



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2016-2017](#))

Members:

MR M PETTERSSON (Chair)
MRS E KIKKERT (Deputy Chair)
MR C STEEL
MR A WALL

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2017

This is a **PROOF TRANSCRIPT** that is subject to suggested corrections by members and witnesses. The **FINAL TRANSCRIPT** will replace this transcript within 20 working days from the hearing date, subject to the receipt of corrections from members and witnesses.

Secretary to the committee:
Mrs N Kosseck (Ph: 620 50435)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

ACT Long Service Leave Authority	9
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	1, 9
Education Directorate	18

Privilege statement

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

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

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

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

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

Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9 am.

Appearances:

Ramsay, Mr Gordon, Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Jones, Mr Greg, Director, Construction, Environment and Workplace Protection, and ACT Work Safety Commissioner

Peffer, Mr Dave, Deputy Director-General, Access Canberra

THE CHAIR: Good morning. Welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs. In the proceedings today we will hear from the Minister for Regulatory Services, the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, in relation to the committee's inquiry into 2016-17 annual and financial reports.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live.

When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used these words: "I will take that as a question on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript. All witnesses are asked to familiarise themselves with the privilege statement provided on the table. Could you please confirm for the record that you have read the privilege card presented before you and that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Ramsay: Yes.

Mr Jones: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Ramsay: No; straight into questions.

THE CHAIR: I have some questions about the three WorkSafe inspectors who were budgeted for earlier this year to monitor light rail. Could you give me an update on that?

Mr Jones: Having developed the recruitment package for those inspectors, they were duly advertised for and, as we speak, this week interviews are being held. We would expect a decision to be made some time this month with appointments, depending on where they come from, pre-Christmas. We put the full package together. Recruitment is well underway and, as I said, we should have people on board certainly before Christmas.

THE CHAIR: Why does a project like light rail need dedicated WorkSafe inspectors?

Mr Jones: Firstly, it is a mixture of construction, testing and commissioning of a rail. We do not have previous experience with light rail, so we have done an extensive survey of what other jurisdictions do in terms of these skills for their inspectors. Having put that together, we believe that, because of the intensity of the project, and the fact that the project will be moving fairly quickly from construction to testing, commissioning, and, finally, 12 months or so away, actually running with public passengers, we think it is very important, and obviously the government agrees, that a dedicated inspectorate keep an eye on that project.

When you look at the route that the light rail is taking out of Gungahlin and down perhaps one of our busiest corridors, there are a large number of work health and safety matters which need to be managed very carefully. To make sure that that project continues on time and in a safe manner, our proposal has been accepted by government that we have dedicated inspectors.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned that there are some specific risks with the project and where the project goes. Do you want to expand on that? Why does going down Northbourne make it a riskier project?

Mr Jones: There is a range of issues. From the very beginning of the project there were a large number of utilities and services that needed to be moved, which were all conveniently located right down the median strip of Northbourne Avenue. Clearly, those need to be moved aside from where the actual rails and overhead wires will go so that there is a clear corridor. Firstly, there was the move of all of those utilities and services so that they were out of the way. That is not only telecommunications but water, electricity and gas. There are significant lines which run down Northbourne. That was the first step.

The second step is dealing with traffic management. Some of Canberra's major intersections, clearly, are down the middle of Northbourne, so it is about managing all of that in a safe manner for drivers or commuters who work around that because, as road closures come and go, with a variety, it can be confusing in terms of the signage and the activity. It is about keeping the public and commuters informed and safe. Obviously, with a number of workers on board, my focus is on making sure all of those workers are safe in that precinct.

THE CHAIR: You are in the process of recruiting now; you have interviews coming up. Are you looking to hire people who already have the specific skills required or do they need specific training for monitoring a light rail project?

Mr Jones: Without having seen the detail of the candidates—and we got a large number of applications, which is very encouraging, for these positions—I would be hopeful that there would be people with transport or rail experience. We are likely to attract some of those, which I think is a really big bonus. There would certainly be a lot of specific training on the job, not so much in the first six months, when we are in the construction phase, but as we move into the substantial construction of the electrical infrastructure and then, particularly, the commissioning of the carriages

PROOF

down different sections of Northbourne and Flemington Road, there will be very specific training.

One of my other responsibilities is utilities regulation. We have a number of electrical engineers who are working in parallel with us on that project. They can provide very valuable, very technical advice on how that operation will work. Finally, I have teed up—with the detail yet to be confirmed on the actual timing—with my work safety colleagues in Victoria, who have extensive experience in both light and heavy rail, to use some of their resources and their goodwill to conduct some training for our inspectors, not just the three specialised ones but a bit more broadly within WorkSafe, so that everyone is familiar with how the electrical systems on the light rail work, especially with the complexities, going from AC to DC, and how that system works. There will be extensive training as well as, hopefully, picking up some preliminary skills that they may have from elsewhere.

MRS KIKKERT: How many inspectors are there, and how often, inspecting Mr Fluffy properties under demolition?

Mr Jones: At the moment we have eight positions, of which about six are occupied, in terms of the Mr Fluffy program. As was advised to the committee yesterday, the program is well underway, with almost 850 houses demolished under the program. WorkSafe do multiple visits per demolition.

MRS KIKKERT: Sorry, can you say that again?

Mr Jones: WorkSafe have multiple visits per demolition, per house, per property, in terms of preliminary assessments. We are there on demolition day, and we make sure that the licensed asbestos assessors and removalists are there, and conducting and supervising those demolitions properly.

MRS KIKKERT: Do you know at which stage during a demolition these inspectors visit?

Mr Jones: They go through all of the paperwork before any work starts on site, to make sure that all the demolition plans are in place and are satisfactory, and they are on site on demolition day. As an example, this financial year, from July to October, we have had over 500 site visits just on the Fluffy program alone, to give you an idea of the intensity of WorkSafe's involvement with that demolition program.

MRS KIKKERT: What steps are WorkSafe taking to remove or dispose of furniture in Mr Fluffy homes or properties?

Mr Jones: That is not a role for WorkSafe inspectors, but we do supervise, through the task force and through procurement solutions, how the content of those houses is stripped out and appropriately disposed of in terms of potential contamination. That is a matter for the task force to supervise, using the licensed asbestos assessors.

MR WALL: I am following on from the comments in yesterday's hearing that specifically related to the property in Ainslie, the commercial property that has had loose-fill asbestos in it. Is the property safe for occupation, or does it need to be

demolished?

Mr Jones: The Ainslie shops precinct is safe, is safe to occupy at the moment under an approved asbestos management plan. That is in the short to medium term. As Minister Gentleman and the task force officials indicated at the hearings yesterday, the only long-term solution for any property with Mr Fluffy asbestos is demolition. But in the short term, under an asbestos management plan which is regularly checked and regularly monitored, it is safe for those shops to be occupied.

At this stage the upstairs in unit 1 is still under a prohibition notice from WorkSafe and has been for a number of years. The asbestos having been removed from all the roof space in that unit, we are just waiting on the final report from the asbestos assessor on what the remediation has been there, and whether that would allow short to medium-term occupation of the upstairs unit, pending long-term demolition.

MR WALL: This seems to me like a major inconsistency with the way we have dealt with residential dwellings. There was the buyback scheme for residential dwellings and quite a bit of urgency put around that scheme to get people out of those homes as quickly as possible, the majority of which had been remediated previously. So why have we got an inconsistency? On one hand, residential homes are not fit for occupation even if they have been remediated, on the whole, and demolition was the priority; whereas on the commercial side we are happy with that halfway solution of remediation and are not delving into the final issue of demolition? It seems largely inconsistent, particularly for people working in those places. They are potentially spending as much time there as they would in a home.

Mr Jones: I do not believe there is an inconsistency at all. The Mr Fluffy program, the residential one, was a specific program which would provide for residential buyback. The task force and Minister Gentleman outlined yesterday in quite a bit of detail the time frame for that program and how that program was going to work within the government budget. Whether it is keeping a residential or a commercial premise safe, there is no difference in principle as to what the long-term solution is. Demolition is the long-term solution for any sort of building contaminated with Mr Fluffy.

There are a number of residential premises which are operating under asbestos management plans at the moment. I guess demolition will be a matter of timing, when that will occur, subject to the management plan. That is exactly the same as how Ainslie commercial shops are being managed. Long term, demolition is the only solution. In the short to medium term, those shops can be safely occupied under an asbestos management plan, pending the long-term demolition.

MR WALL: You keep saying long term. That is very ambiguous. Are we talking one to two years? What is the longer term?

Mr Jones: It is very difficult to put an actual number of years on it. That depends on the advice we get from the licensed expert asbestos assessors, who are the ones that do all the monitoring. For example at the Ainslie shops, every six months the licensed asbestos assessor will go in and do their checks and readings to make sure that asbestos fibres have not turned up anywhere in the occupied spaces. So far they have

PROOF

not, but that is part of the ongoing management plan. Long term could be two to five years, but it depends on how long that building stays in terms of its integrity and whether any fibres turn up in any of the testing. So long term could be a number of years. You cannot put an exact time on it. It depends on each individual building and what the asbestos assessors find.

MR WALL: Every six months the assessors are doing testing?

Mr Jones: Correct. They will do a complete assessment.

MR WALL: How many residential owners have gone down this road of remaining in their property and putting a management plan in place?

Mr Jones: At the moment there is a total of 58 homes which are the subject of asbestos contamination reports and asbestos management plans. Most of those are fully compliant with those plans. WorkSafe continues to monitor those plans and those reports, and—

MR WALL: How frequently would your inspectors visit those properties?

Mr Jones: For residential properties I think it is every 12 months.

MR WALL: And how often are your inspectors visiting the commercial property in Ainslie that is in question?

Mr Jones: While the works are reasonably new, we are visiting quite regularly. Part of our job there is not only to liaise with the owners—we have had multiple meetings with the two relevant owners there—but also, as we do so, to inform the local tenants what is going on so that they have assurance of what WorkSafe is doing and assurance that the actual premises they are occupying are free of asbestos fibres, based on the testing, and are safe to continue to occupy. So we have regular visits.

After the removal of the asbestos in the roof space of unit 1, which occurred in early October, we are continuing to liaise. The next stage of work there, which is why our liaison is quite frequent at the moment, is that some of the asbestos fibres have migrated just into the roof space of units 3 and 5, which is next door to unit 1. We are working with the owners there about having that environmentally cleaned, probably early next year, and hopefully at the same time having the whole roof replaced. We are working through that with them at the moment.

MR WALL: Recently you placed a prohibition notice on ACT government schools. I believe that it was over the level of training given to staff to administer medication to students. Can you give the committee a brief background as to what led to that prohibition notice being issued?

Mr Jones: It was actually an improvement notice rather than a prohibition notice—

MR WALL: Sorry.

Mr Jones: otherwise the school would be shut, presumably. It was an improvement

PROOF

notice; that is just a technical thing. WorkSafe was advised that the Education Directorate's policy for administering to dealing with children who have an insulin-dependent diabetic medical issue was not being completely followed in terms of the very specialised training that was required of staff to administer that policy. We did a very careful and delicate investigation into that and discovered that the appropriate training of the staff involved at one particular school was not adequate and was not in accordance with their policy. So we, through a range of discussions with the Education Directorate, issued an improvement notice to ensure that there was an immediate focus on coming up with an appropriate solution, not only for the kids at that school but also for the staff who were involved with supervising and looking after those kids, and making sure that appropriate quite specialised training was done. We issued the improvement notice for the directorate to focus on that.

MR WALL: Are you satisfied that those issues were addressed and remedied before the notice was lifted?

Mr Jones: The actual issue is quite complex.

MR WALL: It should be a simple yes or no. Has the issue that led to the improvement notice being issued been addressed?

Mr Jones: The Education Directorate came back with some alternative solutions to what was immediately contained in their policy to allow safe operations of that school dealing with that medical issue. Within Access Canberra the regulator—I was actually on leave for that week—lifted that improvement notice on the basis that further medical evidence from a doctor was issued in terms of the management of the diabetes at that school.

MR WALL: As the Commissioner for Workplace Safety, are you satisfied that that improvement notice has been removed only following the issue being addressed appropriately, or do you still have some concern about the practices in ACT schools?

Mr Jones: The issue is very complex, and always more can be done there. We continue to work with the directorate on making sure that appropriate training is available to all staff at that school and more broadly. Part of that issue that the directorate is looking at is reviewing its policy, with additional expert medical input into that policy. The directorate has put on additional medical staff, a trained nurse, to assist at that school. I am satisfied with that as an interim solution until that policy gets revised by the directorate.

MR WALL: Is this arrangement common in other jurisdictions? If the commissioner is away on a week's leave, another public servant can effectively remove notices on their behalf?

Mr Jones: The work health and safety legislation is set up with the main decision-maker and authority being the regulator, which is defined as the director-general of the particular area. My understanding is that that is part of the nationally consistent policy with all work health and safety legislation. So that is not unique. I have the full delegations of that regulator and would normally exercise those delegations, as I do daily. In terms of the way that operates in practice, it is not

PROOF

unusual for the head authority that has those particular powers under the legislation to exercise those powers when they choose. As it turned out at that time, after that improvement notice was issued I was on a week's leave and was not in the state, so the regulator made that decision while I was not there.

MR WALL: Mr Peffer, I understand that you made that decision as the regulator in Mr Jones's absence. What steps did you take to satisfy your conscience that the removal of that notice was appropriate at that point in time, given that your area of expertise is not necessarily in the cut and thrust of the work safety space on a daily basis?

Mr Peffer: That notice was issued on Friday, 8 September. The content of the notice required the directorate essentially to do two things: to ensure that any teachers or support staff within this school who were administering medication to students were adequately trained; and to provide WorkSafe, as the regulator, evidence of that training occurring.

Correspondence I subsequently received while the commissioner was on leave—I think it came on Tuesday or Wednesday the next week—from the director-general of the Education Directorate said the arrangements within that school had now changed. An agreement had been reached between the parents of the children and the principal of the school, a signed agreement, to say that it is now the parents' preference that these children self-administer that medication. That was a signed agreement that was presented.

There was advice provided to me from our investigators that said, "There could be some residual risks with this situation that we think are worth investigating." On the strength of the advice coming from my investigators, I required the directorate to have a trained medical professional, a doctor, endorse that change in arrangement.

That signed agreement was made on 13 September. Then the notice was issued on the basis that there was a signed agreement between the principal and the parents of the children, with the endorsement of a doctor to say that it was an appropriate arrangement and safe. In terms of my conscience, that is what I used to inform the decision.

THE CHAIR: We need to bring the session to a close.

MR COE: Can I ask something very briefly? It will just feed into whether I am in the right place. It is about the community centre on Tillyard Drive.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, we have a big day ahead of us. I do not want to fall behind at the first hurdle. Thank you, everybody.

MR COE: If somebody could say yes or no, that would be handy. It is 117 Tillyard Drive, next to the old top shops. I am sure the minister knows it well. Is there a building there that has been demolished because of asbestos?

Mr Peffer: We might have to take that on notice.

PROOF

MR COE: Thank you, I would appreciate it.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Stephen-Smith, Ms Rachel, Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Nicol, Mr David, Under Treasurer

Fletcher, Mr John, General Manager, ACT Insurance Authority, and Default Insurance Fund Manager

Young, Mr Michael, Executive Director, Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations

ACT Long Service Leave Authority

Savage, Ms Tracy, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar

THE CHAIR: Witnesses are asked to familiarise themselves with the privilege statement in front of them. Could you please confirm for the record that you have read the privilege card presented before you and that you understand the privilege implications of the statement? Before we proceed to questions would you like to make a short opening statement?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I would. I acknowledge the privilege statement. The right for all people to be safe at work is a fundamental one and a responsibility that the government takes very seriously in terms of working with employers and employees to ensure that this is the case. As you know, the work safety and industrial relations portfolio covers regulatory frameworks for work safety, privacy, workers compensation, industrial relations, dangerous substances, public holidays and portable long service leave. Portfolio activities also include the management and prevention of workplace injuries by delivering safety, return to work and injury management services for the ACT public sector.

The directorate's workforce injury management and IR policy during 2016-17 is described in output class 5.1. That output class includes 11 accountability indicators with associated targets. The targets were achieved in the case of nine of those 11 indicators.

One of the targets not achieved called for the delivery of a report on the progress of the *Getting Home Safely* construction industry interventions. The report was delayed due to a problem with the ABS dataset which was essential for determining whether the injury reduction targets set out in the *Getting Home Safely* report have been achieved. That issue has now been resolved.

The *Getting Home Safely* report recommended that by 30 June 2016 the construction industry achieve a 35 per cent reduction in its Safe Work Australia standardised serious injury rate. National comparative data reveals that the industry achieved a 16 per cent reduction in the relevant period, falling short of the target. Although this is disappointing I note that the construction industry performed better than the territory

as a whole, which reduced its serious injury rate by 10 per cent in the same period.

The tripartite Work Safety Council subcommittee is currently developing a new health and safety strategy for the territory's construction industry which will include updated injury reduction targets and new safety interventions. Last month I released the outcomes from a review conducted by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University into the safety culture of the territory's construction industry as at 30 June 2016. The report showed that there has been an improvement in safety and health culture and awareness since the *Getting Home Safely* report but there are still areas for improvement, particularly in terms of work-life balance and mental health. The construction safety advisory committee of the Work Safety Council will consider this report to inform the development of the construction industry safety strategy.

The Work Safety Council is also examining health and safety for vulnerable workers including apprentices, young workers and labour hire workers. In addition to its ongoing work around vulnerable workers and insecure workers I asked the Work Safety Council to establish a new time-limited subcommittee specifically focused on young workers including apprentices and trainees.

As you would be aware, Access Canberra recently made structural changes that allow the Work Safety Commissioner to focus solely on his responsibility. This responded to a concern that was flagged in estimates hearings around the number of hats the Work Safety Commissioner was wearing.

In 2016-17 WorkSafe ACT proactively engaged with businesses on over 1,900 occasions at events and in the community. A greater presence of inspectors in the field of course translates into better safety outcomes and in the last year the total number of workplace visits was 4,923. In addition the New South Wales-ACT cross-border construction project 2016-19 was launched in 2016-17. A joint inspection program delivers greater coordination and collaboration between safety regulators across the territory and surrounding New South Wales region.

Work Safety Council and WorkSafe inspectors also attended industry breakfast toolbox talks, produced safety videos, produced a regular industry newsletter sent to over 13,000 subscribers and ran a series of safety events as part of Safe Work Month.

There has been some commentary recently about the capacity to investigate and prosecute within WorkSafe and Access Canberra. On this matter I would like to note that it was in fact one of the first things that we were alerted to as incoming ministers in terms of historical failure either to prosecute or failed prosecutions, and this is something that Access Canberra has put a lot of effort into addressing and on which we are regularly updated.

Back to the public sector front and the work safety and industrial relations division, the other output class indicator that was not achieved called for a five per cent reduction in the number of public sector lost time injuries. A reduction in injury levels was achieved but at two per cent it fell short of the target. We should however recognise the public sector's sustained efforts to reduce injuries, which has culminated in the achievement of record low work injury rates.

The annual report also showed that the directorate achieved a 100 per cent compliance rate in an audit of its work injury rehabilitation framework. This leaves the sector in good stead to continue preparing for a Comcare workers compensation self-insurance licence application.

Other major reform initiatives that I expect to progress this year include the implementation of the secure local jobs package which will transform the way the territory procures and manages contracts for labour. And in the area of legislative reform we will continue to focus on harmonising work safety laws and making workers compensation payments more equitable.

Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening address and obviously we invite questions.

THE CHAIR: I will lead off. The government considered establishing a new compensation scheme for the public service but ultimately decided to remain with the Comcare scheme. I was wondering: can you outline what the considerations were in that process and why the decision was made to remain with Comcare?

Mr Young: As you would be aware, there was a great deal of consultation conducted over around a 12-month period with the workforce and their representatives which would have been effective had the government determined to exit the Comcare scheme and set up a new workers compensation scheme. The outcome of those consultations was very positive and constructive and in short there was a decision taken at the end that a number of mechanisms and levers to improve return to work and injury management performance were still available to be used within the Comcare scheme, that those should be explored in the first instance and that that would be preferable to changing the workers compensation coverage and services which might be available to injured workers, which was one of the consequences which would have occurred had we exited the Comcare scheme.

Under the proposed self-insurance arrangement, the benefits, payments, services and types of injuries that are covered would remain the same for public sector workers. However, we would be able to exercise more control over the administration of those claims, more control over the resources and policy decisions that are exercised in the administration of them, which should in turn result in better outcomes but within the same legislative framework that workers are in currently.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned that there were several measures or levers, as you termed it, for improving safety and injury management. Can you expand on what they were?

Mr Young: Essentially it is the claims administration area. At the moment a commonwealth authority, Comcare, is exercising the insurance claim administration functions on behalf of the territory, in that sense decisions around: the resourcing, the training of case managers, remuneration levels, service standards and performance indicators which, we know from other environments, can drive improved performance. The territory has much less influence over those under the current arrangements than we would in a self-insurance model. It is essentially in those claims administration areas.

Under the proposal the territory would remain responsible for its safety regulation and its return to work operations in much the same manner as we are doing currently. The change is really in that claims administration area in the event that government determines to pursue self-insurance fully.

MS KIKKERT: On page 293 relating to the collapsed insurance fund, why would you claim to reopen it?

Mr Nicol: I will call the relevant official up, Mr Fletcher, who is in charge of the default insurance fund.

THE CHAIR: Mr Fletcher, will you acknowledge the privilege statement as well?

Mr Fletcher: Yes. The fund managers are two separate funds. One is, of course, the collapsed insurer fund. Claims within that fund are related to insurers who have collapsed. The two insurers of note in that space are national employers mutual association, which collapsed in 1990; and HIH, which collapsed in 2001. The two NEM claims that were reopened relate to claimants who have come back to the fund with additional expenses associated with their original injury.

From memory, one relates to I think some additional dental treatment that one of the claimants had to have and the other one was related to an injury associated with joint reconstruction. Obviously if you are a person who was injured in 1990 and you had dental treatment, that dental treatment may need to be revisited. We reopened the claim for that person under the relevant legislation.

MRS KIKKERT: How is the tailored levy to employers administered?

Mr Fletcher: Sorry, I do not quite understand. How the levy is set?

THE CHAIR: How is the levy set?

Mr Fletcher: The levy is set by me as the fund manager. We have an actuary who is appointed to assist us with an annual valuation of the funds' liabilities. That actuary also undertakes an assessment of those liabilities and assists me in determining what an appropriate levy is for each year. In 2016-17 that levy was 1.4 per cent of the gross premium call within the whole fund.

MR WALL: In relation to the Workers Compensation Amendment Bill which is currently before the Assembly, to what extent do you believe the levy for the uninsured employer fund will need to change to meet the additional compensation requirements as part of the legislation changes?

Mr Fletcher: The key impact is the imminently fatal asbestos-related diseases claims that came into the fund effective 1 July this year. We went through a similar process in terms of determining what an additional appropriate levy would be for those claims inclusive from 1 July, and determined that the levy for 2017-18 would move to 2.9.

Mr Young: There is another bill before the Assembly at the moment which makes a

PROOF

number of changes to workers compensation benefits, mainly increasing the statutory benefit before death, aligning the age-based cut-off for weekly incapacity payments with the commonwealth retiring age, and making some other changes. Those two are the ones with the primary premium impact.

MR WALL: General benefits and weekly payments.

Mr Young: The process that Mr Fletcher outlined is the accurate one. There is a process by which an independent actuary estimates the likely liabilities falling on the DIF, which then informs the levy setting decision. That process will apply in due course. However, if we look at the expected impact on the total workers compensation scheme as a whole, that is broadly indicative of the type of impact that it could potentially have on the default insurance fund. Those impacts are, by the standards of the total premium pool, quite minor. The total premium pool sits at around \$200 million per year. The expected impact from the combined effect of those changes is, I believe, around \$1 million to \$1½ million per year. As a percentage of the total premium pool, it is a very small percentage.

MR WALL: Is there a target number that you are trying to keep that premium imposed on insurers to? It has gone from 1.4 per cent in 2016-17 to 2.9 per cent in 2017-18. With changes to increase payouts and the period of coverage, it is likely that the actuary is going to come up with a figure slightly higher than that again to meet that need going into the future.

Mr Young: Sure.

MR WALL: Is there a policy as to where you ideally want to see that premium?

Mr Young: Mr Fletcher may wish to elaborate, but a component of the current default insurance fund levy is, essentially, a surcharge designed to return the default scheme to full funding. When that full funding level is reached, I would expect that that component would drop off and there would be an overall reduction in the levy rate.

MR WALL: What is the plan to get it back to fully funded?

Mr Fletcher: The fund was underfunded for a number of years. The levy was increased to attempt to put the UEF back into a break-even situation. That happened this financial year. For a number of years, the fund carried a receivable. The fund levy was set to fund claims in the current year with an allowance to basically erode the receivable. From memory, about half of that 1.4, about 0.9 or 0.8, was levied to attempt to resolve that underfunding situation. That underfunding situation was basically resolved at 30 June 2017. The fund has now moved into a surplus on its balance sheet, and that receivable has gone.

MR WALL: The levy is imposed on employees who do the right thing and actually take out a workers comp policy. I notice that there are 13 new claims that have opened during the reporting period.

Mr Fletcher: Yes.

PROOF

MR WALL: What role does the insurance fund have in recouping or chasing down employers who did not carry workers comp policies? I have always had a bee in my bonnet that people who do the right thing are the ones who get punished by having to cover those who do not. There is, if anything, a disincentive to doing the right thing if you can avoid being caught.

Mr Fletcher: Yes. The authority does not have a responsibility in terms of a regulatory sort of role. When we receive a claim, we forward the details of that claim on to Worksafe, and they deal with the incident from that point of view.

The legislation enables the fund to seek to recover from employers who do not have a workers compensation policy in place. Sometimes that is successful. We are often in a position to be able to impose on the employer responsibility for meeting the cost of the claims as they occur. An employee may have a minor injury; they will come to the fund; the fund will start to manage the claim; it will contact the employer; the employer may agree to meet the costs, all the expenses associated with the claim. They are either in that bucket, and the employer does the right thing, or they are in the other bucket, where the costs are quite significant. Often, under those circumstances, the business goes bankrupt; they terminate their business and we have no basis on which to try to recover the money.

Mr Nicol: I might add that we do work, and we are expanding that effort, to attempt to identify employers who do not pay their premiums or do not get sufficient coverage for the number of employees that they have. Some businesses under-report their payroll when they are taking out insurance. We are doing more work, particularly data matching between our revenue office and businesses, and between the Tax Office and businesses, to try to identify those who do not pay the appropriate premiums. It is obviously better to get businesses fully covered before they end up in the situation Mr Fletcher has just described.

MR WALL: How many successful claims have been made for the reporting period, going back to the employer and getting costs covered?

Mr Fletcher: I would have to take that on notice. I do not have that detail.

MR WALL: Okay.

MR STEEL: In the report it says that injury prevention and management initiatives delivered a reduction of more than 20 per cent in the public sector workers compensation premium rate. Could you elaborate on what those measures were?

Mr Young: Certainly. I should clarify that there was a very significant reduction in the premium rate for the current financial year. That came off the back of two broad categories of activity. One is a reduction in the number of injuries that are occurring, and improvements in our ability to prevent people going off work, or to get them back to work faster. There was also an improvement in the Comcare scheme's financial situation, which resulted in a reduction in a number of levy surcharges, which were designed to make up an under-collection of funds in past years.

In terms of initiatives that have been implemented to prevent injuries and to improve

return to work rates, as the minister indicated, the territory has, over the past several years, achieved historic lows in the number of injuries that are occurring. I believe the territory peaked at a rate of around 1,500 to 1,600 injuries per year, and that has dropped off to between 500 and 600. That is quite a remarkable reduction, which has a very significant flow-on to premium impacts.

The territory, in 2011-12, also invested additional funds in the return to work process. A figure of about \$3½ million a year, on average, has gone to employing additional rehabilitation case managers and staff with allied health qualifications, improvements in ICT systems that we use to monitor injuries, and ensuring that there is a coordinated, faster response to them. That is the RiskMan system, primarily, which we have spoken about at previous hearings such as this one. We have also invested in training for staff, particularly managers who may be responsible for assisting the injured worker to return to work.

The government centralised its resources for return to work coordination and rehabilitation, and introduced an independent audit arrangement, to ensure a consistent minimum standard of services across the territory, whereas in earlier years there had been a decentralised arrangement. We have also invested in a number of early intervention initiatives. For example, at the moment we have a number of physiotherapy providers on contract. We arrange to provide, at the government's cost, early intervention physiotherapy services for people who have sustained an injury ahead of the workers compensation claim process, with a view to assisting them to recover, potentially, before a claim even needs to be made.

There really has been an integrated suite of measures very much focused on not just preventing injuries but encouraging people to recover in the workplace, rather than going off, or, where they do go off, to return as quickly as possible. In a system like the Comcare system, around 70 per cent of the premium rate that we pay hangs entirely on the amount of time that a worker stays off work after they have been injured. Our focus is very much on addressing those particular metrics: the duration of incapacity.

MR STEEL: There has not been a specific change to policy around return to work; it has been around the resources provided to support people in that process?

Mr Young: Certainly, but all of those changes that I have just described hung off revisions and changes to policy, backed up by resourcing.

MR WALL: I want to turn to the ACT Long Service Leave Authority. What consideration is given to occupation classes prior to adding them into the long service leave scheme? I know that in the past couple of years there has been an expansion from what was just construction to now the community services sector and also security workers. What work is done in the background to determine what is a suitable industry to bring into the scheme and what is not?

Mr Young: That is essentially a policy decision for government. If you look at the industries that have been selected previously, they tend to be ones where the workers tend to be in the vulnerable classes and there is a reasonably high transition of workers between employers, and into and out of the industry. Certainly, if you look at,

PROOF

say, the cleaning, aged care and construction-type workforces, they certainly fit those characteristics. If you look at the last expansion, which was to aged care and waste workers, that is typical of that policy basis. Ultimately, the decision as to whether or not to expand the scheme and what occupational classes it should apply to is a matter for the government.

MR WALL: What portion of the levy that employers pay into the fund is used up in administration?

Ms Savage: It is actually quite a small portion. Looking at the levy components against each of the schemes—and each scheme does have a slightly different levy rate—it is around 0.2 per cent of the levy that is in place, that goes to the admin side of things.

MR WALL: Is that consistent across the three funds, at about 0.2?

Ms Savage: Four.

MR WALL: Four funds.

Ms Savage: Yes, it is around 0.2. That is certainly derived from the actuarial calculations—admin cost, as a proportion of the overall fund.

MR WALL: I am assuming you may need to take this on notice: for the funds, what is the expected payout rate per fund? What percentage of employees do you estimate will reach that anniversary date and have access to the long service leave contributions that have been made on their behalf?

Ms Savage: I will take that one on notice. There are some quite complex actuarial calculations that go on behind the scenes for that one. It is around decrement rates. I will take that one on notice.

THE CHAIR: The compliance team visited 82 sites in the last financial year. What is your approach to determining what sites to visit?

Ms Savage: That is sites and employers. It is a bit of a generic term, in terms of sites. In building and construction, we try to get a range: large construction, large commercial construction, right through to residential. We might go to a new housing development and literally walk along the street and talk to employers. We might go to a large commercial construction site, talk to the prime contractor, get a list of all their subcontractors, and then go away and investigate everyone associated with that particular site. We might select some employers from some of our other industries, other than building and construction, and do some cold calls. It might be in response to a request from an employer, “Could you come out and give me a hand? Walk me through some of the scheme rules.” It is quite a varied approach but we do try to get coverage across all of the industries.

THE CHAIR: You say it is a varied approach, and, individually, each of those things sounds good. What I am trying to understand is: is there any methodology to that? How do you determine where you are going out to? Is it just a case of, as you are

driving to work, seeing a new site pop up and you—

Ms Savage: No. We also get a list of sites. In the building and construction industry, for example, we understand what construction sites are ongoing, and the various stages that those sites might be up to, because you might get different trades coming in at various times. So there is that methodology; we try to pick sites that give us a good coverage. Of course, the site visits are only a very small part of our compliance operations, but they do give us a lot of insight, and it is a really good way of dealing with employers and explaining scheme rules, and how the schemes operate. We also get the opportunity to touch base with workers on those sites. We quite often get some questions that come through from individual workers that we can then follow up. But there is that methodology that sits behind it.

THE CHAIR: What steps do you take when you go onto a site to ensure that everyone becomes compliant?

Ms Savage: I will use building and construction because I think that gives the best sort of coverage. The other schemes' industries tend to be a one-on-one individual employer. In building and construction, as I said, we might go onto a site and get a list from the prime contractor of all the subcontractors that are registered to work on that site.

We will then take that list, go back to the office and do some deskwork in terms of looking up the registrations, looking up the number of workers that are registered, and making sure that those employers are financial, in terms of levy payments. Quite often we come across subcontractors where it might just be a single-person operation and they do not necessarily need to be registered. They can voluntarily register and accrue long service for themselves, but if they do not have any employees, there is no obligation to register.

If we discover an employer that has not been registered, we will then follow up with that individual employer. We generally go back to the prime contractor as well and give them an indication of the compliance of their subcontractors. There is also a process through the IRE certification where there is an expectation that employers are compliant with a range of their obligations, us being one.

THE CHAIR: You might not be able to answer this but you can take it on notice: there were 82 site visits from the compliance team. How many of those site visits uncovered things that needed rectification?

Ms Savage: Yes, I will take that one on notice. I think there was a very high level of compliance. I do not have the specific numbers of any registrations we had to undertake because of those visits.

THE CHAIR: That would be good; thank you. It being 10 am, thank you, everybody, for coming along.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation

Education Directorate

McAlister, Ms Coralie, Director, EDU, System Policy

Moysey, Mr Sean, Director of Regulation and Compliance, Early Childhood Policy and Regulation

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Huxley, Mr Mark, Chief Information Officer, Digital Strategy, Services and Transformation

Whybrow, Mr Mark, Chief Finance Officer, Strategic Finance

Seton, Ms Sam, Director, Student Engagement

Gotts, Mr Robert, Director, Planning and Analytics

Andersen, Ms Josephine, Acting Director, Learning and Teaching

Craddy, Ms Beth, Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

Brighton, Ms Meg, Deputy Director-General

Hodgson, Mr Chris, Director, People and Performance

Stenhouse, Mr John, Director, Board of Senior Secondary Studies

Bray, Mr Rodney, Director, Infrastructure and Capital Works

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Deputy Director-General, Business Services Division

Summerrell, Mrs Jessica, Acting Director, Governance and Community Liaison

Hale, Ms Claudia, Director, Professional Learning and Regulation, ACT Teacher Quality Institute

THE CHAIR: Welcome everybody. Witnesses are asked to familiarise themselves with the privilege statement at the table. Could you please confirm to the committee that you have read the privilege card before you and that you understand the privilege implications of the statement? Thank you. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Berry: Yes, please. Thanks for the chance to talk about education in the ACT. There are many highlights in the Education Directorate's annual report this year; I and my officials look forward to your questions and we hope that we will be able to help you with your inquiries.

As I highlighted in my ministerial statement in the Assembly in October, my first year as the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development has been very rewarding. I have enjoyed working with all our fantastic teachers and school leaders to deliver on key education priorities and to see the work that they do to broaden the horizon for our students and the community as a whole.

The government took a strong platform, founded in equity, to the 2016 ACT election. I am happy to report that, after 12 months, clear progress has been made to fulfil our commitments. Our foundational value of equity means that I, as minister, with the support of my government colleagues, am focused on how the ACT community

PROOF

supports all children towards a decent life now and into the future, regardless of their background or their circumstances.

The ACT has 75,400 students in 134 schools across the system. In public education, the government is focused every day on making sure that our 46,000 students across 87 high quality schools receive the best education possible. The public education system is growing rapidly and is the system of choice, which is presenting a lot of challenges but also reflects the great standard of education on offer. There is a lot of work to be done, and that is why the government is committed to continuing a large investment in education.

My key priority over the past year has been the future of education conversation. This conversation has been useful in developing ideas to plan for the future of education in Canberra over the next 10 years. The future of education is clearly focused on equity and inclusion as its guiding principles. Our schools, government and non-government, need to deliver the best for the current cohort of students but also consider the next generation. Thousands of people have contributed as part of this conversation, including students and young people, parents and carers, teachers, principals, school staff, public servants and people in the early childhood and community services sectors.

This has been really important. I wanted this conversation to be grounded in the experience of those working and receiving learning in our schools. It is vital for the success of a project like this that it be led from school communities, with their buy-in and recognising their expertise. But the conversation has also been informed by academic and other contributors.

Continuing on the government's focus on equity, recently I announced that early in 2018 every public student from year 7 to year 11 will be provided with an electronic device for their studies. These devices are the textbooks of today, and I am proud to be delivering them to our students.

The ACT government also continues to provide quality infrastructure. This budget will deliver more than \$100 million in capital upgrades over four years, a record investment in our schools, upgrades big and small to help our students to learn, our schools to grow and our wonderful teachers and school leaders to provide quality education. These investments, along with many others, are helping our students to gain skills for life, as well as instil and foster attitudes for lifelong learning.

I look forward to questions from the committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. How is the future of education conversation going?

Ms Berry: Really well. We have had a significant number of people engaged in the conversation so far. What has been really great is the number of students who have wanted to participate, from kindergarten all the way through to year 12. The discussion paper that was first released to stimulate a conversation around the future of education really did do that. Now we have heard from the community. We have provided a further paper that reflects what we think we heard from the community; we

PROOF

will ask the community to make sure that we have printed what we think we heard from the community in all those conversations so far.

There already are a number of themes coming through clearly as a result of those conversations, about how students, teachers, educators, parents and others see the future of education. Particularly, they want to see things improve and for there to be better experiences for kids who have not even started school yet. There has really been a focus on everyone other than themselves through this conversation, which has been really heartening to hear.

I might ask Coralie McAlister, who has been leading the conversation and coordinating that work, to give you some more detail.

Ms McAlister: We are in the first phase of a three-phase process to have a rich, deep conversation with the community. We have had over 2,200 submissions into this conversation. We are hearing from young people, children, parents, the community sector, principals and boards. We are hearing from them and we are going out to seek their views as well.

They are telling us interesting things in interesting ways. It is important to note the innovative way that we are hearing input from the community. It is written submissions, but it is beyond written submissions. It is postcards; it is video booths set up at school fetes. Some of our schools are putting up displays with cardboard cut-outs, moving around to different classrooms, with graffiti walls et cetera.

I will give you a taste of what we are hearing. Young people are saying that they want less focus on grades and more focus on what they are learning and what success looks like for them. “Allow us to be creative thinkers and problem solvers” is a quote from young people. Our schools are saying that they would like a greater focus on building skills and a love of learning. They are saying things like, “Let’s make our focus creating curious minds in our young people.” Our parents are wanting to see students happy and engaged and measurably improving. The community sector is giving us feedback, as are our partners across government.

We are still in the first phase of seeking input from those that we would not normally expect to be engaged in such a consultation. The second phase will be to distil key themes and continue the consultation. Finalising it, the third phase will be the release of the government’s strategy for the future of education.

THE CHAIR: You said there were 2,200 submissions so far. Is that the count of formal written submissions or does that include conversations as well?

Ms McAlister: It is a mixture. We document the conversations; that is important. It is a mixture of formal submissions and website responses through the your say website. We are using postcards to capture or allow people to capture input. All of those submissions are inputted into the program to hear what the community is saying.

THE CHAIR: You touched on some emerging things. What are the next steps? What can we look forward to?

Ms Berry: Because this is part of the development of an early childhood strategy as well, there are two next parts. The first is checking that what we have heard is what the community has told us, which is the paper that is available online now on the your say website. The next part is to have a conversation with the educators in the schools about the kinds of supports they need to ensure that our kids get the best learning opportunities. And there is an early childhood strategy paper; it is talking with that particular part of the sector about the importance of early childhood education in this story. Everybody that we have been speaking to, particularly the school leaders and the school principals, have been telling us how important those early years are in setting up children for learning throughout their years. We have been hearing from a lot of experts about that, and we want to talk with the community about that as well.

There is still a bit of work to happen with getting feedback from the community to check that we are on the right path and that we have heard what they have said properly. Then next year there will be a translation of all of that and rubber on the road.

THE CHAIR: In the context of an early childhood strategy—excuse my naivety as I ask this—there is no engagement with young children, pre school? We are engaging with experts to develop the strategy?

Ms Berry: Part of it will be with experts, but it will also be with early childhood educators, the community services sector. We have already heard from school principals and teachers about the school readiness of children who are under five who have not commenced school yet. There is already some work being done in the ACT, particularly with the prep for pre program, which was piloted last year, and a number of those programs. I might get Sean to take you through some of the detail of those. That is about making sure that young people, before they even get to school, are supported and that if they need additional support, that is provided so that when they get to school they are starting at an equal place. Some children need more support than others. This prep for pre program and big school ready are the kinds of things that help families support their children better and have them more ready to start kindergarten.

We will be hearing from young people. Even four-year-olds have a contribution to this conversation, and we would like to encourage that as well.

Mr Moysey: The minister has recently issued a discussion paper, particularly around the early childhood aspects of the early childhood strategy. We have some consultation work planned with the sector to build on the conversations that have been happening already. The themes that we are looking at are increased access to early childhood for families who would benefit from that but may not necessarily have the means to do that and transitions from early childhood to schools, because in the ACT, and around the country, at this point they are structured differently.

What we can do with that transitions process is maximise the knowledge of children. That is really what a lot of these programs are about, and about taking the opportunity to do that development work with children earlier and build on what has happened with children before.

If we take some great practice that is happening in the territory where practitioners get together and say, “I have these children. They are going to be going to your preschool next year. Let’s talk about how we are going to work together,” we want to elevate that into standard practice, doing that best practice and maximising that across the board.

Key to doing that across the territory is partnerships. There is a lot of potential for really positive partnerships to form across the board between services, between government and non-government. That is the conversation that is happening with the sector. The discussion paper really builds on the conversation that has been happening. The plan is to do some deeper talking with the sector and families around that and see where we can land leading into next year.

In terms of young children, they can participate provided you frame it in a way that relates to their relevant age. There is a great conversation about some of the challenges that families and children face with the week-to-week cycle of drop-off and pick-up and before and after. That is a conversation that children can relate to, and when you have conversations with them about it they can have a view on that. In the past we have done that kind of work with young children. Back in the little part of the building where we work we have some of that material where children have provided comments on things that are essentially consultation on policy issues.

THE CHAIR: That is incredible. Thank you.

MR STEEL: You mentioned that transitions is a major focus for the discussion paper conversation. What other areas are you focusing on as part of that conversation?

Ms Berry: For the future of education discussion paper, the second part is what we have heard from the community. There are 10 themes, which is quite a lot, but we wanted to make sure that we captured everything properly and that we were genuine in making sure that what we heard from the community was correct. They have included things around assessments, what should be measured and what is the best way to use those measurements. I have it here; I can read them out to you. In fact we might submit one of these, as well as the early childhood paper, for the committee’s reference. It is available online, though.

With learning for the future, we have been hearing from young people about being ready. In some of the conversations that I was able to be part of, it was described as being ready to be an adult, what that means and what kind of skills they need to learn when they get out of school transitions, which we have talked about.

Personalised and individualised learning for every single student has come out very clearly from all the age groups of students, and in particular from teachers and school principals as well. Consistency between schools: where there is inconsistency, they wanted a little more consistency across schools around what is actually provided in the schools that meet the curriculum requirements. I refer also to life skills, being an adult and opportunities and pathways for everybody. There was a really strong message around equity and equality from students and the school communities.

With respect to measuring and what we should be measuring, it is probably not

unusual to hear young people talk about tests and not be too excited about them. This was about not taking tests away but about what you would do in an assessment that actually makes a difference to a child, a parent, a family and a school community. What is being assessed and is that actually useful in providing teachers with what they need to know about an individual student's learning needs, where they started at the start of the year and what sort of gains they have made to the end of the year? That has been a really interesting conversation.

I refer also to collaboration in making sure that we support individual needs and valuing educators. There is also a big question about what is inclusion. When we talked to people and asked the question about inclusion, we found that inclusion means a lot of different things. That is part of a bigger conversation, particularly in the disabilities space.

Every single one of those themes has a very strong relationship around equity, and making sure that kids have what they need to be at an equal starting point through all of that. That has been really good to hear. We will table those, and you can also find them online.

MRS KIKKERT: That would be great; thank you. What has been the cost of the education conversation thus far and how much do you predict it will cost when the project is finalised?

Ms Berry: With respect to some of the things in my office, I have a bunch of butchers paper on which kids from the minister's student congress have written all their ideas and contributions. That has all been gathered together and they have put in a report to me on what they talked about in the future of education conversation. This does not need to be a really expensive conversation, because you can do it however you like.

When I have been talking to young people—or anyone, really—I have asked them to contribute in any way that they feel comfortable, whether that is by way of a couple of words, an email, a postcard or in handwriting. They might want to sing me a song, send a rap, or even an academic paper; and I have received a few of those from some young students, and I am sure we will hear more from them, as they go through the school systems.

Mr Whybrow: I refer the committee back to the budget papers for 2017-18. On page 91 there was a budget initiative that provided \$546,000 over two years to the directorate to facilitate the operations of the discussion.

MR WALL: I have had a look at—as you branded it—the response paper, to make sure that what I thought I had heard, I had heard correctly. You managed to condense over 2,200 submissions in various forms down to two pages in the—

Ms Berry: It is more than two pages.

MR WALL: flyer that is online. What has been the process of sifting through all those and how have you determined what is an issue that you want to pursue and what is not relevant at this point in time?

Ms Howson: I will start that response and then invite my colleague Coralie McAlister to fill in further detail. Essentially, right from the outset, we have been collecting information and using a categorisation methodology to map our inputs. That has also been informed by a literature review and evidence from research about high performing school systems that has given us some direction around the sort of framework around which we could be considering information coming in from the community.

Essentially, it is a categorisation process informed by research and evidence and then, through the weight of emphasis that the community places on particular issues—obviously, recurring themes and using methods that are associated with qualitative research—we have been able to generate these themes. The most important piece now is, of course, going back and checking with the community that they were the things they intended us to hear and whether there are gaps in what they think is important that they cannot see articulated in our playback. It is an important iterative process.

MR WALL: What is the title of the document that you are referring to? I am looking at the document library currently on the your say website, and the only one that relates to the response is “what you have told us about our schools” and that is a two-page document.

Ms Berry: It is “some initial themes identified throughout phase 1 of the conversation”—

MR WALL: That is not available on the your say website.

Ms Berry: It should be.

Ms Howson: We will get on to that and come back to you today.

MR WALL: I might ask that you table a copy, if that is possible, please, while we are waiting, given that it is not available online currently.

Ms Berry: Of course we can.

Ms Howson: Of course.

Ms Berry: It is right there. We will give it to you.

THE CHAIR: I have read it. It is online.

MR WALL: I am looking at “the future of education” on the your say site, and it is not there.

Ms Howson: We will be able to come back to you and make sure that is there.

Ms Berry: We will check it for you. It is very public, so it is okay.

THE CHAIR: I think they want you to read it.

Ms Berry: Yes, we do.

Ms Howson: The other point is that we have, with the minister's leadership, been very clear about making sure that there are multiple channels for people to engage with us and that we do not rely on written submissions entirely, because not all of the people we want to hear from across the spectrum would be motivated to read a discussion paper and respond in a written form.

We have had enormous support from our school boards, and particularly our chairs of school boards, who have met with me on two occasions across the course of this year and have facilitated, with their principals, community-based conversations. We are getting some very rich information coming back from school communities.

MR WALL: What is the role of non-government schools in this conversation?

Ms Berry: They have been engaged in the conversation as well. I have met with some parents and educators from the Catholic school sector. I understand that a number of those schools are engaged in the conversation. Coralie can give you some more information.

Ms McAlister: We have received submissions from the non-government sector and also visited professional associations associated with the non-government sector to support them to have the conversation with their communities. We have just checked the your say website and the document is there under the "themes" tab.

MR WALL: It would make sense to put it under the document library, wouldn't it?

Ms McAlister: We will take that feedback; absolutely. The other point that is important is that it is the first initial playback of themes, and they are themes that all respondent groups are mentioning. Earlier I mentioned that we are hearing from our schools, our students, our community sector and so on. Each of those groups is mentioning these 10 themes. We are still looking at themes within individual groups and looking at how they can inform this conversation. We expect another playback and that those themes may be strengthened or new themes might emerge.

Ms Berry: The other part to that as well, and what is guiding our work in this space, is the advisory panel, which includes people like John Hattie, Chris Sarra, Cathy Hudson, John Falzon and Susan Helyar. They have been an important part of the work that we have been doing, in checking over the work that we are distributing to the community, to make sure that it is genuine and that they understand that that is what we have heard and that is what we are feeding back to the community. They have been important in the development of the discussion paper as well as this themes document, and also the analysis of all the feedback that we have heard so far.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is on the laptop policy and the implementation of this policy to give all high school students in the ACT a laptop. Why were the Acer Chromebooks chosen?

Ms Berry: Again, the ACT government took advice from a panel of experts to advise us on what was the most appropriate device for the school community and certainly,

as I have been talking with students and teachers since the announcement was made, they have been very supportive of the Acer Chromebook. I will let Mark Huxley talk with you a bit more about how that decision came about.

Mr Huxley: As the minister referred to, we had a special advisory committee which had some recommendations that informed the rollout of this initiative. They took into account lessons learnt from previous national and international implementations of laptops in education. One of the keys was looking at the success of the Google implementation here in the territory. They looked at what was currently working in our schools.

The evidence they were provided with was, for example, that 91 per cent of devices purchased by schools in the past 12 months have been Chromebooks. It is a device which is very popular amongst our schools. You could almost say it is the device of choice based on the popularity of the schools purchasing. It integrates really well with the Google platform which has been established in our schools over the past three years, which has over 45,000 users and is used across all our schools.

We also have three years worth of professional development of staff. We have had over 1,100 staff go to Google summits, go to key training events, and that has been a really strong capability that has been developed amongst our staff.

They had a look at that and said it would be natural to extend the success of that initiative into the device implementation. It was that strong history of implementation already existing in practice, strong uptake and capability of staff that really led to the decision to continue to use Chromebooks for this initiative.

MRS KIKKERT: What happens if that device is defective?

Mr Huxley: We have strong warranty provisions and that is part of the approach to market that we went out with. It was an assessment of the actual warranty provisions for the device. The Acer device has been chosen. Acer have a strong history of delivering into the education market and that came through strongly in their response. We actually did a lot of cross-checking against referees for these providers and they were very complimentary of not only the device quality but the service of this particular provider. That was definitely a factor in choosing them as part of this implementation.

MRS KIKKERT: Can you please clarify: are the students keeping these Chromebooks or is it just a borrowing for the year and then they have to return it to the school?

Mr Huxley: The Chromebooks actually remain the property of the territory with this implementation. They are provided to the students, though, to take home to use as a personal device to support their learning both at school and at home. They remain with the student until the end of their usable life, which is three years. If the student leaves the system, for example, moves interstate, they would be expected to return it to the school.

Ms Berry: It is like a textbook or a library book.

PROOF

MRS KIKKERT: Each year you receive a new textbook. Do you receive a new Chromebook?

Mr Huxley: The Chromebook's usable life is three years. We are seeing schools use the Chromebooks to their full capability definitely over a three-year period based on the current usage. We are looking at a three-year life cycle in replacement for the devices.

MR STEEL: As a bit of feedback, the program has been received very well in my community. I just want to ask: how many students across the ACT will be receiving a Chromebook under this program from 1 January?

Mr Huxley: It is actually close to 15,000 in total. That is the current size of the order. And it is on track to be implemented early in term 1 next year.

Ms Berry: I am not an expert on IT devices but the Chromebooks that were shown to us at Kingsford-Smith when we announced the formalisation of the contract are military-grade tested. That means that they are pretty hardy, they are robust and they will take what a teenager can give them. They have shatterproof glass. They have the PIN as well.

I said to the students, "This means the excuse 'a dog ate my homework' is not going to work anymore." And the Datacom guys that are distributing the Chromebook said, "If a dog ate these they would get pretty sick." They probably would not be able to get through them. They are pretty amazing. The students took me through the Chromebook, how it works for them, why they liked it and why they were happy that they were going to be getting a new one at their school.

MR STEEL: And the existing MyBackPack—I think it is called MyBackPack—is a Google platform, is that right?

Ms Berry: Google MyBackPack, yes.

MR STEEL: And they are both compatible?

Mr Huxley: Yes. The digital backpack basically is the online portal which our schools go to for their online services and that integrates seamlessly with that.

MR WALL: What happens in the event that a device is lost or stolen?

Mr Huxley: We have got existing policies and procedures in place that have been working in schools for a number of years now in relation to the devices. Basically if there is any malicious damage then the schools have an ability to work with the parents on that. They have also got a base level of stock for replacement purposes over the life of the devices. We make sure that schools are equipped to deal with those things locally in a way that they can respond to that, and they have been used to that practice for a number of years.

MR WALL: Is there any form of a bond or onus on the student or the family to cover

PROOF

the cost of the device if it is lost?

Mr Huxley: Not as such, no.

Ms Berry: But it is the same way as if you would sign a library book or a textbook out. You sign that you are going to take some care of it.

MR WALL: My experience was if I lost a textbook I had to pay for it.

Mr Huxley: We let the schools, within guidelines, obviously, determine the local need based on an individual basis because there are a number of variables in those circumstances and schools are used to negotiating with their parents around that.

MR WALL: And the value of the contract is, from my understanding, \$17 million. Is that over a three-year period or how is that—

Mr Huxley: The value of the contract is for only one year at the moment. It is approximately \$7.6 million for the first year. One of the key recommendations from the advisory committee was to bring forward the device initiative and actually provide it for all students from year 7 through to year 11, not just years 7 and 11. That was really to allow the local school adoption to be faster paced and equity to be provided earlier in the initiative. We have been able to implement that. We are looking at a further approach to the market for the outyears of the program.

MR WALL: And what happens to a student entering year 7 in the subsequent year? Do they get a used device or will they be issued with a new device?

Mr Huxley: All new students coming in will be issued with a new device at year 7 and again at year 10 in the outyears of the initiative.

MR WALL: What happens then to a device that has possibly only had a year's worth of use by a student that exits, say, at year 10?

Mr Huxley: We allow schools to put that back into their local pool to manage devices for those kids who did not bring theirs charged that day or to deal with the local new students coming in short term. We have the ability to give the flexibility to schools to manage those devices locally back into their pool.

MR WALL: And what safeguards are put in place around, I guess, viruses, security, making sure that certain websites are not being accessed and the like?

Mr Huxley: When the devices are at school they are actually managed within our domain. The content filters apply on internet access while they are at school. One of the recommendations from the advisory committee was that, when the device goes home—and there was a conversation with parents and students around appropriate use at home—we should not apply filtering at that stage.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, you mentioned in your opening statement that it is available for years 7 to year 11, is that correct? How come the year 12s are not getting it, just out of curiosity?

Ms Berry: What we have found, and based on the advice of the expert panel, is that the majority of students in year 12 already have a device. At this part of the program they will already have a device. There was a view taken by the panel that there would not be a need to provide a device to year 12 students. However, if it would be the case that there were students who did not have a device or something happened, the school has their own pool of devices that they would be able to distribute if that were required.

Mr Huxley: We currently have a ratio of one device per two students generally across the system. A lot of the year 12s have access to those devices currently and, as the minister says, all schools have a base level of IT funding that allows them to meet local equity needs as well in those specific instances. It was felt, given that year 12s were one year out and they have already got access to devices, years 7 to 11 was the good spot in terms of providing those devices.

THE CHAIR: This is going to sound like a strange question but where are the students meant to charge the laptops?

Mr Huxley: We would hope that they would come to school fully charged. That is an expectation that we have and that has been an expectation around students bringing their own devices to schools now for a number of years. One of the good things about these devices is that they have a common charging platform which means that schools will be able to have their own charging stations available at the school with the existing chargers for students to be able to access if their devices were not fully charged. The battery life on these devices is over 10 hours, though. They are designed to last the full school day.

MR WALL: To what extent will they be used in daily classes? Given that many schools have already got devices available and some classes are using them and some are not, to what extent is the way the curriculum is delivered being adapted in a classroom setting to utilise the device?

Ms Berry: Any parent these days of a teenage child who has a device will know the challenges of making sure that their time on that device is managed in an appropriate way at home as well, knowing that there will be some time spent at school. However, teachers are very careful about the time that our students would spend on these devices at school.

Mr Huxley: As the minister rightly says, there is a balanced approach across our schools. That is part of the approach to implementation of technology across a number of years. We do, as I said, have a large number of staff who have been trained up in the use of these technologies, not just in how to turn them on but actually in how to effectively implement them as part of the curriculum.

The Australian curriculum is now delivered online. Digital curriculum content to support the Australian curriculum is all available online. We are seeing the use of these in really quite powerful ways across the breadth of the curriculum, not just, as it was 10 years ago, in specialist lab situations. Our staff have been working hard on developing their ability to integrate those effectively. We are also going to expand

those supports for schools into next year, acknowledging that this initiative is ramping up. We have increased offerings available through our Google summit and our regular training sessions.

Ms Berry: That is the other great thing about having the same device available across all the schools. There will still be students who might bring a different device, and that is fine. Schools will have a bring your own device policy. So if students or families make that decision, that is perfectly okay as well. But when the majority of the devices are one, teachers will have to spend less time troubleshooting on a whole lot of different devices and they can spend more time with students on learning.

MR WALL: What is the expected outcome of providing a device to each student in the academic space? What policy objective is this trying to achieve?

Ms Berry: At the start of this it is very clear that it is about equity. It is about making sure that every kid gets a device regardless of their background or their circumstances. That will lead to families not having to worry about finances at the start of a school year to purchase a device, or wondering what device to buy or what is going to suit their child's needs. Every child will have access to one device. That gives teachers more time to spend with them on their learning outcomes rather than troubleshooting a whole bunch of different devices and being IT experts across the board. That means that students will have more time learning and a more personalised approach.

MR WALL: What is going to be the benchmark of whether the program is a success?

Ms Berry: Part of it will be that parents do not have to worry about purchasing a device for their child. That is a success, particularly for parents on low incomes. Making sure they have a device that they do not have to worry about at the start of the school year is clearly one success that we could say right now happens as a result of providing this device to every student. That equity outcome is one measure that we will be meeting very easily right now through this announcement. Personalised learning through each child having an Acer Chromebook that has the same interface with the school, their classrooms and their homework and connects up with others will make the learning experiences for children and the teaching experiences for teachers much more—

MR WALL: So there is no academic objective that you are trying to achieve?

Ms Howson: Certainly, yes. Certainly there are academic objectives. The provision of these devices provides more opportunity for a more flexible approach to teaching methodology, or pedagogy, as they talk about in education. And, as the minister has said, it does offer opportunities for teachers to individualise approaches to learning. And things I have seen that save teachers time and give them immediate feedback, which we call formative assessment, can happen in the moment in teaching in classrooms.

Mr Huxley: On a very practical level, as I said, the Australian curriculum is online. The digital curriculum content is online. So in terms of seamless use and more efficiency in the way a classroom operates, ensuring that students have access to that is going to be one of the key outcomes. We all know that the teacher makes a huge

difference in what happens in the classroom, so maximising the amount of time a teacher has to focus on learning and teaching and not on, as the minister said, managing the devices is another key outcome for the initiative and why we have chosen to extend the current platform.

In terms of the actual outcomes from an academic point of view, communication, collaboration and some of the general capabilities in the Australian curriculum are really enhanced by the use of technology. Where in Google you can have multiple students collaborating in a document, as a teacher you can actually see who has been participating in that collaboration and what has been their input. It allows the teacher to then go and target individual students for additional attention as required. So there is that formative ability for the teacher to get much more of an idea about where the students are up to. Kids who otherwise would not be putting their hand up in class, who might not always have a voice, have the opportunity to use these tools to understand and communicate their learning. One of the key things we have heard from teachers is that it allows them to understand the learning needs of a broader number of students and add additional assistance and intervene early. As downstream consequences of that, obviously we would hope for improved outcomes for students.

Ms Howson: The other thing, which is really obvious, is that this is a method of working. It equips children and young people with the skills they need to be able to translate their ideas and their creativity into an electronic platform, which is the way workplaces are operating now and will continue to do more of into the future.

MR WALL: How will you be measuring what benefit this program has had in an academic sense? How are you going to measure it? Or is it just going to be subjective and—

Ms Berry: This is one of the themes that have come out of the future of education conversation: what measures school communities make on students and whether measuring or testing a couple of things and then recording that actually makes a difference to a child's learning and where their abilities are from the start of the year to how they have gained to the end of the year. Whilst obviously there will continue to be reports on a couple of tests that show a moment-of-time result for students in our schools, we will be able to look at different ways we can assess the work of students that benefit a child's personalised learning, and see the gains they have through each year or even through each term.

If that is the way the community and the school community want to progress, which is what we have heard very strongly in the future of education conversations, that is something we will be looking at very closely, with the advice of the advisory group, who have also been keen to look at different ways to provide the information to teachers, students and families that they are really interested in knowing about, not just a couple of things at a moment in time. All of that will be considered as the success of these devices being provided to students in the ACT.

This is nation leading. No other state or territory in this country is providing devices in the same way we are. Whilst it is quite common in countries overseas to provide hundreds of thousands of devices to students, in Australia this is the first time that that has ever happened. We are pretty proud of that and we know that the rest of the

country will be checking out what is happening here in the ACT.

MR STEEL: Minister, you mentioned, I think in your opening remarks, the preparedness for preschool program. Could you explain what the program does, how it is being rolled out throughout the child and family centres and what the outcomes of the program have been?

Ms Berry: One of the things we talked about was working in partnership with different directorates and also within the community to support young people and families before they even start school. That is what the prep for pre and the big-school ready programs are about. They are working with the Community Services Directorate and the child and family centres, as well as other experts in the early childhood space, and connecting up with preschools and schools, who have been very keen on this program. Because it sets children up better, it allows for children to have an equal start rather than some kids starting behind because of different things that are going on in their lives.

Ms Seton: The prep for pre program is linked with the schools for all recommendations. It has been running this year in four networks, one in each of our different networks. As the minister said, it is a combination between Education, the Child Development Service and the Community Services Directorate.

The way the program worked was that we worked to identify vulnerable families. This might have been families that schools already were aware of. It might have been families that were showing up in our community service areas. We set up a session where the students worked with trained educators, occupational therapists and speech therapists, and we ran a session for the parents at the same time. It was a really nice, easy way for parents to come in and feel welcomed. It gave us a chance for a speech therapist to play with the students and identify any concerns we may have had. Then we could start working with those families earlier to make sure they were accessing the services they needed.

It also gives the parents a safe opportunity to talk about any fears they might have about moving into preschool. In our very last session we are inviting our principals from the preschools they are going to in to meet with the families. They are going to give the students a school hat, make the families feel welcome and also be a face so that when they are coming in to school on the first day they already have that connection with someone at the school, so it is not quite as daunting.

MR STEEL: Can non-government early childhood services refer into the program, or are they linked into the program in some way? Or is it just government preschools and government service providers?

Ms Seton: I would have to check the families that are in there at the moment, but it was just the families that were identified as being families of need. I am not sure what the service is moving forward.

MR STEEL: One of the challenges is that many of the most vulnerable families are not linked in with any service systems, and identifying them is a problem. Have you come up with strategies to be able to identify some of those families through the

health system, through health check-ups and so forth?

Ms Seton: We try to work broadly, obviously within the privacy areas that we need to work with. It is about looking at who already knows these families and how we can work with them. Sometimes schools are the best place. They may have an older sibling. They are aware that there is a little person coming through who has not perhaps enrolled for preschool. It is about having that relationship with the family and a warm referral, saying, “We know you. Come on, let’s come and do this together and let’s catch you before”—

MR WALL: Land allocation for schools: how is that currently determined?

Ms Berry: I think I saw on another committee questions around the provision of land.

MR WALL: These will relate to where Education has a role in that.

Ms Berry: We can provide you with some information on that.

Ms Howson: We are very happy to talk about our role in engaging with the department of environment and planning.

MR WALL: Yes, I understand there is crossover between here and the planning space.

Ms Howson: That is correct.

MR WALL: We will delve into where your responsibilities are.

Mr Gotts: Are you referring to land for schools as a general principle or land for non-government schools?

MR WALL: Let us have a look at both, while we are on it. As the operator for government education, how do you go about making sure that there is land secured on the development fronts to meet the demand?

Mr Gotts: The first thing we do is that we keep a very close watch on the enrolment planning. We look at what is happening with regard to enrolments, on a school by school basis and on a network by network basis and across the whole territory. We get very detailed data from our planning colleagues on future dwellings and where those dwellings are going to be. We work with them very closely on developments. For example, with the Ginninderry development in west Belconnen, we worked closely with them on that. Earlier this year I walked over some hot and dusty paddocks out there and looked at potential sites for schools. That is at an early stage and nothing is confirmed.

Not just for government schools but also for non-government schools, given the time frames for a development like that, given the numbers of people who will be in that region, and given the current balance between government schools and non-government schools, we are looking to see what the likely requirement is for an investment that is a very long-term investment. Where might a school be? How large

would it need to be given those parameters?

MR WALL: What is the balance that you try to achieve between an offering for government and non-government education in greenfield areas? How does that then influence—

Mr Gotts: There is not a specific balance. It is not an allocation as in, “You get this percentage and you get this percentage.” It is driven by forecasting the likely need. At the moment the balance between government and non-government is 39 per cent non-government and 61 per cent government, give or take fractions of a per cent. We take that into account.

We talk to proponents of non-government schools. For example, in July I ran a session for proponents of non-government schools and talked to them about the broad market information. These are the enrolment numbers that are happening. These are the numbers of children who are being generated in the ACT—immigration into the ACT and so on. These are the things that they, as proponents of future schools, might need to think about for their own planning against the time that a piece of land would become available and require a school.

MR WALL: What involvement do you have in the approach that, say, a non-government organisation might take to purchasing land and establishing a non-government school?

Ms Berry: There is an expression of interest process currently underway for a school in—

Mr Gotts: It is in the planning process. It will be underway shortly.

Ms Berry: In the planning; there you go. The process is occurring.

Mr Gotts: The only thing I can say about that is that another agency has the lead responsibility for the process of making land available for community purposes. In this case the community purpose would be a non-government school. We in Education have a role in that through the minister’s responsibilities under the Education Act for registration of schools. The process that we have been working with, with another agency, has been to ensure that the education portfolio’s responsibilities can be exercised through a process.

MR WALL: From the data that is available, looking at the current development front, which is Gungahlin, or it has been the more established recent one, do you think we got the measure of schools right in that area? What lessons have been learnt from there to inform how Molonglo and Ginninderry are being developed with respect to sites available for schools?

Mr Gotts: In answer to that question, I have to say I hope so. For example, we have taken data from earlier development of schools in the ACT, in Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Gungahlin and so on. There is about a 19-year cycle from the point that a school opens to reaching maximum enrolment and then starting to drop down, just through demographic changes in a suburb. So we take that into account.

We look at factors like where you would best site a school in a future development so that it might, for example, take account of the stages of development. There might be a certain number of properties sold and developed in one stage of the development and then, next door, a few years later, there will be another number. So how do you choose a site that will take advantage of both of those? We take those sorts of things into account.

THE CHAIR: We will take a 15-minute break.

Hearing suspended from 10.58 to 11.16 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody.

Ms Berry: Just before you start, I have a Chromebook for the committee for a bit of show and tell but I would like it back.

MR MILLIGAN: My question is in relation to the Indigenous completion rate for year 12 on page 31 of the annual report. If you look at the completion rate for Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for year 12 in 2012 you have got 86 per cent. For 2016 it is at 75 per cent. I am just wondering if you could explain what that gap is and what the government is doing about it.

Ms Howson: You are referring to page 31 of the annual report on the completion of year 12 certificates?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes.

Ms Howson: You can see that in terms of the trends across the ACT since 2014 we have been actually seeing increasing improvements. I know that you hear this often but very small numbers can make significant impacts on overall proportional amounts. I think the important point for us to make here is that our approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our schools has been very focused on engagement and attendance at school. If we look at those results and a number of others we will see over the past three to four years some good outcomes in relation to attendance and overall achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We are, however, under no shadow of a doubt that we have got much more work to do.

What we would like to talk to you about are some of the initiatives that are in play and where we are taking those into the future. With growth in learning we are also seeing some promising outcomes for our students but again we would emphasise that the results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not commensurate with the results for non-Indigenous students. My point is that those changes in numbers are small and, even though we are confident overall about an upward trend, we are seeing improvements in attendance and engagement of Aboriginal students right across the board.

Ms Andersen: As Natalie has said, there are a number of initiatives underway to shift the deficit language around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement to a strengths-based discourse. We know that there is that persistent differential in

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement. However, we do know that we are doing quite well in terms of reading and numeracy, in particular in years 5 and 7.

We have a number of initiatives underway that we are building on to ensure that we are catering for the needs and aspirations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Some of these include the Koori preschool initiative. We have five Koori preschools located at Kingsford-Smith school, Richardson, Wanniasa, Ngunnawal Primary School and Narrabundah Early Childhood School. The children enrolled in that program have the opportunity to co-enrol in a mainstream preschool as well so—

MR MILLIGAN: Koori preschool is for two to five years of age?

Ms Andersen: That is right.

MR MILLIGAN: I am talking about the year 12 completion rate.

Ms Andersen: Yes, absolutely.

MR MILLIGAN: There is a big gap between those initiatives. What other initiatives have you got in place that help address the attendance, participation and successful completion of year 12? You mentioned some initiatives. What are some of those initiatives?

Ms Howson: These are long-term targets and goals for us in our system and it is important, I think, to appreciate that we need to be working at every level and across every sector of education in order to improve attendance and, most importantly, the ultimate expression of achievement through our school system, the year 12 certificate, or moving through to a vocational qualification and other learning or employment opportunities once students leave our school system.

Our investment in Koori preschool is critical to that long-term objective because we need to ensure that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are starting school on an equal playing field with all other students. Students who start behind find it more difficult to catch up through the school system. That is why Koori preschool is an important part of this story.

In terms of the specific achievement in year 12 and attendance and engagement with school, I might ask Beth Craddy to talk about the things that we actually focus on for our secondary school students in particular.

Ms Craddy: One of the big things we have is the aspirations program. Our coordinators of that start working with kids in year 5 and follow them through to year 12 so that they actually have some continuity with somebody from our office who then also has contacts with the schools.

We have the secondary scholarships program which we have allocated approximately \$75,000 a year to, which is mostly for students who are interested in both health and teaching. It is worth \$4,000 a year at the moment for those students. They also link into the aspirations program with some mentoring through that.

We also are very much focused on the cultural integrity aspect of all this and the strength-based approach. While we have statistics and they very much guide what we do, we are dealing with individual students. Our responses are usually personalised and individualised to meet the aspirations and the needs of those particular kids.

A lot of Aboriginal families would not necessarily see university as the be-all and end-all. For a lot of students who do leave prior to completing year 12, what we try to ascertain with the colleges and through our section is that they have a positive pathway. By and large by the time you meet up with those students when they are 22, 23, 24, they have found their pathway and are quite productive and happy in their lives. We make sure that there is a positive outcome and not necessarily a year 12 certificate at that point.

We have the Mura awards, which is a recent initiative we introduced in 2014. The schools nominate students for those. It has a small bursary attached so that there is some scope for parents and students to be more actively involved in the decision-making and with what the students are doing at school. That money is then used for extracurricular activities, enrichment programs, uniforms, excursions, all those sorts of things, to actually encourage greater participation at that level.

We have a lot of school-based programs as well which have been strengthening things across the board—homework clubs, culture clubs, all those things—but they are very much operated at a school level within the school community as a response to that.

Again when we are looking at the statistics for the colleges, yes there is still work to be done. As the director-general pointed out, the cohort is quite small. Again if you have got 120 students and there are different kids going through, the statistics can vary at that point.

MR MILLIGAN: You mentioned an individual approach to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is a very small population in the territory. If you are looking at the number of students attending secondary school in the territory, you are talking probably fewer than 1,000 students roughly—if anyone knows exactly what that figure is. That is a very small number. If you are talking about individually approaching these kids, should not that be a relatively easy job to do for the education department and even for the school? When you are talking such a small number you should be able to make a huge difference?

Ms Craddy: There are 1,850 students enrolled in ACT public schools at the moment, yes, from K through. By and large students are members of their school communities. That is the first place where students will make those connections.

Ms Howson: If I may, I would like to say that I think we are having a very positive impact. You are right to say that they are a small number and increasingly we are seeing our schools becoming much more competent at being able to offer individual pathways for the students that they are supporting.

Students that have, as the minister often says, a lot of things going on in their life need a whole range of supports and not all of those supports are provided by education. But we do work very closely with our colleagues in other parts of government to support

those students.

Again we are very mindful of what the community is telling us, which is to shift our language to a more strength-based approach in what we are talking about and focus on the achievements of our students and, in doing that, make students feel more comfortable and successful when they are at school.

This year, for example, every principal in our school system has been going through a cultural integrity program which is focused on ensuring that their school provides a positive and welcoming climate. And we are seeing really wonderful things come out of that. For example—Beth, you will have to help me with the name of it but at Campbell High School—the centre for excellence?

Ms Craddy: Centre for excellence, yes.

Ms Howson: And the focus on building our Aboriginal and Torres Strait workforce to work with those young people but also, more importantly, making links with the local Aboriginal community and inviting those adults into our school system so that students get a richer opportunity to connect with their culture and build their self-identity and confidence about being at school.

MR MILLIGAN: Was that program an initiative undertaken by that school itself? Was it their choice to implement it? Why has it not come from the education department and why has not the education department decided to put across all schools a similar program or some sort of program?

Ms Howson: We are a system that, I think, prides itself on the ability of schools to respond to the specific needs of their students and this initiative at Campbell High School was a specific response of the principal of that school to their community. We encourage every school to take that approach and, as Beth said, there are schools doing a range of things right across the board.

It depends on the partnerships they have with their community, where their students come from, the families that they are connected to, what is important for those students at that point in time. A single, if you like, a universal or silver bullet approach to this is not going to be successful.

We have actually published a report on an action research initiative that we have been running over the past three years where we have provided funding from our central pool, if you like, to encourage schools to design their interventions, whether they are around literacy, numeracy or cultural competency—whatever point they want to emphasise for their students—and actually build an evidence base behind that. In doing that research we are able then to demonstrate to other schools what works and what does not.

MR MILLIGAN: You mentioned a cultural integrity program. On page 68 of the annual report it does not appear to include any cultural awareness training for staff, the directorate or the teachers. Has this been left out or is there cultural awareness training?

Ms Howson: The one that I was talking about was initiated in the following reporting period. This, of course, is just till June 2017. We will be reporting on it next year. But, more generally, every school would make an investment in some level of cultural awareness-raising or cultural competency. Somewhere else in the report there is a list of providers. There are I think four providers from a panel that support our schools to offer that training.

MR MILLIGAN: How difficult is it to get those figures on the number of teachers or staff that have attended and undertaken cultural awareness training of any type?

Ms Howson: We can certainly confirm that every school principal is attending the current program. In terms of the numbers that attended the other programs, I am sure we can get that. In fact, Ms Brighton looks like she has it at hand.

Ms Brighton: In the first semester this year, that is, until 30 June, we had 43 teachers from 12 schools participate in the cultural competency program. This program combines online modules as well as workshops designed and facilitated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education section, as well as external specialist staff.

All participants attended the first workshop, which is about knowing yourself and yourself and culture, and then the additional resources work the participants through a range of programs to help build their cultural capability. That was over semester one. Then in semester two we have got further programs.

MR MILLIGAN: I think later in that annual report it states that there were 53 who attended, I think. Was it 53 or 43?

Ms Brighton: We will have to take that on notice and confirm it for you.

Ms Howson: We will check that.

MR WALL: You touched briefly on Koori preschools. Recently, I think the University of Western Sydney did a review of Koori preschools?

Ms Howson: It was engaged to do a review broadly around our early childhood—

MR WALL: With Koori preschools specifically, what were some areas of improvement and opportunity that they raised and what is being done to address those recommendations?

Ms Howson: The key things in this review—and Mr Moysey will talk to it in more detail—were about ensuring that we were supporting more students to access Koori preschool and that we needed to look at an application of the national quality framework standards to the structure of our Koori preschools.

Mr Moysey: Overall the evaluation found that what was being achieved was in the right trajectory of what the intent was. It was really looking at how we can get some of those best practices to be more consistent. It is about how we ensure that those resources of the Koori preschools are available, increasing the knowledge and

awareness of their existence, and how they fit into the bigger picture of the spectrum of things that are happening. It is looking at whether we have the right set of indicators for how they are going and what we would like to do in the future. In essence, that is what the evaluation was looking at.

MR WALL: This is on a related line. The Australian early development census has shown an increase regarding Canberra Indigenous children. In 2009 about 36 per cent were what were deemed to be “vulnerable Indigenous children”. We are now talking about just under 42 per cent. How is that increase being reflected in the enrolment that we are seeing through the preschool and what work is being done to try to address some of the pre-existing disadvantage of that enrolment?

Ms Howson: One of the excellent features of Koori preschool is that we accept students at the age of three. We certainly would look to focus on improving access and promoting that option to families. That is very important. The other thing about the Koori preschools is that their partnerships with other services within the Community Services Directorate are an important feature of the model that they operate. The transition between Koori preschool and mainstream preschool is then more overtly supported. It is about having good relationships with families to support them to move into our mainstream preschool settings. I am not sure about that particular data. Have you got that to hand?

Mr Moysey: I do not have it to hand.

Ms Howson: In terms of the actual vulnerability domains, it is certainly true that for the whole population of Canberra children, children from vulnerable families are still an issue for us, in terms of their readiness and their development stages for school. In that regard that is why the minister is leading off on such a strong agenda around early childhood.

MR STEEL: The commonwealth government is imposing a strict new activity test on childcare subsidies which will be introduced from 1 July. How do you think that will impact on the vulnerability particularly of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children going forward?

Ms Berry: I expect it will. In addition to that the federal government have not committed to continuing funding for universal access for preschool education. For schools currently in the ACT, the ACT government provides 12 hours and an additional jointly funded three hours with the commonwealth government.

My fear is—and I have put this to the federal government and the federal minister for education—that the minister will suggest that the changes to the rebates will improve things for vulnerable families and he will cut universal access, when we know that cutting universal access will affect more vulnerable families. I have continually asked for the federal government to continue to provide that joint funding for preschool and, indeed, for every state and territory minister to look at extending that funding to three-year-olds as well.

Mr Moysey: Certainly, the conversation nationally is that states and territories would prefer a lot of certainty around the universal access agreement.

THE CHAIR: How will the safe and inclusive schools initiative help support gender and sexually diverse student in ACT schools?

Ms Howson: This is an important feature of the inclusive culture within ACT public education. Essentially, this initiative—because it is not a program—supports some of the foundation values in our school system around diversity, accepting diversity, encouraging diversity and making sure that schools are safe places for all students to learn, regardless of who they are and how they are. Ms Seton, would you like to explain where we are up to?

Ms Seton: The safe and inclusive schools initiative is a community resource that will support all of our schools, our young people and their families to make sure everyone feels safe and welcome in their school environment. It is not a curriculum; it is not a resource that tells schools what they have to teach and when they teach it. It is something that people can access when and if they need it and provide the level of support at an individualised level, depending on what that school community is looking for.

THE CHAIR: What has the uptake been like? Do you have any information on how often resources like this are accessed?

Ms Seton: In 2017 12 public schools have requested support from SHFPACT. They were in quite different forms. SHFPACT offer a lot of different services. One of the really important ones is the SoSAFE! program, which is around teaching students with moderate to severe intellectual disability about social situations and safety, knowing that those students can be quite vulnerable. They are often in circumstances where they have multiple people who support them throughout their day. It is about understanding what is okay and what is not okay, the different parts of their body, who is okay to touch and support, and how to manage those situations safely in a very complex society.

THE CHAIR: Do you have the specific numbers for how many times each of those resources has been requested?

Ms Seton: I do not. I would have to take that on notice.

MR STEEL: The resources are available for all teachers in schools to use online; is that right?

Ms Seton: The resources that form the safe and inclusive schools initiative are not available yet. They are still being finalised, but they will be for the start of next year. SHFPACT have been available all year for schools to make contact with, and the different programs.

MR STEEL: So a school will not have to sign up and become a member of the program in order to participate?

Ms Seton: No.

MR STEEL: If teachers have a particular student who needs support to be included in the school, they can go online and access those resources?

Ms Seton: That is right. As I said it is very individualised, so it is not a one-size-fits-all. It is around SHFPACT and the school working together to determine what the school community needs and making sure it meets everyone's needs.

MR STEEL: Who participated in the development of those resources?

Ms Seton: Education have worked closely with SHFPACT and SHFPACT have worked with the community. There was wide community consultation on what those resources would be.

Ms Howson: There are, too, commonwealth funded resources available to schools right across Australia regardless of sector, to support schools for the very same reason.

Ms Berry: The safe and inclusive schools initiative in the ACT is available for all schools, including independent and Catholic schools, to access different supports that they might need for students in their schools.

THE CHAIR: Are you aware of any misinformation surrounding this initiative?

Ms Berry: There is a conversation federally about some things that this initiative is supposed to be about. I have tried, every time this conversation comes up, to assure particularly LGBTIQ kids in schools, and other kids who want to support those kids, that this is not a sex education program. It is about support for children to ensure that every child, regardless of who they are, is accepted and included in our school communities. Sometimes they need extra support, sometimes teachers need extra support and sometimes their friends need extra support. That is what this initiative is about.

MR STEEL: During the period of the non-binding postal survey on marriage equality, has there been an upturn in terms of the number of students seeking support from their schools as a result of feeling under pressure, as a result of the community debate on the issue?

Ms Seton: I do not have data on individual schools, but all of our schools provide a level of support. They have access to their school psychologist and their pastoral care coordinators. Sometimes it is just to a trusted teacher, so we do not know how many students have sought support, but SHFPACT have been there to support schools if required.

Ms Howson: From the directorate's perspective, we have been very proactive in raising awareness of the possibility of concern throughout this period. I am very confident that all of our schools have been a lot more vigilant about making sure that students who need support are proactively engaged in gaining that support. Ms Seton is right; we would not have the specific data but we have been taking a very proactive and positive approach to this through our school system.

Ms Berry: From my own conversations with students in schools and through the

future of education conversation, that whole theme of equality and inclusiveness has been coming through as well, particularly at this time in our nation's history, because it is such a topical conversation at the moment. Students have told me about their concerns for the safety of students in their schools and that they want to ensure that they are included as much as possible as well. They are keen for this process to be completed so that they can get on with doing what they need to do, and that is getting a great education.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is based on page 26. You mentioned that the Indigenous language taught in Canberra schools was called the Yuwaalaraay language. I had to look that up. I had never heard of it before. It comes from north-west New South Wales and south Queensland. Why is that language taught here instead of the Ngunnawal language?

Ms Berry: This program, I understand, was brought together on the advice of Tyrone and Wally Bell, local Ngunnawal elders in the ACT. A lot of the eastern side of Australia's traditional language has been lost because of colonisation of white people in this country. The languages that they use in schools and this program have been on the advice of the Ngunnawal community in the ACT, particularly Tyrone and Wally Bell, who we do not have here with us today.

Ms Craddy: Was it the Yuwaalaraay you were talking about?

MRS KIKKERT: Yes.

Ms Craddy: Many of the ACT population hail from all over the country. As well as acknowledging the traditional owners of this place, we also value and celebrate the cultures and languages of all the communities that have made Canberra home. That particular language is not actually taught across the schools. We have one officer in our system—it is his father tongue, in a sense, and he uses that language to do acknowledgements of country and other things like that, to expose people to Aboriginal languages and to educate folks about the diversity. This was during cultural competency courses. It was basically one person sharing his own cultural knowledge.

The comment made about the Ngunnawal language is correct. To be able to teach a language to the same extent that you would teach Japanese, Indonesian or Indian, we do not have the body of knowledge there and the language there to be able to do it to that level of complexity. However, we are at the moment exploring ways of embedding Ngunnawal language across the schools, largely involved in a language and culture-type course or courses. One of the high schools at the moment is investigating something, working with Wally and Tyrone, and Glen Freeman as well, to be able to get something in place for next year. At Melrose High School a parent there is incorporating his language into the school. That will be the situation across quite a few school communities, where it is the language of the community members that is shared across the schools.

MR STEEL: The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed by the Education Directorate has more than doubled since 2012. Could you explain some of the reasons why there has been such a significant increase in the number of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, which is fantastic?

Ms Howson: Thank you for drawing attention to that result. This is very important to us, again in the context of our workforce reflecting some of the diversity in our schools. It is an integral part of cultural safety and integrity that we have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working with us. It is also really pleasing to see that we have a significant proportion of those staff actually in teaching and education roles within Education. That is something we certainly want to improve on and grow. I would like to think that it is because Education is seen as a preferred place of employment, that we as an employer offer a very safe and culturally proficient workplace for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

We are very strongly supportive of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network. If I were going to choose one thing, I would have to say that that would be probably one of the strongest features of what we do in Education. I cannot take personal credit for that; that was well in play before I came into the role of director-general. But I am delighted to continue to support it, because what that group do is offer a lot of peer support for people who are in roles where they carry an enormous burden: the burden of expectation of the rest of the workforce on guidance around all things to do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

They also acknowledge that they are leaders in their community and that they have a leadership role for their community at large, which is another responsibility that the general workforce do not necessarily have to manage on a day-to-day basis. So offering that opportunity for peer support is really critical to satisfaction in working in Education. Further to that, they are an extremely committed group of people and they provide expert guidance to me and other members of the executive in the decisions that we make that impact on their children and their communities. They meet regularly and they meet with my senior executive team every quarter. We focus on a range of things that we are doing in the department and seek their advice on how to progress those.

One example is that last year they came to me, in terms of an acceleration of our cultural integrity and reconciliation, to suggest that we put forward a scholarship for Aboriginal staff to join with non-Aboriginal staff and travel to the Garma Festival in the Northern Territory, to have a deep opportunity over the course of a week to be immersed in Aboriginal culture. Every person came back from that process feeling completely reinvigorated and ready to dive further into the value-add that each one of those staff brings to our workforce, to continue to be champions for cultural integrity in education. That is a really important aspect.

Ms McAlister: This has been a key focus for us for a number of years, so we are really pleased about those increased employment numbers. Essentially we are doing a great deal of work in two streams. One is through our employment action plan, which has 35 initiatives looking at recruitment, retention and development of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Through that we link into whole-of-government employment pathways as well, and we are committed to the graduate and trainee program in our directorate.

The second theme is around raising our cultural awareness in a very systematic and

sustained way. We are doing that through cultural integrity programs for our corporate executive and all principals. We are engaging in a three-day sequence of activity right now. The second way is through absolute commitment to our reconciliation action plan, which asks each of us to take an individual next step in terms of reconciliation. The third is, as Natalie mentioned, through ongoing and regular engagement with our staff network.

It is important for me to explain that all of this is underpinned through our student resource allocation loading, which is looking at a policy intent of meeting the needs and aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students—you will have heard that language this morning, and our schools are being very supportive—to reflect upon and take steps with their community about their own cultural integrity and continuing to strengthen that. It is quite an area of focus that we are very pleased to be engaging with.

Ms Brighton: Mr Milligan asked a question before about cultural competency with the school-based staff. I have those data. In semester one this year we had 43 staff go through that cultural competency deep training. Last year in second semester we had another 40. So in total in the reporting period 83 staff have been through that deep investment in cultural integrity.

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you. In relation to the Ngunnawal language, the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies over at the museum are doing a fantastic job of revitalising the Ngunnawal language, along with other languages across the nation. It is a great resource to tap into. If you were serious about including the Ngunnawal language in our schools, maybe you could tap into that resource and use a dictionary that they have already created and also are further creating from there.

I thank Chris Steel for his question in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the Education Directorate. If I remember correctly, the COAG agreement was three per cent for Indigenous employment in public service departments; however, in the agreement that the government has with the elected body it is two per cent. You are currently sitting at 1.5 per cent, so you are below the agreement. What are you doing to try to get your public service percentage up to even the two per cent that was agreed with the elected body?

Ms Howson: We are certainly not resting on our laurels. Targets are important, because they keep our focus and continue to encourage us to reflect on what we have achieved and how we can go further. The next big frontier for us is how we can encourage our own students to choose teaching as a career. As you would appreciate, the majority of our workforce are educators. We need to focus on how we can encourage them to select teaching as a career option and how we might support that from even as early as year 10, as students are starting to think about where they want to go with their careers. We have an advantage there. That is a model we are trialling within our disability domain, where one of our school principals has been brought offline to focus specifically on seeing if we can develop a model where there are these sorts of individual pathways into employment from being a student in our schools to working in education. That is an important area of focus for us.

Ms McAlister: We have also trialled appropriate mechanisms to do exactly that

through the introduction of what we are calling community yarns, where our staff network, members of our HR area and so on go out into a community and just talk about what it is to work within education. We have recently done a community yarn talking to our teacher ed students, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the University of Canberra. We are looking to build momentum in that sort of activity, which makes it easy to understand what it is like in our directorate, rather than hard.

MR MILLIGAN: Are you able to take on notice to provide the details of what levels Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed at?

Ms Howson: We may be able to provide that before the hearing finishes today.

MR MILLIGAN: Fantastic, thank you.

MR STEEL: The report mentions the challenges that are faced by the directorate in filling teaching vacancies with people specialised in the science, technology, engineering and maths disciplines, particularly early childhood education and special education. I was just wondering what strategies and programs are in place to ensure that these vacancies are filled for the future.

Ms Howson: Yes, you are right; it is a challenge. It is a challenge nationally, of course; the ACT is not an island in this respect. We have invested a lot of work into our STEM strategy, which incorporates a component of workforce, but I think some of the things that we are doing in our ACT schools will be totally irresistible to anyone who wants to work as a teacher in these areas. I might ask Mr Hodgson to kick off with the workforce strategy and invite Ms Andersen to talk about the STEM strategy in general.

Mr Hodgson: From a workforce point of view, we have a number of programs in place that are focused on STEM. Probably the main one is the election commitment that we have at the moment that there will be \$250,000 allocated to STEM scholarships every year. In relation to those scholarships, we have a number of scholarship arrangements in place, but the \$250,000 will be focused wholly and solely on STEM. This year we have had 41 teachers take up those arrangements across a range of areas, including STEM and languages.

Ms Berry: Part of this is about a conversation in the community about what STEM literally means. In relation to the STEM acronym or shortcut, I think it was Barack Obama who first said it, and then it just became a thing. It is really just imagining or understanding what the jobs are. Maths is in pretty much every job, but people do not see themselves using maths in every job. I know of a young woman who went into fashion design who really did not enjoy maths, yet of course she uses maths every day in her work. It is about broadening the horizons of children about what STEM actually means and the kinds of jobs in that workforce.

Ms Howson: That relates to the things I would like Ms Andersen to talk about. It is a national challenge, so we are being a bit more creative about how we bring expertise into schools as well as developing our own capabilities in delivering a whole range of the competencies, what they discuss as 21st century competencies, that relate to things to do with maths, science, engineering and technology.

Ms Andersen: We have signed up to the national STEM school education strategy. There are five areas for action under that strategy. One is to impress student achievement in STEM-related subjects, and to build teacher capacity to deliver STEM, through the Australian curriculum in particular. We are looking at education opportunities and partnerships. Ms Brighton sits on the national STEM Partnerships Forum. There is a lot of discussion at that forum, which is at the national level, chaired by the Chief Scientist, Alan Finkel, around increasing students' aspirations with STEM; initiatives and programs for students who are unrepresented in STEM-related study, so girls in particular, for example; and that all STEM projects that are initiated at the national level and at schools have a strong evidence base underpinning them.

We are doing significant work to support implementation of the Australian curriculum at the moment. That includes STEM subjects: science, the technologies, science technologies, and mathematics in particular. The technology subjects will be fully implemented by the end of 2018.

We also have a number of fantastic programs and initiatives underway in schools. The scientists and mathematicians program, renamed the STEM professionals in schools program, which has received a boost in funding from the commonwealth under the national STEM school education strategy, is one example, where teachers are provided with industry mentors to build their capacity.

We have a number of schools engaged in a project to enhance implementation of the digital technologies curriculum. Again, that is a commonwealth-funded initiative. That is a consortium of three of our primary schools. They are being supported with professional learning to build both leadership acumen in digital technologies and also classroom teacher capability.

A number of our schools have initiated maker spaces projects, areas where students can actually work on projects that incorporate all those STEM-related disciplines and have access to a range of technologies. We have the science mentors program at Melrose High School, run by Geoff McNamara, who is a recipient of the Prime Minister's science prize.

And we have the centre for innovation and learning currently under construction on the Caroline Chisholm campus, which is due to open next year. We have just recruited the manager for that centre; they are scoping what those offerings will look like, including outreach to local area schools.

MR STEEL: One of the actions identified in the report is establishing an academy of coding in cyber skills. Where is that academy up to?

Ms Andersen: We have conducted some initial stakeholder consultations to determine what the scope of the academy would look like. We have consulted both within the directorate and with industry, tertiary education partners and our external stakeholders. So far there are five broad things that have emerged from that.

The academy of coding should support our vision for the ACT as a hub for research,

innovation and entrepreneurship. The academy should build instructional leadership capabilities: the capacity of school leaders to ensure that STEM initiatives in schools are robust, based on evidence and support students to achieve at high levels in STEM-related disciplines. We would want, through the academy, to achieve deep learning in STEM-related discipline, so looking at the pedagogical aspects of STEM, integrated inquiry and project-based learning, for example. The academy would be a place where expert mentors would work with students and teachers to enhance pathways and provide opportunities. And overall the academy would be providing access and equity to STEM study for all students, so looking at vocational pathways as well as tertiary study, et cetera.

MR STEEL: Is that likely to be based out of a particular school or is it going to be in the directorate?

Ms Andersen: The initial election commitment was around an infrastructure project at Lake Ginninderra college. Our stakeholder consultation has indicated that a mix of primary infrastructure, teacher capability and student opportunities would be the preferred mix. We are looking at what that might look like. We have the centre for innovation and learning at Caroline Chisholm School under construction, so that is a potential hub for activity related to the academy moving forward.

Ms Brighton: If I can just add to that, the minister, consistent with her approach on a number of the other big policy areas of reform, asked that, as we provided advice back to the government about the form and construct of the academy, we engaged the experts. As Ms Andersen mentioned, we have had the universities, the local cyber industry, the Canberra Innovation Network, those who are deeply involved in curriculum, and students provide us with their thoughts and inputs on what they would be looking for in terms of what this coding academy could do. We have pulled that together to provide advice back to the government. The themes that Ms Andersen identified are a core element of the advice. There is no final decision on that yet, but that will come in due course.

Ms Berry: I might ask Mr Stenhouse from the Board of Senior Secondary Studies to give a perspective from the year 11 and 12 students.

Mr Stenhouse: In terms of curriculum, the board offers a wide range of STEM subjects. Obviously the traditional ones are physics, chemistry, biology and earth and environmental sciences, but there are also courses in flight, oceanography, mechatronics and robotics. Currently the board is in negotiation with Conrad Wolfram—some of you might be aware of Conrad Wolfram—who promotes a different way of looking at mathematics which involves the use of computers and coding. His vision is looking at a mathematics where the amount of hand calculation decreases and you have the student being more involved in doing those sorts of things through computers and coding. We have been negotiating with him for about six months with the idea of introducing a specific course that will focus on computer coding data science, that sort of area.

MR STEEL: He is the founder of Wolfram Alpha, is he?

Mr Stenhouse: No. His brother Stephen was the founder of Mathematica, but Conrad

is involved in that as well.

STEM enrolments are very strong in senior secondary. If we look at the percentage of students studying mathematics, it is about in the mid 90 per cent. In sciences, students who are studying a tertiary package—that is, a package that will lead them, hopefully, towards university entrance—enrolments sit at 58 per cent, which compares very favourably with other jurisdictions. Enrolments in design technology, which includes all the design things like computer-aided drawing, fashion and textiles and those design areas which are very heavily STEM-related but also the IT area, are running at 32 per cent.

When you consider that students studying in senior secondary generally will be studying five subjects, and almost all of them are doing English and maths, there is a lot of competition between faculties and colleges for the other students who have the sciences running at 58 and design and technology at 32 per cent. Those are numbers that indicate that a lot of the good work that has been done in primary schools and high schools in the directorate has a flow-on to senior secondary.

In addition, we have the ANU extension program, delivering STEM courses, again in the traditional areas of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology but also in engineering and astrophysics. And in the ANU extension program at the moment there is some consideration of developing an IT option for students. Last year we had 107 students across the ACT in year 12 enrolled in the ANU extension program. That is out of about 4,500 students who were in the year 12 cohort, so that is quite a reasonable percentage. The work that has been done earlier in school is being reflected in the numbers that we are seeing coming through in senior secondary.

MR WALL: I will pre-empt and suggest we are probably going to get Mr Gotts back up again. I will give him a moment to come up. Just to carry on with some of the questions we had before specifically on the area of Gungahlin, the Australian census from last year showed that Gungahlin is the second-fastest growing region in the country and that children aged between zero and 14 now make up over 24 per cent of the population there. Did the modelling of the Education Directorate project that the demographics of Gungahlin were going to end up as they are currently?

Mr Gotts: Yes.

MR WALL: That being the case, why do we seemingly have some capacity issues at a number of Gungahlin schools?

Ms Howson: If I can just respond, I would actually argue that we are effectively managing the requirements of the north. Of course there is a growing population and there is a need to increase capacity for students to be able to select their local schools. The government is investing significantly in growing the capacity of schools and also investing in new schools in north Gungahlin. In the last budget of course we were given funding to be able to explore the feasibility of a first school in east Gungahlin.

It is always an important balancing act. We need our schools full. Schools follow the ebbs and flows of demographics across many years in the context of any region in Canberra and we need to ensure that our schools can be augmented, if you like, in

PROOF

order to respond to the peaks in those demographic profiles.

At the same time as the demographics change we can adjust our school configurations so that we have optimally functioning schools. That is the general picture. As Mr Gotts indicated, we have been getting better and better at ensuring that our modelling is taking into account the best information available and gives us the best picture for forecasting, which is informing the advice we provide to government and their focus on responding to that need.

MR WALL: How is that need being addressed? What expansion works are currently underway or about to commence for that?

Ms Berry: There is considerable expense.

MR WALL: Specifically for the Gungahlin area because that is obviously where the enrolment pressure is currently?

Ms Berry: The expansions in the Gungahlin area were announced in the election and there is considerable work being done in Gungahlin at Harrison, Gold Creek, Neville Bonner Primary School and the Palmerston District School as well as considerable work on the third stage of modernisation of Belconnen High School in Belconnen as well.

MR WALL: What work is being done on the Harrison School?

Ms Berry: I might ask Rodney Bray to give you some detail about all those schools if he could.

Mr Bray: At Harrison School specifically we completed a new building in mid-2017 to accommodate 200 primary and middle school students in eight classrooms.

MR WALL: Are there any works planned for the Franklin Early Childhood School?

Mr Bray: No not at this stage. I might hand back to Mr Gotts. He will answer that properly.

Mr Gotts: There was an election commitment for an expansion of the Franklin Early Childhood School. At this stage the analysis is being undertaken to be able to provide advice back to the minister and the government as to how that might manifest.

MR WALL: Will that be just an expansion in the “catered to” offering or an expansion of three to six being—

Ms Berry: I think that the analysis is not just about the Franklin school. It is about the flow-on to all the schools in Gungahlin and in north Belconnen as well and where those students go after that. All that needs to be considered in any expansion, but particularly at Franklin. The analysis is not just about what happens at Franklin school but about the capacity for all schools in that area and where parents are going to go next for their children’s education.

MR WALL: In the Gungahlin region if a parent approaches the local public school that is closest to their home, are they going to be able enrol their child in it?

Mr Gotts: Yes.

MR MILLIGAN: In relation to that answer in particular I have a constituent who approached their local school and a letter that was sent to that constituent from the principal said that they are facing tremendous enrolment pressures. The parent was unable to enrol their kid in that school. The parent had to enrol their kid in Gungahlin College which was a further two kilometres away from where they lived. Is that an example of overcrowding in our schools?

Ms Berry: No. What I would suggest in relation to the individual that you have referred to is that we could follow up the correspondence with them rather than talk about it here. But it should be noted that sometimes the priority enrolment area might not be the closest school to a home, depending on where they live.

Ms Howson: It depends on what the order is. Again without knowing the specific circumstances, in some cases there are shared zones between schools and it is a matter of principals across schools trying to get the best balance between the schools that share that zone. That might be part of the communication with families.

MR MILLIGAN: Does the government believe that there is an overcapacity issue in schools in Gungahlin?

Ms Howson: What we believe is that we are meeting the need; that there is a growing need and that the government is responding to that growing need. As I said, the last budget indicates very clearly the investment that is going into the Gungahlin region and the north in particular.

MR MILLIGAN: I notice that Harrison School had some development for classrooms. Was that a reaction to classes being taught in the library because of the lack of classrooms and the increasing number of students?

Ms Berry: Sorry, just before you go through that, there are, of course, new schools on the horizon for Gungahlin, particularly in north Gungahlin for 2019, which will be able to take into account the growth in Gungahlin within that community and future schools proposed as that suburb continues to grow. As student populations grow within schools the government will meet the needs within those individual schools, as we are with our election commitment and with the work that is happening in Gungahlin schools right now.

Ms Howson: I think one of the obvious things that we do is bring in transportable units. When schools get beyond their capacity in their permanent infrastructure then we augment schools so that they can accommodate their local population and that is, again, part of the government's commitment. You will see that that is happening in schools right across Canberra.

MR MILLIGAN: That is demountable classrooms?

Ms Howson: No, transportable.

Ms Berry: They are transportable because they are removable but they are also completely different from what people might think that they are. These days they are very modern, comfortable, high quality teaching spaces and learning spaces for children. The school upgrades in Gungahlin will have these transportables for as long as they are required.

Mr Bray: That is correct. They will stay there until what we call the peak passes, which can take several years, but that is based around the demographic projections that Mr Gotts's area provides to my section.

MR MILLIGAN: And back to the Harrison School?

Mr Bray: Yes. Harrison School has quite a large library and it has some large general use spaces that are actually outside the traditional book display area of a library. We have used those couple of spaces in the years past. They were used even before while we were building these additional eight classrooms. Harrison has grown at a very rapid rate. We negotiated with the principal as a representative of the school community that he would be able to use temporarily those rooms within the library building to accommodate the classes whilst we were having the new building constructed.

MR MILLIGAN: Harrison is growing at a rapid rate. However, it is one of the older suburbs there. There are a lot of newer suburbs there. Would not the government have known how many dwelling were going into Harrison and roughly which suburbs a school there would accommodate? Should not the government have had a better plan and ensured that the school would be able to accommodate the residents moving into that area?

Ms Howson: As I said, I think we are getting more and more precise in our forecasting and we also are working on adjustments around our priority area enrolment policy so that families have prior warning and can consider a range of schools and a range of options in the Gungahlin region. The whole strategy is complementary. It is very important to think about not only new schools but adjusting the capacity of existing schools to accommodate students. The Gold Creek expansion is a very important example of that.

MR WALL: Ms Howson, you said that the directorate is getting better at its projection of what the population growth is likely to be, yet Mr Gotts, in answer to my first question, said this type of pressure is what was projected in Gungahlin. There has obviously been a game of catch-up in play here, to actually meet the demand of what the enrolment is. Either we did not project it correctly or the government's infrastructure and policy did not keep pace with what the advice that the department was providing to it said.

Ms Berry: There are a couple of things that need to be noted. The behaviour of the parent community, the parents in our country, has changed, where both parents are working. There are more single parent families and single parents working. It means

that parents are making choices that involve leaving schools in their priority enrolment area and moving to schools outside the priority enrolment area, which is then another thing that governments are trying to get on top of, regarding the changed choices in our community that we need to adjust to as well. It is not just about data and numbers; it is about what our society is looking like now and into the future.

Ms Howson: What I was referring to is the fact that we have recently been working with the ANU to modify the modelling process that we have been using, and, as the minister just said, making adjustments to the assumptions that inform that model around the way that people in Canberra are now living their lives, for example, apartment living and so on. They are the adjustments that I think are reasonable for all policy departments to be making on a continuous basis. I would still go back to the general premise that in meeting demand there is no student in Gungahlin who is turned away and we have a multifaceted approach to our policy for meeting the needs of communities in the north.

Mr Gotts: Both the minister and Ms Howson are entirely correct in what they say. We are trying to increase the detail and accuracy with which we approach our planning for enrolment purposes. We take a very close look at the number of children, for example, who might live in Gungahlin but go to schools in areas outside Gungahlin where there are schools with capacity. For example, there are around 750 students who live in Gungahlin who go to schools in the central region of the ACT. About 650, give or take, who live in Gungahlin go to schools in Belconnen. In many cases these are families fitting in with their family circumstances, where they work relative to where they live, what works for them and what is convenient for them.

All of that gets fed into the modelling that we do, along with, as I mentioned earlier, what is the long-term trend for a suburb. If we look at Gungahlin, you can look at Palmerston. That is one of the older suburbs in Gungahlin. We observe the enrolments coming out of Palmerston starting to fall off as the demographics of that suburb change. We then see Crace nearby, which feeds students into Palmerston, picking up the difference. So we see two curves: one curve starting to go down from Palmerston and another one coming up from Crace, and we balance those.

We keep a close watch on the balance between system affiliation—the parents who are choosing government versus non-government schools, how that differs in different suburbs across the ACT and what that tells us about future planning. When Ms Howson says we are getting better at it, it is not that we were not good at it; it is that we are going into it in ever finer detail. As she said, we got the ANU to review our modelling and assist us.

MR WALL: How is the capacity of a school calculated?

Mr Bray: School capacity falls within my branch's responsibility. We literally go out and measure all the usable spaces at a school, including even small spaces that might be used for, say, remedial reading, teaching and so on. We then apply a certain square metre to how many people—students, obviously the teacher, and even learning assistants—should be in a space. We have quite well defined how much area is needed to be provided for an average class size of 25 students and a teacher. We then

PROOF

apply that; measuring across the school, we identify how many spaces could be used as a teaching space.

The grey area in that calculation is what we call the more specialist spaces or multi-use spaces in a primary school. Some primary schools will want spaces for music, language or artwork. We also try to identify where those spaces are needed for a school to run a program and we will exclude those spaces from what you would call the capacity calculation. We do not measure it and say that every space within a primary school has to be used for a home classroom. There are spaces that are actually dedicated to those other non-home classroom activities in primary schools.

The same sort of logic applies to high schools and colleges, but they are typically more driven around timetabling rather than space capacity as such. For instance, the number of science classrooms has a great impact on the capacity of a high school. We do not have many high schools that are at the critical capacity level because other things drive the enrolment level before you get near what might traditionally be a measure of square metreage.

MR WALL: Do areas such as front office spaces, staffrooms and teachers' offices form part of the square metreage calculation?

Mr Bray: Not for a calculation of capacity; not for the enrolment capacity. They are just spaces that we identify so that we understand the areas available for those uses. That becomes handy particularly if we are trying to plan forward upgrades to primary schools, as an example, where we might be looking at enough space for teachers' offices. A whole range applies to how teachers have their offices in primary schools. Some have them within the classroom; some have them in a multi-use space and they hot seat; some schools have a full area that is used for all the teachers. They help us in planning about the modernisation of our schools and in that sort of discussion with the schools. But it is not used to calculate the enrolment level.

MR WALL: For each of the public schools across the territory, are you able to provide what that square metreage calculation comes out at, please?

Mr Bray: Yes.

Ms Berry: Is it available on the website?

Mr Bray: I cannot answer that definitely but we can certainly get that information.

Ms Howson: We will check. I think the capacities are currently—

MR WALL: If it is on the website, a direction to there; otherwise the data itself.

Ms Howson: Yes, it is currently on the website. We can provide those for you.

MR MILLIGAN: Has the government installed air conditioning in the Gungahlin College yet?

Mr Bray: Okay, that is a—

THE CHAIR: It is going to require more than a yes or no. Let us come back to that question after lunch.

Hearing suspended from 12.30 to 1.59 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back everybody. What work is underway to make sure that schools are more comfortable during the hotter summer months?

Ms Berry: There is considerable work happening to ensure that our schools are cooler in the summer months. As the climate has been changing across the world and here in the ACT, schools have been getting hotter, so we have taken some proactive steps with funding that was announced this year with a priority on heating and cooling but particularly on cooling in some of our older schools.

The directorate has been working with the schools to identify areas within schools that they consider a priority for cooling. I think nearly all those schools have completed or just about completed that process. The next part will be about going through the priority areas and putting a plan in place to ensure that the schools can be more comfortable when the hot weather arrives and those extreme temperatures hit Canberra in late January and early February.

In addition to that, we are making sure that the school communities are aware of the schools' policies around extreme heat mitigation policies within the schools and what they do to ensure that children and teachers have a comfortable learning environment when it gets very warm at that time of year. I might ask Meredith Whitten to give you a bit more detail on that.

Ms Whitten: Yes, we do operate our schools under the managing extreme temperatures in ACT public schools policy. That means that when we have periods of extreme heat, schools put into place a number of actions to create comfort for both the students and the staff at the schools. That will include optimising natural ventilation in the school, making sure that there is air movement and maximum shade around the schools. We also bring in additional fans and coolers, and we make sure that there is easy access to water. For the primary school students, we also increase the use of water play.

The other important action that we take is to rotate classes through the areas of school that are air-conditioned. Over the past couple of years, we have been looking at the air-conditioning arrangements in each of our schools, focusing on our libraries. We have had a program to increase the air-conditioning in our libraries and some of our admin areas. The other thing we do is, if students wear uniforms, make a little adjustment to the uniform rules on those hot days.

From the infrastructure perspective, Mr Bray might like to talk a bit about our current program.

Mr Bray: In response to the heatwave that we had last summer, we contacted each of the schools, as the minister referred to. They came back in response to our request and identified what they called hot rooms, hot classrooms, in their school. Not all

PROOF

classrooms are considered to be exposed to high heat. As you can imagine, the western classrooms get the biggest heat.

We got all that information. Then we went through a process of trying to prioritise the schools. We then engaged a consulting firm who actually inspected every school and came back with recommendations on how best to address that problem in each of the schools. From that information, we have commenced a rolling program of addressing those problems.

In the first instance, we are providing air conditioning. If preschools do not have air conditioning, we will put it in. We have also checked to see whether the existing air-conditioning units are in good order. If they are not, they are being replaced. We are making sure sick bays, learning support units and transportable buildings all have air-conditioning units that are operating in a reliable condition. We have also purchased about 16 spare air-conditioning units, just in case some fail unexpectedly. We will have those in stock, so we can install them as fast as we get a contractor to the site.

We then break down the stages of the works, moving from primary schools to high schools to colleges. Obviously, the younger children are the most vulnerable in our sectors. In each of those sectors, we have identified high requirements and low requirements, just as a way of differentiating their need. We have issued orders for the works for both the high requirement and low requirement primary schools, which total about 30 primary schools. Those work orders have been issued and contractors are being progressively engaged to implement those works. The slow work is the installing of the air-conditioning equipment itself.

We also have a program of installing ceiling fans and external reflective film on glazing on the other rooms that we are probably not going to get to with air conditioners.

We are trying to get to as many classrooms in all sectors as we can by the end of January with some form of treatment to alleviate some level of the heat load, but the reality is that we have only got, in essence, about 2½ months to do as much work as we can. Then we will get to the start of February and the heat load will hit. I am quite confident that we will be fine with the primary schools. I think that there will be discomfort for students in some high schools and some colleges, simply because we will not be able to get to them in time before the next summer peak temperatures.

THE CHAIR: Just to clarify that, you will not be able to get to them for this upcoming summer period?

Mr Bray: This coming summer period. By the end of January 2018, we will have all the preschools, sick bays, libraries, learning support units and transportable buildings as well as the works identified for the high and low requirement primary schools. They will all be done, I believe; that is how we programmed it. We think we can achieve that by the end of January 2018. How much we can then get done with the next priority, which is the high requirement high schools, will really depend on how we go with getting the other works progressed.

Ms Berry: Some of that work has already been completed.

Mr Bray: Yes.

Ms Berry: So some of the schools—what about Harrison?

Mr Bray: Harrison specifically I cannot talk to. There is other work done in relation to the new buildings; that has been installed. But in terms of responding to other areas, they would be on the list to get to those.

Ms Berry: Mr Milligan asked a question about Gungahlin College. Gungahlin College was built with a green star rating of five, which was quite remarkable at the time. However, the temperature has increased, so with that green star rating, whilst it was the case at the time, and the school still works when the temperatures are quite high, when they get extreme for long periods of time for days in a row that sort of system does not work as efficiently as it was designed to in moderately hot weather. Do you want to talk about that school?

Mr Bray: Yes. The issue at Gungahlin College is that there is—

MR WALL: It has got above 40 degrees in this town for a long time.

Ms Howson: It is becoming more consistent and with repetitive high heat days, which is where our buildings in their performance struggle. The buildings themselves heat up and they do not get the opportunity to cool in the same way overnight as has previously been the case.

Mr Bray: In relation to Gungahlin College, there are four large skylights that were designed to allow natural light into the centre of the building, because the main building is quite a wide building. The heat load that we are experiencing with the high temperatures in summer means that the building temperatures internally are getting much higher than were initially proposed or designed for. We have engaged a consulting firm, and they have developed a solution, which is motorised louvres to be installed above each of the skylights. They will be open during the winter to let natural light in as intended with the design, and in summertime, as the heat gets higher, the louvres will be closed so they shade the skylights and therefore prevent the entry of the heat load during the summer months.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other things going into Gungahlin College or is that the one change?

Mr Bray: No. Based on what our consultants have told us, that is the biggest cause of the heat load at Gungahlin College. We want to try that solution first to see what effect it has, how much it mitigates the problem. If it is not sufficient, we will look at doing further work. At the moment, we think it is going to make a big difference. We want to try it before we go to the next step if we have to.

MR WALL: What would the next step be?

Mr Bray: We need to see where the heat load is coming from. That is essentially the

problem with buildings. We have to source where the heat load is getting into the building. It is not being generated as such by internal temperatures; it is the external heat load. You look at north-facing windows, you look at where it is getting that load and then we will look at treatments if that is the case.

THE CHAIR: As a supplementary, as we are talking about school infrastructure, can you outline any other school infrastructure programs that there have been in a learning environment?

Ms Howson: This is our investment in improving learning spaces for students and we had some significant programs particularly in relation to meeting the needs of students with challenging and complex needs. That has been part of the schools for all initiative. That is a program we are very proud of. Mr Bray can speak to that.

Mr Bray: Yes.

Ms Howson: In addition, as we approach our capital upgrades program, with any school we will consult the school about what they need. Many schools are looking now for different configurations and more flexibility in classroom spaces to be able to deliver the sorts of teaching methods that get the best results. Do you want to talk about that?

Mr Bray: Yes. The schools for all program is a multi-year program. The work is identified and scoped by a combination of my staff and my branch and people from NSET. They engage in conversations with the schools about where they might have needs and how the problem could be potentially solved. Once they have been through that discussion and arrived at the preferred solution my branch then organises for those works to be done. At the moment we have got, I think it is, about 20 projects approved to proceed right now in this current 2017-18 financial year and I think there are another 10 projects under further investigation. Once they have been resolved then they will also be implemented in this 2017-18 financial year.

MRS KIKKERT: How are those needs prioritised? How are those 20 projects that you have going prioritised?

Mr Bray: They are not prioritised within themselves. All of them are approved to proceed. The only decision that is made around those is the likely benefit of responding to the needs of the student by providing that particular space. NSET have the expertise and they seek the advice of occupational therapists as well and other people if they need to.

A school might put up a solution or a proposal. That is then considered by NSET and whatever other experts are required. If the project is seen as being appropriate then it proceeds. In regard to the 10 that they are going back through, I think they want to do a further investigation on whether they are the best solution for the problem trying to be addressed. Once that is resolved then they will proceed. It is just simply making sure that we are doing what is seen to be the best solution for the need at that particular school.

MR STEEL: Do those 20 projects include the establishment of sensory spaces in

schools?

Mr Bray: Yes they do.

MR STEEL: Can you paint a picture of what those sensory spaces will look like once they are set up; and do they exist at existing schools?

Ms Howson: Ms Seton can answer that question for you.

Ms Seton: Sensory spaces are very different depending on the needs of students, which is why we are using our allied health team in the NSETs to work through that space. Some of our students actually need more stimulation. They need lots of things that move and engage them, and others need things that bring them down: the dark, quiet spaces.

It is not one size fits all; it is very much individualised as we work through the project. We are trying to make sure they are broad. It is not just one student and then we cannot use the space again. We are making sure, for example, that we consider access. Is it a student who needs to access that with wheelchairs and do we need to change the original plan?

Ms Berry: Turner is an example of a school that worked really closely with the school community but with the students as well to design their sensory space, which was their outside space, making sure that it was accessible from the inside out, that there was a very smooth transition. It had quiet, calm spaces as well as some other spaces to engage children that needed that extra stimulation.

Ms Howson: Mr Steel asked you to paint a picture. Can you describe some of them?

MR STEEL: I think she did start to paint a picture. It was a wide picture. I am just trying to get a sense of what they are like and I think you have given a sense about it.

Ms Seton: We have got one student who loves the tree and he goes and sits and it is really cool, calm and quiet and he plays with the bark and it gives him the sensory input he needs. For other kids we have got big cocoons and they are full of cushions. They climb into that cocoon. They are in with the cushions. They have particular things they like to feel while they are in there. There is a really big range.

MR STEEL: And is the focus on primary schools at the moment for those spaces?

Ms Seton: We work with all our schools; obviously, we are age appropriate as we move up. A student might have liked the tent-type thing in primary school. We have different pods and different spaces. In the library perhaps it is much more age appropriate but it meets the same need.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is about gifted and talented students. How are gifted and talented students identified in the ACT?

Ms Howson: Ms Andersen will be able to answer that question.

Ms Andersen: A range of strategies is used to identify gifted and talented students in the ACT. Obviously there are assessment tools at the school level to identify a student's level of achievement but importantly there are also other measures; psychometric assessments, for example, administered by a psychologist to gauge a student's IQ, and other measures that impact on a classification of a gifted and talented student. But importantly there is also the information that parents and carers can provide and teachers can provide. All that information is used together to identify whether a student is gifted and talented.

MRS KIKKERT: How does the directorate liaise with the families of students who are gifted and talented?

Ms Andersen: The schools are obviously engaged in a partnership with families around the education of their children.

MRS KIKKERT: Is there a liaison officer within the directorate who does that?

Ms Andersen: Every school has a gifted and talented liaison officer. Principals are responsible for implementing the gifted and talented students policy. But the gifted and talented liaison officers are the first point of contact for families and also a source of information for teachers in the school as well.

MRS KIKKERT: Is there dedicated professional development aimed at teachers of gifted and talented students?

Ms Andersen: Yes, absolutely. Since our gifted and talented students policy was implemented in 2014, the directorate has engaged GATEWAYS education, who are experts in gifted and talented education, to undertake three years of professional learning. I have some information about how many teachers have accessed that professional learning. Over that three-year period we have had 680 teachers, gifted and talented liaison officers and school leaders participate in professional learning.

MR STEEL: My question is about the measures and work going on to address occupational violence. Is it possible for you to provide an update on how that work is going?

Ms Berry: Yes. Again this is nation leading. The ACT is the only jurisdiction in the country that is tackling this issue and bringing attention to occupational violence in schools. The directorate has worked very closely with the Education Union and the school communities to work out ways to ensure that the school communities are safe environments for both children and everybody that works in or is part of that school community.

It will be some time—not too long but some time—before there will be a significant change in schools because we are asking for a change in culture within our school communities. For a little while we will see an increase in reporting, which we welcome, because that gives us a very good picture of what is happening in our schools; then we can build a strategy to address what is happening in our schools.

We cannot do that unless people tell us what is going on, so we have encouraged the

school communities to report any incidents that occur as they occur, working out different ways for reporting to happen, because sometimes multiple incidents can happen in a short period of time and you cannot stop to report every single one. There are programs and policies in place to assist school communities in getting through this part of the program. I will ask Ms Whitten to give you some more information on what is happening so far.

Ms Whitten: In terms of occupational violence management, policy and plan, the directorate and the Australian Education Union have worked together quite extensively since about August 2016. Minister Berry, at the end of July this year, launched the occupational violence management policy and plan for the directorate. As the minister has said this is pretty leading edge work in terms of what is happening in education settings across the nation.

It was very much a partnership approach in terms of working with the union and our school staff, getting their feedback at the development stage in terms of what was important in meeting our obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act and also our obligations under the Human Rights Act in terms of children having the right to an education as well.

The policy and plan were launched in July. They are available on our website. What is important about it is that it leverages off the ACT public service occupational violence policy. It defines what occupational violence is and it very clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of not only all staff but also principals and school leaders in our schools, corporate executive members, our senior executive and the director-general, and being very clear about our collective roles and responsibilities.

It has been important for us to raise awareness around reporting occupational violence incidents, as the minister has explained. Certainly, we have seen an increase in the number of reports over the past 12 months. As the minister said, we wanted to improve our reporting culture and, over time, the number of reports might increase but then hopefully it will plateau.

The other important aspect of that, in terms of incidents, is that, when there have been incidents, our work health and safety team go out and support schools where there has been a particular response that has needed to be provided to support the student. That is the role of student engagement as well as the staff, very importantly, in terms of being either in an incident or a witness to an incident. We have had an increased number of actions going out to schools and supporting individual schools as well. That has been a really key feature.

The other important aspect of it is the training that we have been providing, to principals, primarily, in the first instance, in terms of raising awareness of our obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act. We have had a number of opportunities to train principals. That has been really important, and the take-up and participation of principals in that training is really important. In 2018 we will roll out some other training in terms of other categories of staff, which is really important.

Another aspect that we have been focusing on is our risk assessment tool; having a tool that is easily able to be used by not only our student engagement team but also

our work health and safety team for assessing what the risk is in a school environment. That is another piece of work that we are still progressing. We have been doing that in consultation not only with the union but also with WorkSafe ACT; very critical partners.

MR STEEL: Are you hoping to find from the data from the reports times, places and situations where teachers might be more at risk in their work?

Ms Whitten: Our data shows that the greater number of reports are at some of our special schools, where the educators are trained to make reports. We can also see that there are some patterns in particular types of schools. We are probably talking more about primary schools and early childhood schools at this point in time.

MR STEEL: More so than high schools?

Ms Howson: Yes. That is what people might assume, but this is where these issues are quite complex, in the sense that, because of our inclusive school policy, all children are welcome in mainstream settings. Particularly young children are still working out and learning how to be at school, learning strategies for behaviour regulation and emotional regulation. The schools are getting to know these children, and it takes some time of working with children to be able to get to a point where we understand what particular triggers motivate different reactions from those children.

When you understand the context in which this is happening, I think it is easy to understand those sorts of complexities. The good thing, and a positive reflection, about the data that we are collecting now, and the reporting—this is again an interesting aspect of culture—is that teachers largely do not report these incidents because their focus has been on children. They understand where the behaviour is coming from, even though it has had an impact either physically or psychologically on them, and if it continues over a period of time it is more damaging to our staff. Teachers have been reluctant to consider that, really, in the context of a work health and safety issue. It is really a student focus issue and it is an issue around supporting children with special needs.

What the data tells us will help us to design better early intervention models. It will give us better insights into triggers around emotional regulation and behaviour that manifests from that, which will help direct our training more effectively and assist us. In most of these incidents, of course, it is very much around training that is quite specific to individual students as opposed to general training, although the general training that Meredith has mentioned is really important in terms of how people see themselves acting to keep themselves safe as well as use tools like risk management strategies to identify where risk might occur.

Ms Berry: The other part to this as well is that it is not always, unfortunately, the students. It is sometimes other members of the community as well as parents and carers. That has been identified in reports recently from the Australian principals association, who were talking about their interactions with different people in the community.

We have some work to do with regard to parent and school community behaviour

towards our educators, who are doing the most important role in our community, in giving our children the best possible education and start to life. Part of the training is about how you manage those kinds of situations. Teachers, school principals and others do much more than just what is happening in the classroom in building strong communities. We want to understand that as well, and how the school communities can be supported better to respect the work of educators and school principals, while making sure that they are fully equipped with whatever support they need to help parents and others.

Sometimes it is complicated. Sometimes people have things going on in their lives that are not known, but the relationships are so important there. Even back at the start, when we do that prep program, the prep for pre, when the school principals get to meet people who might not have had a very good education experience themselves, they come along with their children. Being able to have a relationship with a school principal that they might never have had or experienced themselves before is so important.

MR WALL: Turning to parking and traffic safety around schools, how are the priorities identified as to what a school needs to improve this aspect?

Ms Whitten: The directorate works very closely with Transport Canberra and City Services in terms of identifying the key schools or crossings that we look to address. We have a really good working relationship with our schools and our principals. One thing we are working on at the moment is the election commitment around school crossing supervisors. There is quite a significant process, which our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services are working through with us, and the non-government sector as well. That is one way. They obviously do a lot of traffic analysis that they hold. We do not have that info. But we do other things as well. Mr Bray can talk about active streets.

Mr Bray: As Ms Whitten just indicated, we get information from various sources, from requests from schools, which might raise a concern they have about traffic, parking requirements or what could be seen as unsafe practices by drivers and pedestrians, through to information from transport and city services, as well as our own internal monitoring against the ACT parking and vehicle access general code for car parking.

We review all of our schools parking as a straight look at the parking requirements. We review that each year when the census comes out in February. When the enrolment census data comes out, we go through each of the schools and update whether they meet what we look at as the minimum requirements. Then we look at what works might need to be done. But we do not just implement the works; we will go and talk to the school about how they are managing the situation. They might be quite comfortable with their situation, even though they might have fewer car parks or drop-off zones than what are specified as the minimum. It all comes down to case by case, and we respond on that basis of need rather than by looking at any specific benchmark.

MR WALL: For the reporting period of 2016-17 how many schools were identified as needing upgrades or improvements or have requested improvements to be made?

Mr Bray: In terms of just comparing it to the ACT parking and vehicle access general code, there are 17 schools that do not meet the minimum code requirement. Of that 17, 13 have alternative parking available within the precinct around the school. It is not like there is nothing else that the traffic can turn to. Of the 17, 13 of those schools already have, in effect, local solutions. In terms of the number of schools that have requested, I would have to go and check how many schools have made those requests. If I were to give an order of magnitude, I would say probably fewer than five, off the top of my head.

MR WALL: If you are able to take that on notice and provide what the request was for, please, that would be appreciated.

Mr Bray: Yes.

MR WALL: I am guessing that they apply only to government schools.

Mr Bray: Yes. That is all I directly respond to in my role.

MR WALL: Does the Education Directorate have any involvement with any non-government schools in this space?

Mr Bray: Not directly. That is not to say that we would not engage in a conversation if there were something that could be mutually done. There is nothing I can remember in the short term where we have done that. I could not answer the question specifically around non-government schools.

MR WALL: For the 17 schools you mentioned that were not currently at the code level, what has the time line been for addressing the situation in each of those schools?

Mr Bray: As I said, we will respond to those only on a needs basis. There are probably only two or three that we would be looking to do any works with, of that list.

MR WALL: How has that been determined?

Mr Bray: By the feedback from the school. Essentially the school will contact me and say, “We are really experiencing some problems with drop-offs or car parking.” We will then typically get a traffic engineer to go out and have a look, try to collect some data, look at how the situation works and then come back with recommendations on how best to address the problem.

Ms Berry: It does not mean that they do not have drop-off points at schools; it just means that, for example, at the front of the school door there is not a set-down spot. Every school has a different sort of make-up. Canberra High is a good example of a school that does not have a set-down space at the front door but has a very safe drop-off point at the back of the school. The other schools identified have that. That is where the common drop-off point is.

Mr Bray: That is right. That is why we have to go and look at it case by case. I will

give you a reverse example. Kingsford Smith, which complies with the numbers of car park and drop-off zones, raised concerns about vehicles travelling too fast through the car park, so we went out and put in some traffic-calming devices and improved the signage. It is really about looking at the need: what each school requires.

Some schools manage what would be seen as a lack of car parking spaces quite easily and do not need any additional works to be done. We would do work if it were needed, but of the 17 schools there would probably be only three or four that we are currently working with, looking at solutions. Some have virtually no solutions. An example is Telopea Park School, where there is just no space available, so the school itself has made some additional car parking space available on the school grounds. A lot of schools have to deal with this with their own local ability. Most schools find ways around it. If they have not, we have gone in, got some expert advice, tried to come up with some solutions and done what we can to address the problem.

Ms Berry: Another way that schools do work on their own in engaging with the school community is about parent behaviour around car parks, and that of the school community as well. Macquarie Primary School actually won a design award. The students drove the process, the conversation with the community, to improve parent behaviour and safety around car parks.

Mr Bray: One of the other activities of whole of government is the active travel program, which is trying to encourage students to ride or walk to school. That has multiple benefits, obviously; there are health improvements, fitness and other spin-offs. It reduces the traffic load on the schools as well. So a number of things are being done to address both the traffic congestion and the safety in relation to traffic around our schools.

MR WALL: Lollipop people, traffic controllers, are going to be employed. From recollection, it was 20 schools that were going to be identified for that.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MR WALL: Have those 20 schools already been identified?

Ms Berry: I do not know the answer to that, but TCCS has that information.

MR WALL: So that is being developed through TCCS?

Ms Berry: Yes. They are the lead. The minister for transport is the lead.

MR WALL: Will the traffic controllers be employed through Education, or through—

Ms Berry: I think a procurement process is currently occurring, which TCCS is leading, procuring the services for that particular initiative.

MR WALL: Are you able to provide a list of schools that have been identified for that commitment, or is that—

Mr Bray: No. They are going through an assessment process. The process was that schools were to lodge a submission. By the way, this applies to both non-government and government schools; it is not just government schools. The process, I believe involves a school nominating their request for a lollipop person—

Ms Berry: School crossing supervisor.

Mr Bray: That is it. They put their case about why they believe they need that as a priority. The group that has been formed under the chair of the TCCS will then go through those, in essence, applications and decide which will warrant being the first 20 to be rolled out at the start of 2018.

THE CHAIR: I have some questions about public education awards. Can you tell me about the most recent awards night?

Ms Berry: Yes, we can do that. It was only last week, so it is fresh in our memories. It was a really lovely award ceremony recognising the work of not just the winners of the awards but also the people who were nominated, the people who nominated, school volunteers across our public education school communities and others who came along to join up in the celebration. There was also significant recognition for a number of educators in the profession who had served 40-plus years in the school community as educators. That is quite a significant number of years for education.

THE CHAIR: Is that the recognition of service award?

Ms Berry: Yes, for 40—

Ms Howson: That is right. The recognition of service awards are for those who have taught for over 40 years, in terms of that public event ceremony, but we also provide public recognition awards for service for teachers at the 30-year mark and the 20-year mark.

Ms Berry: I will read out the award recipients. They were Vanessa Stephens, primary school teacher of the year award, from Mount Rogers Primary School; Jeff Hunt, secondary teacher of the year, from the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre; Helen Witcombe, school leader of the year award, from Tuggeranong Sustainable Living Trades Training Centre; Emily Gregory, new educator of the year award, from Turner School; Elinor Archer, leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education award, from Dickson College; Luke Ferguson, education support person of the year award, from Woden School; and Emily Walter, Daniel Trevino and Louise Woodruff, the playground enhancement team, volunteer of the year award. We know that school communities put a lot of time into volunteering, so every one of them should receive an award. This group were from Macquarie Primary School. And the Black Mountain School and the YMCA got the outstanding partnership of the year award, for providing vocational opportunities for students.

The staff who were recognised for 40 years of service to public education are Graeme Falls, Jennifer Hall, Mark Ashdown, Ian Johnson, Lynette Morehouse, Patricia Cregan, Rae Pottenger and Eric McCabe. Hear, hear to all of them.

THE CHAIR: Have the awards changed over the years? Is that quite an unfixed list of awards?

Mrs Summerrell: I have been involved in the awards process for a couple of years. There are set categories that we have for the awards. We run an evaluation post the awards, we talk with the people who have been part of the process and we make the necessary adjustments, but for the past two years the categories have been unchanged in terms of the nomination process.

THE CHAIR: What is the assessment process to determine who wins these awards?

Mrs Summerrell: We call for nominations throughout the year against a set, identified number of categories. Then a panel is put together and there are judging criteria depending on what the award category is. That panel meets and goes through that process, and our finalists and winners are identified through that process. We do not notify the finalists beforehand. They are notified at the event, which is part of the excitement for people who come to the event. It is a really great and exciting night. They find out there that they are a finalist and then obviously the winner is announced there as well.

THE CHAIR: How many nominations did you receive in the most recent year?

Mrs Summerrell: In 2017 we had 170 nominations. That was from 62 schools. In 2016 we had 142 nominations and in 2015 we had 66, so there has been a significant increase from 2015, which we are really proud of. We love the fact that peers are nominating their peers. It has this lovely feel about it within the organisation, about the prestige that is associated with being nominated and then obviously becoming a finalist and winner.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is based on homestay.

Ms Howson: Do you mean homestay or home education?

MRS KIKKERT: Homestay, when an international student comes and stays. I have been receiving some reports that some of the students who pay for their board and their food are not getting the meals that they have paid for. Within the Education Directorate do you have a certain policy where you regularly check up on the host?

Ms Andersen: Yes, absolutely. At the moment we have 327 students in homestay arrangements. A high level of support is provided not only by staff at the schools that those students attend but also by staff from the international education unit. They do regularly check on the students, both in their school environment and in their home environment.

Ms Howson: I would add to that that the students are encouraged, if they have any concerns, to reach out to their support staff at the school or the staff in the international education unit who are available to those students 24/7. If you have got information that we could act on, then we would be happy to take that on board. If you have heard reports and we can specifically follow through on that, we would do so.

MRS KIKKERT: You seemed quite surprised, Ms Andersen, when I mentioned that. Would this be the first that you have heard of it?

Ms Andersen: Yes, absolutely.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is: considering these students are quite vulnerable, is there a certain support system for them—

Ms Howson: Absolutely.

MRS KIKKERT: to encourage them to come forward and mention anything?

Ms Andersen: Absolutely.

Ms Howson: Yes.

MRS KIKKERT: And how regularly do you actually encourage them?

Ms Andersen: All the time. They are in contact with the staff in the international education unit as they need to be but also staff from the unit provide outreach to the students in schools. We have international education coordinators in each of the schools those students attend as well.

Ms Berry: They would also be able to access any of the other counselling or support services that any other student would be able to in that school. If you do have students that are saying that they feel like they are not being treated well while they are here in homestay then you should let my office know if you can and then I can follow it up— or with the directorate, whatever they are comfortable with. But that should not be the case. I would want to make sure that that was followed up on.

Ms Howson: Absolutely, yes.

MRS KIKKERT: Have there ever been cases in the past or at present where students would request to be transferred to another home?

Ms Andersen: Yes, that does happen from time to time, for various reasons, and that is a supported process. That process is supported through our staff from the international education unit.

MRS KIKKERT: How long does that process take?

Ms Andersen: It can be immediate, depending on the circumstances.

MRS KIKKERT: And what have been the most severe cases in the past or at present that require a student to ask to have their accommodation changed?

Ms Andersen: I think, typically, it would be a breakdown of relationships but I could not give you any more detailed information than that.

MR STEEL: I apologise, I am going to ask a question about capital and in particular around solar in schools. It says in the report that 85 ACT public schools have solar panel installations that are feeding into the grid. I was just wondering whether there were any schools that did not have them and, if they did want solar panels, whether they could as a school decide to invest in them or whether that was something that needed to go through the directorate or be funded directly by the directorate rather than through school resources.

Mr Bray: I believe all schools have solar panels. I do not remember any school not having solar panels. That was our program. I will put on record that I believe every school has solar panels.

Ms Whitten: Eighty-five have.

Mr Bray: Eighty-five.

Ms Berry: Almost every school.

Mr Bray: We have 87 schools. I will have to go and find out. I will just give you probably one that may not have any. O'Connor Cooperative School might be one, for example. The reason why it may not have them, if I could assume that it has not got any, is that it is surrounded by large trees. Obviously, as you probably know, solar panels do not work under any shade. I will check and find out which two schools do not have panels on them. It would be a reason like that. We ran a program about five or six years ago and the intent was that there would be solar panels in every school. I will need to come back and inform the committee on that.

In terms of additional solar panels, schools are very welcome to put on additional panels if they want to. Malkara school did that themselves recently in the last financial year. Alternatively schools can also approach us to do a joint-funded arrangement on the solar panels as well. We would typically go into a dollar-for-dollar arrangement with that.

We have done so much work in the solar panel space that schools have moved on a little from there. We are looking at doing other works to try to reduce the energy consumption in the schools. Solar panels are still a very big item for us. We are very interested in expanding our systems. If they have got an interest in doing it, we are interested in supporting every school to do that.

MR STEEL: I am aware of one situation where a non-government organisation—it is actually after-school care—was keen to have solar panels placed on a government school building and fund that for generating energy for the after-school care and the government as well. How would they facilitate that and have you been approached by other non-government organisations to use your roof space for that purpose?

Mr Bray: Is this in relation to non-government schools or non-government organisations?

MR STEEL: Non-government organisations. After-school care might be one example of an organisation that is collocated with a school and using the roof space of

a school for solar.

Mr Bray: To my knowledge, I am not aware of that approach. But then again, I might not be across the detail of what my staff may be aware of. I will have to check that. Again, typically, the only issue there would be that the agreement has to be with the school board, the school principal, in terms of the arrangement only because it is a government asset managed on behalf of the government by the principal and the board of the school. I would have to find out why that did not happen.

If, say, a private before and after-school operator wanted to do that, it may create some legal problem about having that situation. But I would need to check the details. But if they were approaching us on the basis that they were doing it as part of a contribution to the school's operation then, in principle, we would have no objection to that.

Ms Howson: In answer to your question, you could direct them to Mr Bray.

Mr Bray: Yes.

Ms Brighton: If I could just add to that, Mr Bray do you want to talk about the arrangements at Amaroo School?

Mr Bray: Yes. Amaroo School actually has a commercial operator who has put on the school 600 kilowatts of solar panels. They essentially rent the roof of Amaroo School. The majority of the school roof is covered in solar panels. The school receives in the order of \$20,000 or \$25,000 a year for making their roof available. That is a very big power production in terms of solar generation. That was the first one we have done of that scale.

We were approached by another company that was trying to facilitate potentially superannuation companies looking at investing on a joint basis with solar panels. We referred their proposal to the environment and planning directorate. I believe they are still in discussion around that opportunity.

It is worth probably mentioning at the moment just what we are doing in the environmental space. We are starting to look at opportunities around installing batteries as a trial at some of our schools. This is very early at the moment. But, again, we are having discussions with other directorates around possibly doing a trial to see if we can introduce battery technology into our schools in time, if it makes economic sense to do that.

I have just been corrected. The rent that is paid at Amaroo School is \$45,000 per annum. Apologies for that. I am also given another note. Jervis Bay School I think is the second school that does not have panels because we do not actually own that building. It is a commonwealth building. We are really a tenant in their building.

MR STEEL: I would imagine it would largely depend on the roof itself and whether you were going to replace it in the short term as well. I know a number of roofs have been replaced on government high schools on the south side.

Mr Bray: That is correct. We always have our roofs checked structurally before we put any extra load on them, both weight and static load as well as wind load, because the panels can change the wind load on a roof as well. We always check that out before the panels are installed.

MR WALL: You mentioned Jervis Bay. What is the arrangement with the Education Directorate regarding the operation of the school at Wreck Bay? I have never got my head around this, as to where that relationship starts and ends and how it is facilitated.

Ms Brighton: Education is the service provider down at Jervis Bay. The asset is owned by the commonwealth and the commonwealth funds the territory to provide education services. The staff down there are our employees and they have access to the same professional development, supervision and supports that every other employee in the service does.

MR WALL: The school facilities have been registered by the ACT?

Ms Brighton: Yes, it is one of our 87 schools.

Mr Whybrow: As Ms Brighton said, it is under a service-level agreement. There are a number of services from the ACT government provided to Jervis Bay residents through an agreement through Chief Minister's with the commonwealth government. A number of those other services are things like judges, child protection and registration. The directorate also provides registration of childcare facilities in that space as well. It is a service-level agreement where the commonwealth pays the ACT for the costs incurred.

MR WALL: The enrolment of students in the school at Jervis Bay forms part of the reporting in this annual report?

Ms Brighton: That is correct.

Mr Whybrow: It does.

MR WALL: The Indigenous metrics and those sorts of things as well?

Ms Brighton: That is correct.

Mr Whybrow: Yes. It is identified in our financial statements as a user charge.

MR WALL: With respect to the Board of Senior Secondary Studies, are there any other jurisdictions that use our model?

Mr Stenhouse: Could you repeat the question?

MR WALL: The BSSS system that runs here in the ACT is unique compared to the HSC which operates across the border. Are there any other jurisdictions, either domestically or internationally, that use our system?

Mr Stenhouse: When you say "use our system", the answer would be no. But that

would be the same answer for any jurisdiction because all the systems are different. What you are referring to are systems where there is an end of year 12 examination. It is a high stakes examination and counts for the bulk of the student assessment. The first jurisdiction in Australia to run a system which is essentially parallel to ours was Queensland. I believe they started in around 1972. The system we have in the ACT began in 1976. At the same time as that system of year 12 certification was introduced, the public colleges became year 11 and 12 entities. So those two things happened at the same time. Queensland did not have the year 11 and 12 public colleges but it did have school-based assessment with the scaling test. The scaling test in the ACT is known as the ACT scaling test or the AST. In Queensland it is called the Queensland core skills test.

In recent times, probably three or four years ago, Queensland Education did a review of their system. They found that, essentially, because of the scale of Queensland, being a very widespread, diverse community, there were certain problems in having that school-based assessment system. In particular, there were issues of moderation and standards across schools, and because of the isolation of some parts of Queensland. Queensland have been moving very slowly back to not so much an exam-based system but they are introducing more external assessments. It may not necessarily be an end of year 12 exam. It could be an external assessment in the middle of year 11 or at the beginning of year 12 or somewhere else. It might not necessarily be an exam but it would be a common assessment across the whole system.

That results in having less of that moderation and standards problem across the schools. We do not have that tyranny of distance, of course, in the ACT. With the system that we have, we have two moderation days of the year when all the year 11 and 12 teachers from all the schools in the ACT and from our seven overseas schools get together and we have peer review of student work to confirm the grades.

MR WALL: I was probably not quite as specific as I should have been with the question. Obviously, jurisdictions as a whole are not necessarily using our system. As an example, Canberra Grammar School here in the ACT uses the HSC.

Mr Stenhouse: Yes.

MR WALL: Are there other schools outside the ACT that are using the BSSS?

Mr Stenhouse: There is a school just across the border in New South Wales that is planning to use the ACT system starting in 2022. The population of that school is still at the primary school age. They have conducted a discussion with their community and evaluated the HSC, the IB and the ACT system and decided that the ACT system, the senior secondary system, is what their community wants to go with. Having said that, we are only in 2017 and 2022 is five years off.

MR WALL: There are a few years, yes, between now and then.

Mr Stenhouse: That would be the only one.

MR WALL: They would be the first school that would be outside the ACT?

Mr Stenhouse: Outside the ACT and in Australia. We have seven overseas schools.

MR WALL: Okay; tell me about that.

Mr Stenhouse: We have schools in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and more recently in China.

MR WALL: Is there just a school in each of those?

Mr Stenhouse: More than one. There are two schools in Indonesia, three in Papua New Guinea, one in Fiji and one in China. I hope that adds up to seven.

MR WALL: It does. What is the relationship between the ACT and those schools? How is that system administered?

Mr Stenhouse: The relationship is essentially through the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies legislation, the act that was brought in in 1997. There was an amendment to the act in 2015 which clarified the position of international schools with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies. Before 2015 they were not specifically mentioned. Now there is specific mention of them in the act. The way that that works in brief is that if the board comes to an agreement with a school that the school is suitable for running our ACT BSSS system, if that happens, the minister is then able to declare that that school is a recognised educational institution for the purposes of the act and they are on exactly the same basis as other schools in the system.

MR WALL: Do those schools pay a fee to utilise our system?

Mr Stenhouse: Yes. They pay a fee for service that is on a per student basis. The basis is the number of qualifications that the students get at the end of year 12.

MR WALL: What is that fee?

Mr Stenhouse: The fee varies from year to year. It goes up gradually. At the moment—

MR WALL: Not many things go down gradually.

Mr Stenhouse: I will give you a ballpark figure. If a student is doing a tertiary package, which most of the students in our international schools are doing, that is \$800. That is for the full two years. I personally think that is quite a good deal. If they are doing the standard package, which is less work for us because we do not need to do all the scaling that we do with the tertiary package, that is around \$700.

MR WALL: Per student per year.

Mr Stenhouse: Per student per ACT senior secondary certificate.

MR WALL: For the 24 months that they are typically enrolled?

Mr Stenhouse: Yes, that is right.

MR WALL: Is that the same fee that schools in the ACT pay?

Mr Stenhouse: Schools in the ACT do not pay the board a fee.

Ms Berry: As much as we'd like that!

MR WALL: Just checking; I was not sure if there was an arrangement with non-government schools, that there was a fee for service or anything like that.

Mr Stenhouse: No.

MR WALL: Are you able to provide the numbers of how many international students are currently enrolled in the BSSS system?

Mr Stenhouse: You are talking about offshore?

MR WALL: Yes.

Mr Stenhouse: Obviously, there are international students within the ACT. Again I cannot give you the exact number off the top of my head but it is—

MR WALL: I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Mr Stenhouse: It varies from year to year, of course, because it depends on the number who meet the requirements for the ACT senior secondary certificate. Over the time that I have been at the office of the board, it has varied between about 120 and 140. It moves around a bit. We are expecting that the program in China will expand in the coming years.

THE CHAIR: Could someone please tell me about the consultation underway to establish an academy of coding and cyber security?

Ms Brighton: We talked about the coding academy previously when we were talking about the STEM work. We have taken a round-up program logic design approach to this. We have pulled in academics from ANU and the University of Canberra as well as the curriculum designers, who are based at the University of Sydney, some of our year 11 and 12 students from Tuggeranong college, a number of our teachers and school leaders, and cyber security experts and local entrepreneurs.

We have brought these teams of people together a couple of times to unpack what problems we are trying to solve with this cyber academy and the methodology that would land the territory in a really strong position to enable students to be great contributors to the broader society in the STEM professions.

We have found that having the input of local entrepreneurs as well as academics has meant that we have been able to provide the government with some pretty rich and deep advice—I should say that we are in the process of providing the government with pretty rich and deep advice—about how the government could get the best

opportunity for territory students out of this initiative. Ms Andersen might want to add something if I have missed anything.

Ms Andersen: I think you have covered it very well.

THE CHAIR: What is the vision? I know it is very early days, but is it to have a stand-alone building that students congregate to? Are there teachers or instructors who would go out to schools? I am still at a loss as to what it is going to look like.

Ms Brighton: The beauty of the consultation, with the minister's blessing about getting these inputs from the different experts, was that we could provide the minister with advice about what the construct could look like in order that we could be in a position where we have engaged students who are participating and growing and we have professionals in our school who are skilled and further skilled in this domain of cyber security and STEM professionals.

We have taken all of that mix and we are in the process of providing that advice back to government. When we started, we worked within the concept of the election commitment, which was quite broad in terms of its narrative. Then we used the consultation to craft up some advice to the government about how they might pursue this initiative. That is in the process of making its way to the minister.

Ms Howson: The important principle here is that we want to lift the capability of the whole system. Concepts like centres of excellence can help us do that, but we need to broaden the access and make sure it is a virtual presentation of all of the skills and expertise that might be circulating around and centred on the original concept of a centre of excellence. We have worked with that idea but, as I said, the principles around access, equity and ensuring that we are lifting the capability of the whole of our education system are important in what we are presenting to the government.

Ms Brighton: The other thing I would add to that is that we are also trying to learn from the work that we have already done. One of our colleges has a course which they originally called ethical hacking; I think they have changed the naming convention. Those students that have come out now see their teacher as a facilitator rather than someone who is in the possession of all knowledge. Those students have gone on to participate in a Department of Human Services initiative where they have been working side by side with the cyber security experts in a design challenge in the Department of Human Services. What we are trying to do is learn from what we have been participating in with local academics and local industry, and put all of that best knowledge in the advice back to government.

THE CHAIR: I think it is a great vision. At the moment, how many colleges have a specifically focused ICT course available to them? Does every college?

Ms Howson: We will ask Mr Stenhouse to come back.

Mr Stenhouse: Almost every college, apart from probably some of the international schools, would have an ICT course. The ICT course has different streams. It has a stream that would include some coding; it would have a networking stream; there would be a stream that would be more focused on media. There is even a stream that

is more design focused. There are quite a number of different pathways in terms of the IT course, but yes, there would be coding in some of those pathways. In the media pathway, I would say probably not, but in some of the other more technical pathways, yes.

MRS KIKKERT: My next question is about Bimberi education. Are you able to answer those questions?

Ms Berry: Yes. At the school?

MRS KIKKERT: Yes.

Ms Howson: It is the Murrumbidgee education centre.

Ms Berry: Whose teacher won the secondary teacher of the year award last week.

MRS KIKKERT: Fantastic; congratulations to him. In answer to a question during budget estimates hearings, I was told that many detainees at Bimberi do not spend enough time in the facility to complete a valid assessment in literacy and numeracy. That is quite understandable. Is there any data available that would allow us to accurately assess the effectiveness of the educational program?

Ms Howson: Yes: certainly, the formative assessment data that the teachers use within that setting. I will let Ms Seton speak about that approach in particular, but in the Murrumbidgee education centre, what is most important for us is a very personalised and individual approach to learning. In that respect, I have a lot of confidence that the goals for each of those students is very clearly articulated. For the time that those young people are in the detention centre, I think there would be some realistic expectations about what they might achieve. Many of them, as you would appreciate, are there for very short periods of time. But we certainly focus on a range of learning opportunities, from life skills development and social skills development to academic improvement.

Ms Seton: The Murrumbidgee education centre provides a very individualised program. These students' results are not going to be picked up in things like NAPLAN. We do run a MultiLit program, which is an individualised program that assesses where the student is with their literacy and provides an individualised program forward.

More importantly, what the school does is look at where the student is going to next. They are not the long-term centre. Are they returning to a school? Are they talking to their home school? It is making sure they have already got that information, and then passing the information back to the home school so that it is not a missed opportunity.

For some of our students, it is moving on to employment opportunities; it is aligning them with the right CIT course or setting them up with an ASBA or something, so that they are moving into an educational space and making sure they have the literacy and numeracy skills they need to access that.

MRS KIKKERT: How many teachers are currently teaching there, and what

subjects? I know you mentioned a couple.

Ms Seton: I believe there are two teachers. The range of students changes, obviously, from day to day. It does provide the Australian curriculum but, again, it is tailored to the individual needs of the students.

MR STEEL: I have a question in relation to the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, particularly about how the ACT compares nationally in relation to teachers who are recognised at the lead and highly accomplished levels.

Ms Hale: How do we do nationally? Very well, considering our size. As of today, we have 61 teachers who have achieved certification. We have 41 highly accomplished and 20 lead teachers; we also have a significant number of trained certification assessors.

MR STEEL: Do they have a similar system in other jurisdictions?

Ms Hale: Similar.

MR STEEL: So it is broadly comparable?

Ms Hale: Yes, that is correct.

MR STEEL: I understand that 20 days of professional development is required for all teachers who are registered for TQI per year.

Ms Hale: That is correct.

MR STEEL: Do they get to choose or have input into the professional development that they undertake?

Ms Hale: Yes, they do. In the mandatory 20 hours, five of those must be a TQI-accredited program and five must be a teacher-identified activity that the teacher chooses themselves. The other 10 can be their choice.

MR STEEL: How much money is available for that? Is there an amount per teacher?

Ms Hale: That depends on the schools.

MR STEEL: For each school, is there an amount?

Ms Brighton: The Education Directorate provides release time within the week. Every week of the school year, the teachers will participate in professional learning communities. We also provide funding for teachers to participate in a range of professional learning. Some of that is system identified professional learning that anchors very squarely and firmly into our school improvement agenda. Other professional learning is very specifically about the work that is going on in a particular school.

At the beginning of a school year, the principals work with their staff and set a

professional learning plan for the whole year for their teaching staff at that school. That plan aligns to their school improvement program for the year and for the coming years. Then the professional learning is anchored into that. That is funded; funds are available for those activities.

MR STEEL: There is a list of registered providers, I think, in this report.

Ms Brighton: Yes.

MR STEEL: How do they become an approved provider with you? What criteria do you use?

Ms Hale: To become a recognised provider in the first instance, unlike in other jurisdictions like New South Wales, the grant does not come in at that level; it comes in at the individual program level. There are some criteria to become a recognised provider, but it is around their qualifications and their ability to deliver. That is checked further in the individual program. We have had cases where people are recognised providers but they have not been able to actually deliver a program.

In going back to the costs for professional learning, I can say that of the 509 programs available this financial year, we have had 303 that had no cost attached to them.

MR STEEL: How many teachers were deregistered as a result of not undertaking enough professional development?

Ms Hale: None. There have been none for that addition.

MR STEEL: That is good news.

Ms Hale: We work very strongly with all teachers. In fact, a bulk email went out today to all teachers, a courtesy email to remind them to ensure that they have submitted their 20 hours of professional learning.

MR STEEL: Thank you.

MR WALL: What is the process for a course provider to get registered under the TQI?

Ms Hale: It is on the TQI website. It is some simple questions around what they are choosing to offer. They have to actually say what they are; they cannot just come in and say that they are a provider and will tell us later on what they provide. You have got to be very specific as to what your area of expertise is.

MR WALL: I understand TQI is responsible for the registration of teachers. For a teacher who, say, qualified in New South Wales and is moving across to the ACT, what is the process that they need to go through to get accreditation in the ACT and how long does that typically take?

Ms Hale: Typically, 20 working days. But if a teacher in New South Wales is fully accredited in New South Wales, which is equivalent to our full registration, they can

come in under mutual recognition. If they have not gone through that process in New South Wales, they would come in with provisional registration with ACT.

MR WALL: And provisional can be given while the 20-day registration process is underway?

Ms Hale: If they are coming out of mutual recognition, we will acknowledge that, but if they are not registered, no; they have to wait until that full process has been put through. It is not automatic; there is an assessment that goes with that.

MR WALL: In relation to the Canberra Islamic school, the decision has now been reconfirmed by the commonwealth that they are ceasing their funding at the end of the school year. I am curious to get an understanding of what work is being done at the ACT level to work with that school community going forward?

Ms Howson: Mr Whybrow will be able to answer that question.

Mr Whybrow: It has been a number of years. The commonwealth government originally served a notice on six schools around the country, including the Islamic School of Canberra. I believe that was back in November 2015. There have been a number of notices served and reviews of those notices. The most recent was notified in October this year, which confirmed an original decision to effectively deregister it—“remove its status as an approved authority” I believe is the correct term—under the Education Act 2013. Without that, the school would not receive funding.

The effective date of that decision, though, is 15 December 2015. The Education Directorate and the registrar for non-government schools received a request from the Islamic School of Canberra, I believe on 20 October—around that date—seeking a change of proprietor. Under our act, the Education Act 2004—sorry, I need to correct myself. I believe I said it was effective from 2015. I meant 2017. Apologies for that.

MR WALL: I followed.

Mr Whybrow: Let me go back to where I was. I was talking about the ACT registration. Under the Education Act, the 2004 act, the school has the capacity to identify a change of proprietor; that is the legal entity running the school. Currently, the entity that has been identified as being deregistered as an approved authority is called ASAL. I believe that is AFIC Schools ACT Limited.

There have been discussions between the organisation IPDC, Islamic Practice and Dawah Circle, to do two things. The first is to purchase the facility from AFIC, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, the current owner of that lease, and become the proprietor of the school. That organisation is seeking re-registration. With re-registration, the school applies and we go through a process of assessment of a number of things, including financial assessment. We are currently in the process of doing that assessment for the new proprietor. The advice that we have received from the Islamic School of Canberra’s principal, and I have confirmed it with the commonwealth government, is that IPDC is also seeking to become an approved authority under the commonwealth’s legislation. Those processes are currently continuing. The school is looking to continue in 2018, but there are a number of steps

to complete.

MR WALL: Is the ACT's registration process likely to be completed in time for the 2018 school year?

Mr Whybrow: The recommendation is made to the minister, and that needs to be made by 31 December. We are well into that process at the moment. Obviously, a key component of this relates to the financial viability of that school. We are undertaking our assessment of the new proprietor and, as we always do with all schools, seeking independent financial advice from an external organisation. That process is underway, and we are on track to have a decision about registration. A key component of that will be the commonwealth's decision about ongoing funding.

MR WALL: I would imagine there would be space for the student body in government schools, but is any work being done with the staff at that school. There is a lot of hope in this process going through appropriately and the school being able to open come the beginning of 2018.

Mr Whybrow: As I first said, this has been going on since November 2015. There is approximately—

MR WALL: There have been a series of stays of execution, essentially.

Mr Whybrow: Yes. We have gone through that assessment. As was discussed earlier, each resident of the ACT has a right to access their local school, and we have not provided that—

MR WALL: I am not too worried about the student body in this scenario.

Ms Howson: I think that if it came to that being a reality, we would be very open to engage with the school staff about their future.

MR WALL: That was basically what I was trying to get to.

Ms Howson: That is the key thing.

MRS KIKKERT: My question concerns the NAPLAN test. Turning to page 29, can you explain why year five is not meeting the ACT targets, which are already well below those of their non-Indigenous peers, which is on page 42, and the same for the year nines as well?

Ms Howson: Your observations about those shifts in achieving the mean standard are correct in relation to year five reading. Your question asked us specifically to explain why that is occurring. These are moment-in-time measures of, as you know, numeracy and literacy results. The key thing for us is actually responding to this at a whole-of-system level. Our investment in school improvement and the range of measures that we are putting in place in relation to that are quite pertinent here.

If you would indulge us, we would like to talk a bit about a shift in focus towards gaining learning, which the minister spoke about this morning, which is a much more

meaningful measure of the impact of our efforts in schools to improve the capability and capacity of our students across the numeracy and literacy foundation domains; and about our investments, particularly in the early years in primary schools, that are happening at the moment in relation to that.

The actual explanation for that particular result is, as always, I think, that there are many factors that come into play. Mr Gotts might like to speak about that, and then we can move to the response to it.

Mr Gotts: I think the important thing with regard to year five reading in 2016 is not so much the mean score that is reported here; it is the growth figure, as Ms Howson has said. By growth, I mean growth between year three and year five in reading. For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohort in the ACT, the growth was 105.5 points, versus 74.5 points for the non-ATSI population in the ACT. So the pleasing thing about it is not so much the score; it is how much that group of students grew over that period. Their growth rate was high enough to make a material impact on the gap between them and the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

MRS KIKKERT: Page 44 gives the mean achievement scores for ACT year 10 students in a science literacy test. Why is this not included for Indigenous students? Did they not attend a test? What was the reason?

Mr Gotts: The test you are looking at there is a sample. It is not a test that is run for all year 10 across the ACT. It is just a sample of students. So the likelihood is that there are simply not enough Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in the sample to be able to separate them out as a separate group.

Ms Howson: This is also an assessment that is run internationally.

Mr Gotts: Yes. Whereas NAPLAN testing is generally done across the whole of a year three, five, seven or nine, the sample tests, which are done for year 10, year eight, and year six, focus on particular things each year. Each year there will be a different focus of the sample. This one was science literacy. It is a relatively small group, a few hundred in the whole of the ACT, that would do that. They would be part of a sample that is a national group. The numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students would not be split out from a small group like that.

MRS KIKKERT: Are the small groups chosen by teachers, or do they volunteer?

Mr Gotts: It is done as a random sample. We provide data, and then a sample frame is created from that data. We provide information to ACARA and they create the sample. ACARA is the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. They run the NAPLAN.

MRS KIKKERT: I am looking at how those small groups of students participate in that. Are they chosen?

Mr Gotts: They are chosen. It is just a random selection. It is a bit like jury duty. There is a group of people who can be chosen, and this group of students is identified—

PROOF

MRS KIKKERT: The teacher picks them?

Mr Gotts: No, it is randomly selected; it is not done by the teacher. They are randomly selected and identified to participate in the sample.

MRS KIKKERT: And then obviously a permission slip will go to their parents, to—

Mr Gotts: All the normal processes.

Ms Howson: Mrs Kikkert, I am sorry: it was a misstatement when I said it was international. I meant to say national. It is a national survey.

MRS KIKKERT: You have clarified that now, thank you.

MR WALL: Is the directorate's office at 220 Northbourne Avenue an ACT government property, or is it privately leased?

Ms Howson: It is privately leased.

MR WALL: What is the lease term on that building?

Ms Berry: It is around 2020.

Ms Howson: Could we take that on notice?

MR WALL: Yes. And any implication light rail has on the future of the tenancy in that space would be handy as well. What are the terms of the rental? Are there options for Education beyond 2020-ish?

Ms Berry: Some of it might not be in this portfolio, if you are talking about light rail, the government office block and things like that.

MR WALL: What is the directorate's intent in occupying that property?

Ms Berry: As you know, the ACT government is building an office facility here in Civic. So the intention at this stage is that we would move into that premises.

MR WALL: You will move into the office block?

Ms Berry: Yes.

Ms Howson: We need to clarify something, if you do not mind, Chair.

Mr Bray: It is in relation to the solar panels. My staff have confirmed that all 87 schools do have solar panels. The reference in the report, page 99, refers to 85 schools that receive the feed-in tariff. The two schools that do not have the feed-in tariff are Charles Weston School and Jervis Bay, because when the panels were installed the feed-in tariff opportunity had closed.

PROOF

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank all the witnesses who have appeared today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing when it is available. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice today, could you please get those answers to the committee secretary within five business days.

The committee adjourned at 3.32 pm.