely taxpayer subsidy of twice the amount of money spent on their kids than any other—

**MR SMYTH:** Some were special needs kids who did not fit into any other schools.

**Mr Barr:** kids in the system.

**MR SMYTH:** It was cruel and it was inhumane.

**Mr Barr:** That was entirely inequitable. It was the sort of indulgence—

**MR SMYTH:** What, that somebody needs special resources for their child?

**Mr Barr:** that an education system that is struggling to provide for other needs should not be engaged in.

**MR SMYTH:** It is disgraceful.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Leaving Tharwa alone, can I suggest that in the future, given that one of the things the ACT education department is trying to look at is environmental impact, we start collecting statistics on how your students get there. We do it for other things. For adults going to their school—called work—we do it.

**Mr Barr:** Well, the ABS does it.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The ABS does it, yes.

**Mr Barr:** Sure, and maybe we could see through that sort of data collection. I am not sure that the ACT will get into the business of surveying every single person who attends a school about how they get there. That would be a pretty costly exercise, I would have thought.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, and then Mr Doszpot.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you, Mr Chair. On page 373 of budget paper No 4, the amounts

that were put to the department in the second and third appropriations, has the \$25,000 estimated for this year for the roof at Turner primary been spent?

**Mr Barr:** If not, you had better do it by 30 June.

**Mr Bray:** The works have commenced there. I am not sure about how much has actually been expended to date, but my staff are aware that we are targeting a quick and fast delivery of that project. I would believe that we would be. I mean, \$25,000 is not a lot of money. That would be expended pretty fast in 2008-09.

**MR SMYTH:** Can you confirm how much of the \$25,000 and whether or not you have drawn forward any of the \$725,000?

**Mr Whybrow:** We do fortnightly reports on this to the Treasurer, because it is second and third appropriation items. While I do not have those figures in front of me, my recollection of the last report was that it was over \$25,000. It was something in the order of \$40,000 on that particular project.

**MR SMYTH:** Good. That is well done. The second line there is, of course, business improvement, which was \$1.6 million. What progress has been made on expending those funds this year?

**Mr Bray:** That is for a fit-out at 220 Northbourne. We are looking at moving into that site on 12 June. Currently, I think, in that report I was talking about something in the order of around \$200,000 has been spent to date. That is the cash impact, but the project will be completed by 12 June and the majority of the funds will be spent.

**MR SMYTH:** The third appropriation, replace stormwater and sewer pipes, stage 1. Will the 400K be spent this year?

**Mr Bray:** Yes, it will be.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. Will you draw forward on the \$2 million?

**Mr Bray:** No. At this stage we are working on the basis that we will just be expending the amount that was appropriated for 2008-09. We do not want to put the Treasurer under pressure of advancing funds any faster. We have awarded our contracts based on that cash flow.

**MR SMYTH:** On a 1 July start?

**Mr Bray:** No. We have started work already. That is money that is allocated 2008-09 and 2009-10. We are targeting to spend the amount of money in 2008-09 as per the allocation.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. So the 400 will be spent by 30 June?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** And then we will get into the \$2 million?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** The roof access system, \$700,000 this year?

**Mr Bray:** Again, we are actually going faster than that. But, again, we are awarding the works in such a manner that we will expend the money allocated in 2008-09. There will be contracts in place. It does not mean we do not stop. It is just that the bills will arrive in July. So, again, we will expend all that money.

**MR SMYTH:** Good. The asbestos removal?

**Mr Bray:** Yes, again, asbestos removal, that is going faster than we expected. We have actually been expending that quite fast, because Dickson college has a large amount of asbestos that we are working on removing at the moment. But, again, that money will all be spent as cash flow in 2008-09.

**MR SMYTH:** All right, and then into the \$2.5 million next year?

**Mr Bray:** Yes. That will be fully expended in the next financial year.

**MS HUNTER:** How many schools do we still have that have asbestos that needs to be removed?

**Mr Bray:** It is 107.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, most of them.

**MS HUNTER:** Most of them?

**Mr Barr:** Pretty much every building in Canberra that was built before—

**MS HUNTER:** Certainly, but I thought we had started this program a while ago.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** But large buildings—extensive use of asbestos means a big project on each building?

**Mr Bray:** Look, the problem with asbestos is that it is in so many different materials, but it is quite safe unless someone has a reason to touch it. It is very hard to get to the point where you can actually say you have removed it all from a building because you do not know what is behind the walls; you do not know what is under the floors. Dickson college had a particularly bad problem with its gymnasium. We have decided to get all of it—well, as much as we can see will be removed. That is what we are focusing a lot of our effort on right now. Dickson college is very much a building site at the moment around that area.

**MS HUNTER:** I am well aware of that.

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** It is safe?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** You are quite sure that all safety precautions are taken?

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Because this is work that is being conducted during school term?

**Mr Bray:** We have very stringent requirements about how we carry out that work. Obviously, with a school being occupied, we have an independent laboratory that has air monitoring equipment installed. The actual asbestos removal occurs mostly after hours, on weekends or on school holidays. We have a whole series of processes that create separation, both in distance and in time. We have independent laboratories monitoring the processes so it is, again, a second independent voice to tell us that everything is going to plan; it is all being done to the right standard. They issue the clearance certificate. No-one goes back in until the laboratory tells us that it is clear and safe.

**MS HUNTER:** With this 107, has it been programmed out over the next so many years?

**Mr Bray:** No.

**MS HUNTER:** Or is that a little bit hard to do because until you get in there you do not realise the extent of how far you have to go or how big the job is?

**Mr Bray:** What we have prepared for every site is a hazardous materials survey management plan. That is, again, prepared by consultants. That report is updated about every three years. A copy of it is then given to each school so that school holds it as a register. It shows everything that we can find or the consultant can find. Again, he or she does not know what is behind the walls, areas that they cannot get access to. But, generally, in the building industry when you know where something is, it is an indicator that there is something beyond it as well. If you find a certain material here, there is a good chance there is another material behind that wall. So the industry understands those sorts of risks and those indicators.

The program we have developed at the moment for the appropriation—in 2008-09 we have targeted five schools: Dickson college, Lyneham high, north Curtin preschool, south Curtin preschool and Caroline Chisholm school. Now, depending how the funds go with completing those works, we will then determine how much more we can do in the next run of schools that we have identified. The criteria for how we develop the program is about the level of risk with the asbestos.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. Is that based on age or is it based on—

**Mr Bray:** No, based on the material. If it is what we call friable asbestos, which is the

most dangerous, depending on how accessible that might be to students and teachers, it raises its risk level even higher. If it is in a contained plant room where the children and staff do not ever go into and it is a locked room and is only entered by the building services officer who knows that it is in there, then it is a very controlled environment and there is very low risk, whereas if it was material in an exposed area that could be damaged, that is where we go in and remove that rapidly as soon as we find it.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, you used the number 107 schools. Did you mean 107 buildings?

**Mr Bray:** No, 107 schools. What that means is within those schools there is asbestos-containing materials.

**MR SMYTH:** We have been using the number of 83 schools.

**Mr Bray:** No. We count—

**Mr Barr:** We include preschools.

**Mr Bray:** Yes, that is right.

**Mr Barr:** There is another 80-odd—

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. Somehow I just thought you had picked up extra responsibility. I was wondering if you were getting a pay rise.

**Mr Barr:** It goes to this wonderful definition of what is a school.

**MR SMYTH:** That may be true too.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, I want to go to budget paper 4, the second appropriation grant for school parent groups. Has every parent group now received their entitlement?

**Ms Davy:** I just need to check. I think we were still waiting for two schools. Has that been finalised—their bank details?

**Mr Whybrow:** All the schools that have provided their details have been paid. I will just check. We were waiting on a couple of schools—or P&Cs or parents and friends groups—who had not provided those details as yet. But all the ones that have been provided have been paid.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, you are, I think, aware of the situation at Caroline Chisholm, where funds were promised to both the senior and the junior campus.

**Mr Barr:** There has certainly been some confusion over the nature of that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes. Has that been rectified yet?

**Mr Barr:** My understanding is that, yes, it has.

**MR DOSZPOT:** To the satisfaction of Chisholm?

**Ms Davy:** Yes, it has, to the satisfaction of both the P&C presidents and the school principal. It was a department administrative error. We sent out two letters when we should have sent out one to the different sites. We have made good on the promise of supporting the costs incurred in their planning for the school canteen upgrade.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can I commend you for that, because there are two separate campuses and I think they both deserve it. Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** So they both got the money or one got the money and the other got something else?

**Mr Barr:** The latter.

**MR SMYTH:** Could we have a detail of the something else—what the value of it was?

**Ms Davy:** Yes, sure. The exact detail—the school has had confirmed that it will get the \$15,000 P&C grant, which all schools have got. They had plans because they had a letter—a second letter on the second campus—expecting they would get a second \$15,000 grant. They had not made plans, as I understand it, to do some upgrades of their canteen area and purchase some ovens and a new fridge. I do not know the exact detail. We have promised that we will cover any costs that they will incur up to that \$15,000 limit in terms of completing that work. As I said, both P&C presidents and the school principal are quite satisfied with that arrangement.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. I have a supplementary. In terms of the problems that schools are experiencing with the recruitment to school boards, what is the latest situation there? I believe there was some talk about funding school boards.

**Mr Barr:** I indicated that, as part of the consideration around the review of school-based management, we could look at the issue of whether there were barriers to participation for some parents, most particularly around perhaps there being some costs that would be incurred to attend night-time meetings. I know a number of organisations who provide assistance to people with things like childcare so that they can participate in those sorts of activities. It was somewhat misleadingly or mischievously reported in the *Canberra Times* as a suggestion that we were going to pay school board members like directors of companies, even though halfway through the article there is a direct quote from me indicating that that was not the government's intention. I have answered a question on this, I believe, in the Assembly as well.

Let me restate so that everyone is clear. The issue I was raising was the possibility that schools may need to look at what sorts of provisions they could make or assistance they could provide if there were identified barriers to participation for some parents. The example I have used, and I think it is an entirely relevant one, is that, if school board meetings are going to be in the evenings, it would be worth schools considering, particularly if they are struggling to get parental availability, what sort of

childcare provision might be able to be provided.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am glad I have given you the opportunity to clear that up.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is all from me.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, you would remember that in the 2006 estimates there was discussion about bullying. As a consequence of that, some guidelines were put in place. I understand the education committee was going to monitor and report regularly. Can you update the committee on the effectiveness of the guidelines that you have put in place? In particular, has there been a trend down in the number of incidents of bullying in ACT government schools since the advent of your guidelines?

**Mr Barr:** There has. The last data I saw would relate to the end of last year. We do require public schools to report on this. There is not a similar provision for non-government schools, although I have raised this as a possibility with the Non-Government Schools Education Council. We do collect that data. I will have to take on notice whether we have figures now for the first term of 2009, but the trends were down.

Just to update the committee, I have taken the opportunity to get the Youth Advisory Council to also work with the Safe Schools Taskforce in relation to some new initiatives and to get a direct student view. Now that I have the youth portfolio, I have the Youth Advisory Council. One of the areas where I thought they could make a very constructive contribution was in relation to the work of the Safe Schools Taskforce. I will see if we have got the first-term data. Certainly, the trend from late 2007 onwards was for a reduction in the number of incidents.

**MR SMYTH:** Inside that data, is there a division between serious and less serious incidents?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there is.

**MR SMYTH:** Have both declined?

**Mr Barr:** That is my understanding, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** The New South Wales department—I think it is the New South Wales education department—has recently put out some advisory material on what is called sexting.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. I think you need only watch *Four Corners* to get a bit of an indication of what that is about.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that something you are likely to do, given that mobile phones are almost dress of the day for kids day these days?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed.

**MR SMYTH:** What work are we doing in—

**Mr Barr:** We are certainly very happy to look at that New South Wales government—

**MR SMYTH:** So it has not been considered at this stage?

**Mr Barr:** I have no problem with looking at exactly what they have done.

**MR SMYTH:** Is it a problem in the ACT and is it something that we have to address?

**Mr Barr:** I will just say that I have not had it regularly brought to my attention that this is a major, major issue, but I would have no doubt that, in the context of 60,000 kids interacting every day in all of our schools, there would be a bit of this going on. We have to be realistic about that.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you for that. But it is slightly larger than that. Perhaps Ms Davy—just the general use of mobile phones and their contribution to some of the more interesting—not just sexual activity but violence and—

**Mr Barr:** We do have a policy around mobile phone usage in schools.

**Ms Davy:** I was just going to mention that it is an issue which has been raised at the Safe Schools Taskforce and it is something that we are working on with the AFP and the Youth Advisory Council members who have joined us over the last couple of months on that. It is on our agenda to have a look at, to see what other states and territories are doing. But, as the minister has said, it has not been raised as a big issue within our schools at this point in time.

**MR SMYTH:** Finally, I understand that Caroline Chisholm high school went into lockdown, probably a month ago, on what may have been thought to have been a kidnapping. You would be aware that there have been several attempted abductions. I understand that it turned out to be a false alarm. But are incidents of lockdown reported to you and are they in the statistics that you will provide to the committee?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, they are. There is a requirement for schools to provide immediate verbal advice, and then a written report within 24 hours. Each of those comes across my desk.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that trending down? Obviously it does not happen very often.

**Mr Barr:** I will double-check the figures, but I see them. They are emailed to me virtually straightaway and then I get a formal written brief not long after. I still have some—I do not deny that—but they are certainly not of the same frequency that might have been the case two or three years ago.

**MR SMYTH:** One more question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Could I ask a supplementary after you?

**MR SMYTH:** Are there any criminal charges being put forward by the AFP or the DPP as a result of activities at schools?

**Mr Barr:** We would have to check with the AFP in answer to that.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** Within the data you collect around bullying, are you also collecting information on how many schools are using techniques like restorative justice and how effective that is?

**Ms Davy:** Certainly all of our schools in one way or other pick up some support practices and programs in relation to the principles of restorative justice. There are a number of programs that are called different things which follow the same sorts of concepts. The blue ribbon restorative practices and restorative justice program runs in quite a number of our schools; we would be happy to provide you with the information about that.

**MS HUNTER:** That would be great. I know that not that long ago there were concerns from parents, schools and the education department around the rising numbers of parents or students who are taking out AVOs and how schools were trying to manage this particular situation. Is that still of concern? Where are we up to on that?

**Ms Davy:** Again, we would need to come back to you with the data, but it is my understanding that we are not trending up in that area. Part of the issue is that we do not get informed as a natural course around that process. We have certainly been talking to JACS around some of the ways that we can have better communication around managing some of those AVO-protection order processes.

**MS HUNTER:** Though the individual schools would be told, wouldn't they, because obviously it has an implication for how they manage their students?

**Ms Davy:** That is right.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a supplementary on Mr Smyth's question on bullying. Is cyberbullying included in that exercise? Is that a major problem at the moment through schools?

**Ms Davy:** Not a major problem, no.

**Mr Barr:** Obviously there are incidents from time to time, and there are certain social networking sites. I use Facebook, but I understand that is for older kids. Bebo and MySpace are the more popular ones for school-aged kids. There are those sorts of issues from time to time. There have been some very high-profile ones interstate that I

am sure people are aware of. One of the things that I particularly want the Youth Advisory Council to focus on is the prevalence of those sorts of social networking sites and how that can have an impact in terms of bullying in schools.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** I know that a number of schools block those sites and make it difficult to access some of them.

**Ms Davy:** Yes. There is a consistent policy of blocking—system blocking—of certain sites. Then it is more about the requirement to unblock if they can be used for educational purposes.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter and then Mr Smyth.

**MS HUNTER:** Minister, I want to go to an article that appears in the *Canberra Times* on 18 April. It was regarding the new school reporting system that was coming into place. You were reported in that article as saying:

... positive aspects—

around the new system—

included the Department of Education being able to clearly identify schools which were succeeding and those which needed assistance through better funding or more experienced teachers.

I was wondering where that appears in the budget around addressing that—that this new system will show up those that maybe need a bit more assistance or need more experienced teachers?

**Mr Barr:** The national partnership, COAG.

**MS HUNTER:** So that is where you put in extra funds to provide for that assistance?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly a number of those national partnerships provide those opportunities.

**Ms Davy:** If I could elaborate, minister.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** I can elaborate, minister. Probably more than the national partnership is the underlying national education agreement, so the adjustment we have within the base from commonwealth funding, because as part of that national education agreement we have all agreed across states and territories and the commonwealth to sign up to some principles of greater national reporting and consistency of school reporting nationally.

In relation to the process in terms of where we are going to go with this in schools, it is really embedded within our current practice at the moment in terms of the nature of

our school improvement work, in terms of our literacy and numeracy strategy. One of the things we talked about in terms of literacy and numeracy was our requirement that we are going to ask schools to identify or set particular targets for student literacy and numeracy in the future. The level of data we get from NAPLAN and other resources will allow us to provide that information to schools in a more accurate way.

The big picture agreement that ministers have agreed to in terms of national reporting is around a national website for schools. There is no cost built into our budget around that, because that will be managed by ACARA, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, and it is funded separately by the Australian government.

**MS HUNTER:** Ms Davy, I understand that this national website will have profiles of each school, will have their NAPLAN results. Other parts of the school will be included there and then there will be some sort of links around what are the comparable schools across Australia that you can have a look at. I know you have said that this new body will be setting that up and organising that, but what are the sort of knock-on costs to the ACT? Obviously each school will need to maintain their profile page and so on. Can you see that there will be costs?

**Ms Davy:** No, schools will not be required to maintain any pages. There will be a national website managed by ACARA.

**MS HUNTER:** So they will just email their information to it?

**Ms Davy:** Again, schools will not be required to do that. It will be a responsibility that jurisdictions will take. With NAPLAN data, for example, we already provide the data sets to the curriculum corporation to produce the national report. We do that on behalf of our schools. I would imagine it would be a similar thing in the future in terms of providing data from our schools on their population, student numbers et cetera. We already do that in the reverse for our schools every year so they can do their school annual board reports. We provide each school with a data sheet which actually gives them the information about—we have done the scope from MAZE—and so we can say that this is how many students you have got at this point in time, these are your last NAPLAN results, this is your number of qualified teachers et cetera. So they can use that data set to actually produce their annual school board report. We do the reverse for ACARA.

**Mr Barr:** What I can do—because we have got copies now—is provide the committee with the draft template for what the website will look like.

**MS HUNTER:** What will be on those profiles.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. Probably the most significant thing that will be different from what is already included in the ACT school board annual reports is funding sources for schools. For the first time, all schools will be asked to declare their funding from government, from fees and from other sources. That is a significant step forward in terms of transparency around ensuring that all schools in the government and the non-government sector are fully transparent in identifying where all their funding is coming from.

**MS HUNTER:** With this template, I guess what I am sort of getting at are the NAPLAN results around reading, writing, literacy and numeracy. Of course, a school provides a lot more in that it is quite a rich experience. Will these profiles include that sort of element?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. There is provision in the draft for information provided by the school.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay, so the school will have to draft up something to send through, but your view is it is not going to be too onerous?

**Mr Barr:** Well, in consultation with the department. But there is the provision, of course, for a link from the ACARA website directly to the department website and to the school website.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. Minister, are you quite comfortable that the websites and so on, the way they are doing this, will not lead to league tables being pooled together and then a sort of stigmatisation of schools. Recently, a list has come out in Tasmania—

**Mr Barr:** The Hobart *Mercury* produced a table of sorts—

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, indeed.

**Mr Barr:** not based on this national work, because that has not been done yet. They produced it off the back of what was publicly available currently. If a journalist at the *Canberra Times* wanted to download every annual report from every school in the territory, they could construct some sort of table. It would be an interesting analysis. It would be the work of the *Canberra Times*, not the education department. The one figure that I saw in the Hobart *Mercury* that you could construct a league table on would be student attendance, because that is reported as a percentage within each of our annual board reports. So you could rank schools based on who has the highest attendance levels to the lowest. That option is available.

Under our FOI laws, prior to their amendment in this Assembly and certainly beyond it, there is a whole range of information that could be sought by a media outlet. Today, the *Canberra Times* have shown a slightly different editorial bent than News Ltd papers in relation to this issue. So I do not think there is anything significant in terms of the new transparency and accountability agenda that will make it easier for media organisations to do that work—I suppose having stuff on one website rather than having to click on each individual school website, but it is still 83 clicks. You still have to do it on the ACARA website as opposed to 83 clicks off the DET website at this point.

**MS HUNTER:** But you would have some strategy or be developing some strategy, understanding that that is likely. The Hobart *Mercury* has done it—

**Mr Barr:** It could happen and obviously we would seek to respond at a political level. It is difficult—I am just speculating—because I have no idea what sort of option. In fact, I can hand it out right now. I just advise the committee that this is the draft—it will go for final approval to MCEETYA in June—but it will give you the idea of the

sort of data that is available. You will see that in box 6 at the top there is information provided by the school, including links to websites and departmental material. There is some NAPLAN data, VET data, measures of gain, growth, information around the school population, sources of income, teaching stuff.

The bulk of the information you will see there is already currently available in a school annual report or on a school website. Probably the difference would be a numerical rather than a graphical description of NAPLAN results and the like school comparisons, but the parent/student/teacher satisfaction, for example, we have in these budget papers and it is available on an individual school level as we are now moving to doing that in every school every year.

**MS HUNTER:** And also you are putting down the number of parents who responded to the survey; that can be—

**Ms Davy:** Again, as the minister indicated, there is quite a lot of work going on with officials in terms of agreement around the country, because part of this has to be whether we all have a clear, shared understanding and definition of each of these indicators and then whether we all have comparable data sets that we can provide for some of this information. So, at this stage, that is the draft template we are working towards, but some of the advice to go to education ministers in June may well be, “For this particular component we do not believe there is consistent data in the country at this point in time,” so it may not be ready for production in the 2009 version but it may well be ready for the 2010 version. So there is an amount of work going on around it.

**Mr Barr:** There are a couple of ACT-specific issues. For example, there will be no NAPLAN data for our colleges, nor will there be NAPLAN data for our early childhood schools, because the year levels are outside those tested. There are some ACT-specific issues that we are working directly with the commonwealth on that I have raised at ministerial level but, as is normally the case in these ministerial meetings, I have to put my hand up and go, “Well, we’re a little bit different, and this is why,” and we go through those discussions, and we will continue that.

**MS HUNTER:** I do realise that a lot of this move came from a federal level, but I think, minister, you have mentioned that parents have said they wanted improved reporting.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Where did that come from? Was that evidence? Was that some sort of survey?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, the ministerial council commissioned Colmar Brunton research to undertake a major piece of work across the country that included the ACT, I understand on 2008 NAPLAN material. I understand that report is on the federal government website somewhere. To summarise it, nearly 90 per cent of parents approved of the NAPLAN reporting, thought it was valuable, and the ACT results were within one per cent of the national results. The jurisdiction that approved of it the most was New South Wales, as I understand, and they include one other piece of

data that the ACT does not include on the individual student reports. That relates not just to where the individual student performs, where that sits within the bands of achievement. They also include the national average and in New South Wales they also include a school average.

I have met with the P&C council and principals association and other organisations and we are currently asking for community views, parental views in particular, on whether they want that extra level of information. It has been put to me by the principals association yesterday that perhaps a more useful piece of data rather than the school average would be the territory average, so you would have the individual student score, the Australian average and the territory average. That is something we can consider. We will keep on working on that consultation.

**MS HUNTER:** With the 90 per cent of parents who did want the type of reporting, do you recall—I know this is probably a high level of detail—whether it also stated what percentage of parents actually filled that survey out and put it back in again?

**Mr Barr:** It was a random sample of 1,500 Australians, I think—the same size that Newspoll use. So the ACT sample was 150 or something like that, but the ACT results were entirely consistent with the national ones, so within an obvious competence interval for a survey, but it was overwhelming that parents liked this.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Just a quick query on the reporting: the number five there where it talks about SES profile, are we talking about SES profile in the way we understand it for schools funding model, or are we talking about another SES profile?

**Mr Barr:** Another.

**Ms Davy:** No. This is a good example of a piece of work that is still going on and advice will be provided to education ministers in June. There is no agreement across the country about a measure of SES that is common. So there is quite a lot of debate around testing of different models in terms of whether you use the ABS IRSED factor, whether you rely on parent information that is provided at the time of enrolment. Some states and territories, like us, do collect that information; other states and territories, like South Australia, do not. So there is a significant piece of work to be undertaken to determine whether we can actually fill in that particular SES profile box this year in terms of the national website.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a tricky one, isn't it?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** The SES funding model obviously has some flaws in terms of just taking the postcode, but I imagine that the reasoning behind having that there is so you can do like for like comparison. If you cannot get that, it undermines one of the key parts of certainly what the federal government said these reports would do. So I imagine that if that falls over that puts a reasonable hole in the process.

**Mr Barr:** It might delay some elements of it. That said, the discussion at the March education ministerial council was that it may be a period of a year before we can populate all elements of this and we will then have to agree on a national standard and we will all adopt it. It would be fair to say that there is a fair amount of political consensus around the table, the Western Australian government included, in relation to this. It is really the technical matters that are being discussed, not the philosophical direction behind this new structure.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Mr Smyth, then Mr Doszpot then Ms Bresnan.

**MR SMYTH:** The AEU appeared a week ago, and one of their final comments was that there was a plea for assistance for primary school students presenting with mental health issues. They claimed the numbers are growing and that they are proving more difficult to manage. They made the suggestion that there might even be the need for alternative settings for these students. Are there adequate services in our primary schools for kids with mental health difficulties, and is there any consideration of alternative settings to assist them?

**Ms Davy:** I might start on that, and I will ask Dr Collis to take over if you get into some of the detail. It is certainly an area that the union has raised with us, and we are having ongoing conversations about it. We are looking at different options around the programs around this. There is a fair amount of work that Mark is doing with DHCS in terms of mapping current programs and structures. It is certainly an area that we will need to continue to look at.

The anecdotal reports that we are getting from schools is that it is probably an area that we do need to start seriously looking at, and it may well be that we need to look at programs such as the achievement centres and the connect 10 programs that we have got running in the high school sector. But, Mark, you might want to add some more detail to that?

**MS HUNTER:** Are you also investigating the non-government services that are being provided that have a really good track record? Unfortunately, the funding is the issue. Are they included in the investigation of this issue that you are doing?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, they are. At this point in time, we are looking at this through the lens of disconnecting students from middle years and senior years. Our focus is DHCS, the Department of Education and Training and the CIT. The CIT provides significant educational programs for young people who are disconnected in this area. Through that, we will be looking at all those services that DHCS at this point in time are funding.

**MS HUNTER:** I think it is that there are the educational sorts of supports, but we are also talking about the mental health services or the assistance that might be needed. Obviously there are counsellors in schools.

**Dr Collis:** Sure.

**MS HUNTER:** That is a key pathway, but quite often there will need to be something also that counsellors may have to refer out to.

**Dr Collis:** Yes, and can I say that the focus of the work that Ms Davy talked about was really where education provision was being made for students who were disconnecting or disconnected; it was not primarily mental health. But what we have discovered in our work around there is that the mental health issues impact upon this area significantly. There are a series of other things that happen, as you have pointed out. The 45 full-time equivalent school counsellors across—

**MR SMYTH:** How much of that counselling is going on in primary schools?

**Dr Collis:** I would have to take that on notice to get the exact number.

**MS HUNTER:** Is it about one counsellor to every two or three primary schools?

**Dr Collis:** Around about that level, but I would have to take it on notice to get the precise number. It does vary slightly depending on people who go on leave and needing to adjust around that.

**Mr Barr:** And the size of the primary school.

**MR SMYTH:** What sort of numbers are we talking about? Has there been any statistical work done to see how many kids are presenting with mental health issues in primary school?

**Dr Collis:** The answer to that is no. The issue is around how we would pick up and diagnose mental health issues. There are a number of different paradigms with which one might approach this. Can I say that, from the education point of view in terms of looking at mental health as an issue for young people and their families, we are working hand in hand with Health to look at this from a health promotion, prevention, early intervention model. The Department of Education and Training are very much taking a strong leadership in health promotion and prevention and early intervention and not so much in the targeted services where we are collaborating with mental health services to do that.

We have two programs which are rolling out across all ACT schools in regard to this—they are “mind matters”, which is in high schools, secondary schools and colleges, and the “kids matter” program, which is in the primary schools. These two programs are evidence based and endorsed by the Department of Health and Ageing. They are the gold-standard approaches for the promotion of early intervention processes. In the recent budget through Health there has been an allocation of funding to help us further roll out those programs. I believe there is \$200,000 over the next two years, and we are working with child and adolescent mental health services to action that so that we can support those programs better in all schools in the ACT.

**MR SMYTH:** Ms Davy, you said that there was some work being done and Dr Collis said an investigation. Is something formal in place? Are there some criteria that are being looked at or is this more of an informal “we’re aware of a problem; we’re just trying to get a feel for it”?

**Ms Davy:** No. What I was mentioning—and Mark was right to correct me—was the

work that Mark was talking about in terms of the mapping of services across departments for disengaged and disconnected youth, particularly in the high school sector.

**MR SMYTH:** That is in the high schools, but the concern was about the primary schools. What is being done specifically—

**MS HUNTER:** And to do with mental health.

**Dr Collis:** This work is actually in the middle years to senior years, as I said. So we are picking up those.

**MR SMYTH:** So that is years 4 to 8?

**Dr Collis:** It is roughly year 4 through to college years that we are looking at at this point in time. We have a number of other programs in the early years of schooling, as you would appreciate. Rather than duplicate programs that are already happening, that is where we are focusing attention.

**MS HUNTER:** I guess schools can often be a key place where many issues can be picked up for children. So obviously that is looking at PD for teachers to be able to recognise signs and so forth.

**Dr Collis:** That is right.

**MS HUNTER:** I was actually meeting with Marymead yesterday, which has some very good programs. I believe there is a connection there with some schools, but, unfortunately, they are under a bit of threat at the moment. I take on your point that a lot of people do not want to go around diagnosing at that age, but the reality is that there are children suffering trauma through violence in homes through to a whole range of different issues going on. That is obviously a key one. Schools hopefully will be able to pick up on that, but they also may have these children that are behaving in a way that is because of something else happening. That is why I think it is quite key that schools become players.

**Dr Collis:** That is right, and staff have a capacity to recognise that and also to provide universal programs that build resilience to mental health outcomes in the future. That is where these programs are aimed, but also to identify and to refer on. That is why we are working hand in hand with child and adolescent mental health services. Probably one other thing to be aware of is that some mental health issues are actually picked up within the students with disabilities areas as well. So one of the verifiable disabilities recognised is in that area.

**MS BRESNAN:** Just a follow-up to that, is there any work done with identifying or assisting children who might be young carers? There is actually quite a high number, and often it can be at ages of around eight to 10 that children start becoming carers. So I wonder if there is anything done to assist them as well.

**Dr Collis:** At this point there is awareness raising. My staff have attended workshops around children as carers. Indeed, just yesterday we had conversations about this

needing to be another group we need to identify when we are identifying special groups within our schooling sector who have barriers and disadvantages to overcome. But, as yet, no, there is no—

**MS BRESNAN:** But it is something you are looking at?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, something that is certainly being canvassed, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** In regard to the alternative settings, is there a search for different places, different ways of looking after these kids, or is it too early yet in your investigations to be discussing that?

**Ms Davy:** In terms of looking at the issues around the high school sector, my understanding is that we looked into notions of alternative settings. That is why we made the decision to move down the achievement centre, connect 10 line in terms of trying to support and identify these kids early and re-engage them back into schools. Since last year we have got the three achievement centres set up for the years 7 to 8 students, and we have got the three connect 10 programs set up for the years 9 and 10 students. Again, Mark would be able to—

**MR SMYTH:** That is fine, but this was specifically about primary school students.

**Ms Davy:** No. As we have indicated, there is no further work on that.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, will you be looking at alternative settings for primary school students?

**Mr Barr:** We will certainly consider that. It will not be in this budget year, obviously.

**MS HUNTER:** Where does the cottage fit into this picture? Based at Calvary?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, the cottage is run by the health department. The Department of Education and Training provide a teacher for the cottage.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, okay.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, going into the last election, your government made a commitment for continuing funding for pastoral care, student welfare and learning support. Has that commitment continued?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. That was a—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can you direct me to where the funding for that is?

**Mr Barr:** Well, it is in the department's base, so you would have to go back to last year's budget papers. It was ongoing funding.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can we have any idea as to how much the funding is?

**Mr Barr:** Again, I would refer you back to last year, or the year before?

**Ms Davy:** That was last year's budget.

**Mr Barr:** We are just tracking back through the history of extra appropriations, but the pastoral care initiative was around a particular provision of a pastoral care coordinator—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure, I understand that.

**Mr Barr:** They are all still in place.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. The numbers are the same, or has it grown?

**Ms Davy:** Some \$17.4 million was provided in the 2007-08 budget for the student welfare pastoral care budget.

**Mr Barr:** That was two budgets ago now.

**Ms Davy:** That included a number of things. It included establishing the achievement centres and the connect 10 programs that I just talked about. It included providing a pastoral care coordinator in every high school, and that has occurred since 2008. It included funds for three social workers that are working under a families and schools together program and a number of other elements.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**Mr Whybrow:** I can provide the amount in the 2009-10 budget. It equates to \$4.2 million.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you very much.

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

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** This is the book that has everything we ever need to know.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Whybrow, just table the book and we could have a general look and come back to you.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes or no?

**MS BRESNAN:** Can I ask my question?

**Mr Barr:** I think it was a facetious question.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you. My question is in relation to the Kingsford Smith school. I understand it was announced that it would originally open as a P-10 school? I believe that was October last year, is that correct? I think it was around the date. But then it opened this year as a P-7 school.

**Mr Barr:** No. I mean—

**MS BRESNAN:** Taking P-7 students.

**Mr Barr:** It has taken enrolments from preschool to year 7. It is a P-10 school.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes. So when will enrolments for the 8 to 10 years be—

**Mr Barr:** Well, year 8 will be next year; year 9 the year after and year 10 the year after that.

**MS BRESNAN:** All right. When was the decision made that it would be P-10?

**Mr Barr:** That has always been the case for new schools that open. They progressively—

**MS BRESNAN:** So when it was announced that it open as a P-10, it was not going to open as a P-10?

**Mr Barr:** Well, it was announced as a P-10 school and it would be taking enrolments for P-7.

**MS BRESNAN:** So it was not announced that it would open as a P-10 school?

**Mr Barr:** No, that is right.

**MS BRESNAN:** Okay.

**Mr Barr:** Can I just say, so that this issue does not arise again when we open the new P-10 school in Kambah, it will begin as P-7 and then it will grow with a year 8 enrolment.

**MS BRESNAN:** It is probably good to make that clear to people.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** We have got Mr Smyth and then Ms Hunter.

**MR SMYTH:** I want to ask about the accountability indicators on budget paper No 4, pages 366 and 367. Obviously, the measures on page 366 have been discontinued. Is there a reason for it? The note refers to the introduction of NAPLAN. Is this data not considered—?

**Mr Barr:** No longer collected nationally.

**MR SMYTH:** It is just not collected?

**Mr Barr:** It is just not collected anymore. Everyone has done away with their state-based tests and we have moved to NAPLAN.

**MR SMYTH:** In the final year there, the 2008-09 outcomes, the only one that seems dramatically down is h, Indigenous students in year 3. The target was 90 per cent and we got to 72 per cent. Is there a particular reason for that?

**Mr Barr:** Indigenous students in year 3? Janet will go to the detail, but, generally speaking, we need to treat the figures around Indigenous students, particularly when you go down to an individual year level, with some caution because they are a very small cohort. That, I imagine, would be the explanation.

**Ms Davy:** It is the explanation, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** You are a good head of department. On page 367, in terms of usefulness for this year, that means nothing. There is nothing to compare it to. I know it takes time to collect data. Is it possible to get the national averages?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly that is provided in the NAPLAN report. Is it in year 12?

**MR SMYTH:** Because otherwise it is just a set of numbers—

**Ms Davy:** The national averages are in the table on page 355. They are in tabular form. They are not in—

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. It is very hard to compare 355 accurately with what is on 367. I am just asking—obviously next year we will have 2009-10 targets to compare with.

**Mr Barr:** To compare with, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Have these targets been back cast or is this data now being collected in such a way that we can only start with the coming year?

**Ms Davy:** These are targets based on the start of a new, I guess, series with the NAPLAN data.

**MR SMYTH:** Sure.

**Ms Davy:** The way that we have set these targets is a quite complicated way, but I believe it is a robust way. We have mapped performance of students in previous ACTAP data for the last four years and we have actually managed to be able to put that on to the NAPLAN reporting scales.

We have looked at the trends over the last five years. We have given consideration to growth between year 3 and year 5; year 5 and year 7; year 7 and year 9. We have looked at the notion, which we have in the setting of all our targets, in terms of an aspirational but still reasonably realistic target.

Under the COAG agenda, as I said before, we have to achieve a target nationally of improving the literacy and numeracy of all of our students. We have said, “Well, we believe that the ACT could be the best internationally.” We have looked at the last OECD PISA results, Finland being the highest performing country. We have said, “Well, how many points growth do we need in the ACT to get us to where Finland got to in PISA?” We have set ourselves an overall target of increasing the mean system literacy and numeracy scores by eight points in four years time.

**MR SMYTH:** So this is where we are now? For instance, the top, A, that would be 417 plus eight?

**Ms Davy:** Yes. 417 is basically taking all of our trend data and looking at last year’s NAPLAN data, and that is about where our average is now. If you go back to the table on page 355, you will see mean year 3 students reading in that very first column. It is actually 421 plus or minus a confidence interval of 5.9, which gets you to around 417.

**MR SMYTH:** Sure, and thank you for that. But going to the table on 355, given the scale of the table, it is very hard to get an accurate number.

**Ms Davy:** Yes. I appreciate that.

**MR SMYTH:** Ms Le Couteur and I were just at a conference New Zealand

**MS BURCH:** You could mention my presence there, too.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, you, too.

**MS BURCH:** I am as memorable as you, Caroline.

**MR SMYTH:** It was the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees. I was just following my chair. There it was said that when you put in new measures, it would be useful if there was at least two years data or a comparison point in this data. Otherwise, for us it is just a chart with a stack of numbers in it.

**Ms Davy:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** The other thing is if you go to—if I can find them quickly, the ones that I would really like—DH and CS have in their charts four or five years of data, including forward targets. In terms of getting an appreciation of what you have just said, we are going to go up two points a year for the next four years.

**Ms Davy:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** They actually presented quite well, and I just cannot find it, so I will keep talking until I do. In terms of usefulness, it is great to say, “Go to the chart on the other page,” but if you do not ask, it is often hard to know that. Instead of carrying boxes and boxes around, comparable data that gives you where you have been, what it is for this year and some outward trends would be very useful in all this.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you. Are you right, Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** I am right. They are on pages 230 and 231. They give four years worth.

**MS HUNTER:** I wanted to ask a question around superannuation. There is an increase of superannuation going in as \$2.5 million in 2009-10. It goes up to \$2.3 million and then up to \$3.1 million. That is on page 371. Then, going to page 381 at the top, there are increased superannuation contributions, indexation and new and continuing initiatives. What does that mean?

**Mr Whybrow:** The new and continuing initiatives component means that, as with any of the new initiatives, there is a component when you employ extra people that relates to the super cost for them. I might be going into the wrong level of detail, but if we actually have a look at 376 and probably also 377, you will note that there is a significant jump in our employee entitlements in those years.

**MS HUNTER:** So this is to do with putting more teachers in? There are 70 extra teachers, obviously. I understand that that will be an increased superannuation contribution.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** At the same time, I am wondering what is happening with—I believe there has been a bit of a bulge of teachers who are about to retire. Where are we at at that point in—?

**Mr Barr:** Happily, our average teaching age is falling, so our teachers are getting younger, which is terrific, for many reasons. I suppose one of the interesting impacts just in terms of superannuation—I am sure Mark will correct me if I am wrong here—is that you have got two factors. Obviously, with increased number of employees, there is an impact there. But the changes to superannuation provisions from the 2006-07 budget, where the government contribution rate was reduced from 15.4 per cent—

**MS HUNTER:** To the nine—

**Mr Barr:** Yes—has an impact as well. So it reduces the on-costs associated with each additional employee.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes. So it is a guideline? I see. That is when we are talking about new and continuing initiatives.

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct. There is a change in structure and a change in costs as people leave the CSS and get replaced.

**MS HUNTER:** What is the average age now of our teaching service? Are we looking at another spike of losing teachers?

**Mr Barr:** Here we go. Janet has a page open in front of her.

**Ms Davy:** Forty-two is our average age at the moment for teachers. For principals, it is 53.

**MS HUNTER:** So there will be a number of principals who will be moving out in the next few years?

**Ms Davy.** Yes, and that is why we have invested into that aspiring leaders program et cetera. The ACT teaching average of 42 is considerably lower than most other jurisdictions. As the minister said, we have seen it dropping over the last couple of years.

**MR DOSZPOT:** While you have got your stats open there, is there a figure for gender balance?

**Ms Davy:** No. I do not have that detail, but I am happy to do that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It would be interesting to find out.

**Ms Davy:** For teachers and principals?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** Hang on. We might just have it.

**MS HUNTER:** Just while Mr Tardif is finding that, I was wondering also: what is the annual turnover? Are we retaining our teachers?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** We are. Our separation rate is about 8.5 per cent, which is lower than about 10 per cent, which is the standard across the country. So, again, we are. We are seeing that decrease over the last couple of years as well. So we are managing to retain our teachers in the system.

**MS HUNTER:** And not having problems with recruitment?

**Ms Davy:** And not having problems with recruitment.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Do we have an indication as to how that is happening? It is good. Do we know why it is happening—the fact that our retention rate is better?

**Ms Davy:** I am not sure. I would have to take it on notice.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** I have data on the gender breakdown for 2008.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** Primary schools: 181 male teachers, 1,181 female teachers. Secondary schools: 485 male teachers, 799 female. That leaves a total of 666 male and 1,980 female. That was for last year.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, you probably need to take this on notice, but Mr Doszpot asked earlier about the specific costs of that advertising campaign that we saw in relation to overall advertising and marketing in this financial year to date and what is budgeted in 2009-10.

**Ms Davy:** In terms of the payment for the *Canberra Times* ads, the payment for the *Canberra Times* ad last weekend was \$8,908. That is GST inclusive. We are going to run another ad tomorrow, a smaller ad, which is going to cost \$2,253, GST inclusive. In terms of our media marketing budget, our annual budget we allocate for media marketing is around \$100,000. That includes everything we do—not just newspaper ads, but other work we would do. Today, for example, we are doing a workshop with our principals around marketing your local school. It includes our publications; it includes brochures that we would do, pamphlets we would do, et cetera.

**THE CHAIR:** And the year to date spend?

**Ms Davy:** I would have to get the detail of that.

**THE CHAIR:** That would be fine.

**Ms Davy:** Unless Mark has got something in his magic book.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Just a couple of supplementaries on that. In terms of the additional teachers we are trying to recruit at the moment, are we looking at things like relocation expenses for teachers?

**Ms Davy:** I would have to take that on notice. I am not sure what our policy is around that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Especially for internationally. If we are recruiting overseas teachers, would they have relocation—

**Mr Barr:** Unlikely.

**Ms Davy:** As I said this morning, we are unlikely to do that. We get enough bulk of interest locally and around that area.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay.

**Ms Davy:** But I am certainly happy to provide our policy—what is our policy around that.

**Mr Barr:** There is a public service policy that has \$12,000 as the maximum; then there is an amount per dependant. Obviously, the second you include an international airfare in that it is all gone if you are coming from anywhere. That is the maximum.

Whether you are moving from Sydney or you are moving from Shanghai, you would get that allowance.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I was just interested in terms of all the teachers you are trying to recruit—whether there was an additional expense there. That is all. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to follow up, Ms Davy. Earlier we had a discussion about literacy. I went back and checked some of the figures. I think the PISA showed a decline in reading literacy between 2000 and 2006, and it was most pronounced in the 75th, 90th and 95th percentiles. What was the reason for that decline in reading literacy?

**Mr Barr:** It occurred nationwide, in OECD countries too.

**Ms Davy:** It was a nationwide issue around reading in PISA. Again, you could not put it down to any particular one factor within the ACT. We have also got to remember that the ACT cohort in these international studies, these assessment programs, is small in comparison to other jurisdictions so we have to look pretty carefully at what the data is telling us in that area. But, as I said before, that, plus all of our own analysis around our five-year trend data with ACTAP and the results around TIMMS, which is the most recent data, have all been factored into the decisions we have made about the new literacy and numeracy strategy.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** You can go.

**THE CHAIR:** He defers to Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Just a few months ago, we had a case of a parent being prosecuted for a child who was truant. How many prosecutions a year do we have?

**Ms Davy:** In terms of what we have been able to find, that is the first time that such a case has been brought before the courts.

**Mr Barr:** Since the 2004 Education Act.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Obviously you have got good records. What is the record-keeping process for truancy? Can you tell us that?

**Mr Barr:** For truancy at schools or prosecutions?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Truancy first of all.

**Mr Barr:** Okay.

**Ms Davy:** In schools, we have an attendance policy, a roll-marking policy. Primary schools are required to mark the roll twice a day; high schools and colleges are required to account for students once a day. Each school will have processes in place to follow up on student absences. I am not sure, but someone might be able to tell me,

what happens in terms of the exact detail at a particular day—how long it takes, whether it is after two days, three days or four days, to trigger more of a formal response from a school.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is exactly what I am getting at.

**Ms Davy:** I am certainly happy to provide you with our policy. Again, it would be up on the website.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Would it? If it is up on the website—

**Mr Barr:** Back in 2006-07, we funded a marked schools, marked students program. An element of that was attendance monitoring and sending SMS messages to—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I was involved in that; that is why I am asking. I do not think it got very far.

**Mr Barr:** I am advised in this piece of information here that, as part of the SMS messaging project, 16 of 25 secondary schools have implemented the notify SMS system; and, over two terms, 48,000 messages about school attendance have been sent to parents and carers. So it is taking advantage of that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would like to have some information on that. In particular, I would like to know at what point a parent gets informed and warned about repeated serial truancy and things like that. If you could get an indication of that, I would appreciate it.

**Ms Davy.** Yes; all right.

**MR SMYTH:** Is there any indication of how big a problem truancy is? Is there a general feeling? Giving us the data is one thing, but is it a significant problem in the ACT?

**Mr Barr:** Not relative to other jurisdictions. Each school board annual report reports on student attendance. I was interested to look at the table the Hobart *Mercury* published about Tasmanian schools. They had some with attendance rates down in 70 per cent. I do not think we have any schools that are in that sort of league.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. I guess this goes back to Dr Collis. Work is then done to address the underlying cause of the truancy?

**Ms Davy:** Certainly, particularly in some areas, which again comes back to the some of the programs we have talked about today. Some of those students who are disengaging from schools, even from years 7 to 10, will be showing their level of disengagement by not turning up to school.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** They are the sorts of students that we are earmarking for those achievement centres and Connect10 programs. We have got some particular programs around

Indigenous students; we have got some particular strategies in place and some positions in place to ensure that we keep track and work with those families and encourage those students to come to school and stay in school. So yes, we do.

**MR SMYTH:** And the data is collected and segregated into primary, secondary and college?

**Ms Davy:** The data for?

**MR SMYTH:** Truancy?

**Ms Davy:** That is the information and the nature of the policy advice that I will take on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have been writing to the minister regarding an issue about very long term truancy where I think there are some serious health issues. We are certainly concerned about the information we received from the parent. I am very concerned about the lack of action in that regard. You need to take that on board. I just flag that now again. Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** Do we ask here about swimming or do we do that in sport and rec?

**Mr Barr:** I think it depends on what sort of swimming you are asking me about.

**MR SMYTH:** In the Greens-Labor agreement there was a line about providing adequate funds so that all children have access to swimming and water survival skills by July 2009.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that education or is that sport and rec? Or is that somewhere else?

**Mr Barr:** An element would be through education, and an element could be through sport and rec. Certainly, schools participate in learning to swim programs, and there is support for that. There is a range of other programs that are delivered outside school hours. So we have policies in relation to some of these areas.

**Ms Davy:** We already fund some swimming programs that schools can access in terms of primary school aged children, but we are still doing the mapping in terms of trying to determine whether, in relation to that statement that there is a need out there—how many schools are accessing the swimming programs, how many are not accessing them, what are the reasons they are not accessing them, et cetera. We are still finalising that piece of work before we can provide some advice back to government about fulfilling that particular statement.

**MR SMYTH:** I think we are going to get some advice.

**Ms Wilks:** Ms Davy has probably covered that. We give a grant to the Royal Life

Saving Society. It is on a tender process, and they have it for the next three years, which subsidises programs. There still is a parental cost involved, and we have been doing some work around what is the cost that parents can bear in terms of the program and what the program needs to be. Does it need to be water safety for the young students, which does not necessarily have to be in a pool? That can be incorporated into the curriculum. There again, there are issues built into the curricula which are not about swimming lessons but are about water safety, et cetera.

It is an area that we are exploring in quite a bit of detail, but the majority of our schools do something around swimming. They do not necessarily all use the Royal Life Saving Society program; they use a number of programs. One of the issues at the moment is that they do not like to do it in winter. There is a key time to do it, and then there is pressure around that and the availability of pools at the time. It is ongoing work that we are investigating, including the cost if we were to provide full access, and we have done some work with the Royal Life Saving Society and Kidsafe around this issue.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. The collection of the data, therefore, means that we do not know what percentage of our kids can actually swim and what percentage cannot?

**Ms Wilks:** Yes. We do not have any data on what percentage swim and what percentage do not. We have data—or this is the data we are gathering—on the percentage of students who go to swimming lessons. Unpacking that to the different levels—that is part of the thing. There is some of it around water safety; there is some of it around proficiency; there is some of it around lifesaving. For students who go to lessons—kids have different demands and requirements depending on what has happened outside school. It is that whole relationship of what happens outside school and what happens in school and how we could fit that into the curriculum around things. It is a big body of work that is being done, but I think I could say that at the moment our indications are that it is a substantial sum of money and would need to be a budget initiative for the future to be able to meet that requirement.

**MR SMYTH:** When will you have that work done?

**Ms Wilks:** It is ongoing work. We would hope to have the data that we have collected, which shows that we have got lots of gaps—

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Ms Wilks:** We could provide that data by the end of this term, but the data is very incomplete. We have not unpacked those particular issues. If you wanted that level, it would take us a substantial period of time to unpack the swimming levels. Then there are the issues around who decides what swimming level students are at, because everybody has different ideas around that.

**MR SMYTH:** Rather than asking you to unpack that for the committee—minister, would you take on notice that, once you get it, you report the detail of it to the Assembly

**Mr Barr:** Certainly. I would anticipate that my colleagues in the Greens will be

seeking regular information in relation to this. I am happy to provide that to the Assembly.

**MR SMYTH:** Not just the Greens.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Thank you, minister; thank you, Ms Davy, and officials. We will adjourn until 8.30 am on Monday.

**The committee adjourned at 6.29 pm.**