

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2002-2003)

Members:

**MS K MacDONALD (The Chair)
MR S PRATT (The Deputy Chair)
MS R DUNDAS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2003

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms K McGlinn (Ph: 6205 0137)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

The committee met at 11.09 am.

Appearances:

Ms K Gallagher, Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Women and Minister for Industrial Relations
Department of Education, Youth and Family Services

Ms F Hinton, Chief Executive

Mr F Duggan, Acting Executive Director, Children's, Youth and Family Services

Mr T Wheeler, Executive Director, Corporate and Vocational Education and Training

Mr J Mason, Director, Curriculum Renewal

Mr R Donnelly, Director, Budget and Facilities

Ms A Thomas, Director, Human Resources

Ms R Calder, Director, Children's Services

Ms B Baikie, Director, Family Services

Ms A Haughton, Director, Training and Adult Education

THE CHAIR: Good morning. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

If questions are taken on notice during the hearing, witnesses will be asked to check the proof Hansard transcript for a copy of the questions. The secretary will email witnesses a copy of the transcript as soon as it is available, and responses are requested to be with the secretary of the Standing Committee on Education within seven working days. Another comment I would make is a request to committee members that we stick to the annual report and not go on a dipping mission. If anything has already been covered in estimates this year, I'd prefer that we not go through it again.

I welcome the minister and Ms Hinton, who is head of the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Gallagher: No thanks, Madam Chair. We're happy with the opportunity to appear today, and we'd like to use the full time for answering your questions.

THE CHAIR: As was previously advised, we will start with Children's, Youth and Family Services. Can the head of that section come up?

Ms Hinton: The Executive Director of Children's, Youth and Family Services is still on leave, so we'll bring people to the table according to whether we're dealing with children's, family or youth services.

THE CHAIR: Does anybody have any opening questions related to this area?

MS DUNDAS: If it pleases the chair, I thought we could start with support for young people and then go on to youth justice and then care and protection services. That is the order they appear in from page 147—4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7.

THE CHAIR: Rather than skipping backwards and forwards, were there any questions you wanted to ask on Children's, Youth and Family Services outputs that come before those?

MR PRATT: No, I can run in that sequence.

THE CHAIR: Before we go to that, I have a brief question regarding the child-care work force issues covered on page 54. The *Childcare work force planning project 2002* report, which was completed in October last year, made recommendations for the training, recruitment and retention of staff in the ACT. Where can I get a copy of that report—is it on the website? What does it actually say?

Ms Gallagher: We're currently finalising the government response to that report, and we were going to release the report at the same time as the government response.

THE CHAIR: So it hasn't been released publicly yet?

Ms Calder: The work force report was released in February of this year, and consultation continued for the first part of this year.

THE CHAIR: So it has been released publicly?

Ms Calder: It was released publicly in February of 2003.

Ms Gallagher: Sorry, Karin. Yes, it was released to all child-care centres for consultation following its release to the people that had been on the project themselves. Did you want a copy of it?

THE CHAIR: Yes—or I can just visit the website if it's there.

Ms Calder: No, the report is not on our website, but we can provide a copy of it.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that would be useful.

Ms Gallagher: There are a number of things in that report that we have been able to move on, but there are also a number of things that require national attention. On Friday I'm meeting with child-care ministers, who have done similar reports and have similar issues, including the federal government, to discuss some of those national solutions. In the areas of training and some of the ideas for the recruitment and retention of staff, we've already put things in place. That will become clearer through the government response.

THE CHAIR: Ms Calder, are you able to give me a brief summary of the areas the report covers?

Ms Calder: The report covers three main areas in terms of recommendations—training, recruitment and retention, as you stated earlier. The recommendations are reasonably broad ranging. In the area of training the report talks about the level of qualification, how students may be qualified and some of the avenues for retraining staff to be able to re-enter the work force. In the area of recruitment it talked about the crisis of the work force sector at the moment in getting qualified staff across the various positions and various levels. In the area of retention it talked about the fairly significant staff turnover in child care, which is a national issue as well.

THE CHAIR: Okay, and the response is going to be released soon, which I look forward to seeing. Thank you, Ms Calder.

MS DUNDAS: Turning to page 147, output 4.4, measure No 9—cost—there has been a significant reduction in cost per student attending the adolescent day unit program, with the number of students attending still the same. However, the note says that there's been an increase in the number of students since 2001-02. You met your target of 20, according to your annual report. How can you then factor that in terms of budget costs?

Mr Wheeler: As I understand it, from 2001-02 there has been an increase in student numbers, so there's been a reduction in costs there. There have also been some changes to the attribution of costs across all outputs.

MS DUNDAS: You said that last year, Trevor.

Mr Wheeler: Some changes are made every year that have no practical effect on the outputs, but they occasionally mask real increases in funding. It might help if I give you a thumbnail sketch of some of those. If you look across the department and include extraordinary items, there's an increase on budget of about \$16 million, due mainly to some transfers out to the new department of Disability, Housing and Community Services.

Asset revaluations in the year 2001-02 have altered the attribution rates between years. There is the discontinuation of the capital charge, which was really money-in money-out, a reflection of our share of the territory's borrowing. That's been offset by increases in the government payment for outputs for the maintenance of funding, indexation, teachers' EBAs and other EBAs, various budget initiatives and, in the area of education, increases in the number of international students.

There is a range of what I would call "no impact" changes. In the Estimates Committee hearing for 2003-04, it came up that, in the rush to make the changes for the new department, the overheads that were transferred out were all taken from two outputs: 4.2 and 4.7. In fact, they should have been distributed across the whole department. That's now been done for 2003-04, and it was the basis of the discussion in estimates. They also had to be reflected in the outcomes for 2002-03. That's also contributing to part of it.

Most of the variations you see in the share of the costs are really those outputs' share of EBA funding and, in the case of Children's, Youth and Family Services, the non-

teaching EBA impacts. There's been some reallocation of depreciation to reflect the actual ownership by outputs of their share of our depreciation expense of fixed assets. We are still experiencing a reduction in our superannuation bill, essentially because of the mix of staffing and because people are coming on under the less expensive PSS model.

There's a change to our accounting rules: when we calculate employee entitlements, we're now required to estimate for the year ahead what the likely impact of any wage increase is going to be and take them up. Finally, we've sorted out overhead allocations for the new department.

The other thing is that, when we estimated the original budget, we incorrectly said there were 12 students, whereas there were 20. That's now been corrected, and it is flowing through. The revised budgets that we have in these papers are only adjusted for any appropriations that we receive; they're not adjusted for any corrections or changes to attribution arrangements within the department. To a large extent, a lot of the explanations are about those attribution changes.

MS DUNDAS: Specifically, in relation to the adolescent day unit—

Mr Wheeler: As much as anything, it's the increase in student numbers and a bit of a decrease in costs.

MS DUNDAS: The question I was asking relates to the increase in student numbers. From memory, at the end of 2001-02 you knew that there was an increase in numbers from 12 to 20, and that was factored in through the budget. You knew there was going to be that change, and you now say we're going to be working a number of 20 students for this year and last year. Why is there such a difference?

Mr Wheeler: It's the calculation rather than the fact that we didn't know we had 20. We knew we had 20. It's just that, when we went back and looked, we realised that the calculation had been based on 12.

Ms Hinton: On reflection, I recall us discussing this issue at budget estimates as well. That was when we first realised that the calculation of per student cost had not been changed to reflect the increase in the number of students attending the unit.

Mr Wheeler: I'll add a bit more to that. In the previous year's annual report, the cost per student was about the same as the outcome for 2002-03. We just didn't pick up the error when we set the original figures in the output. \$16,852 was the result for 2001-02.

MR PRATT: In that same output, at measure No 8—contract payments disbursed within contracted timeframe—there's a 33 per cent variance from target. The footnote over the page says that a factor was inadvertently omitted from those contracts. Was this simply an administrative oversight?

Mr Duggan: It was an administrative oversight on the template that we'd developed. The Auditor-General picked up that we had said that we would, within our contracts, pay within 10 days. We did, but because we didn't have it in the original template, we had it recorded as being low.

MS DUNDAS: I have a quick question on the surveys that are being done under this output. Measure No 3 shows that funded organisations have a 100 percent satisfaction rate with government contract administration. How many organisations were surveyed to get that response?

Mr Duggan: My understanding is all.

MS DUNDAS: And they're all responding with 100 percent satisfaction?

Mr Duggan: They're all responding very positively.

MS DUNDAS: Can we have a copy of this survey?

Mr Duggan: Yes, certainly.

MS DUNDAS: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Shall we move on to output 4.5?

MS DUNDAS: All the questions I have on that are being pursued through another inquiry.

THE CHAIR: Do you not wish to pursue it?

MS DUNDAS: We've been having enough conversations about youth justice and community services that I'm exhausted on that topic for today.

THE CHAIR: Do you have anything on Children's, Youth and Family Services?

MS DUNDAS: Yes, there were a few more on outputs 4.6 and 4.7. I've looked through the report, and I can't find any reference to any of the coronial inquiries that were undertaken over the 2002-03 year that the department was involved in. It's not listed under the statutory requirements either. Why was the decision made not to include in the annual report any mention of the involvement of the department in external investigations, such as the coroner's inquiry?

Ms Hinton: The department provides submissions to various sorts of inquiries, including coronial ones. That's part of our ongoing, regular business. At the time the annual report was completed, the latest coronial inquest was not completed. We didn't have findings from the coroner; it was an ongoing process. Short of saying that we made submissions to court processes, there wouldn't have been anything else to say.

MS DUNDAS: There were two inquiries over the year.

Ms Hinton: That's right, and only one that we were involved in.

MS DUNDAS: So there were two inquiries into children's deaths, but you were only involved in one, which was the second one.

Ms Hinton: That's right, and it was not completed at 30 June.

MS DUNDAS: In the compliance index on page 262, under Overview and Major Achievements, at "external scrutiny" you've put N/A. Is external scrutiny something different?

Ms Hinton: I was looking around for someone who might be able to give me some guidance on what "external scrutiny" means—no-one can offhand. I also need to indicate that the coroner brought down her findings on 20 June, so it was completed by the end of the financial year.

MS DUNDAS: I understand that the coroner made some recommendations and decisions that impact on how child protection services operate. Will we see them reflected in future annual reports? Will there be any response to the coroner's findings?

Ms Hinton: We'll give consideration to that, Ms Dundas. There's limited space within the annual report to respond in detail to every area. The key findings of the coroner didn't relate to this particular agency—the coroner had some broad views around it. We'll certainly consider it in next year's annual report.

MS DUNDAS: I have heard about the refocusing for Family Services—coming out of the causes that led to those deaths—on how reporting was working through the departments. How is that progressing, and do you feel that there are now greater reporting mechanisms throughout the department as a response to those deaths?

Ms Hinton: I'll let Ms Baikie answer in detail, but I will say that the refocus strategy around Family Services wasn't simply related to the coronial inquests. In fact, the process was well in train prior to the coronial considerations. It was part of the process of providing the information to the coroner about our activities in this area that led to references by the coroner about it.

We mention in our annual report, on page 63, that we have continued the strong focus on preventative programs to support families and to assist children and young people and their families who may be at risk. We talk about decision making in the care and protection of children and flag that the centralised intake service, which is a significant part of the refocus as well, is a future direction. Ms Baikie can tell you more about it.

Ms Baikie: As Ms Hinton said, one of the major strategies of the refocus is the introduction of a centralised intake and the government, in the last budget, did allocate \$2.1 million over the next four years for the centralised intake. That is well under way in terms of the development of a centralised intake. We have located premises in Swanson Plaza in Belconnen and the accommodation planning is well under way. Also, we have recruited the centralised intake manager and we have an intake admin person on board. We have also recruited for the positions for centralised intake and we are to announce them imminently. Also, linked with the centralised intake is the after-hours service. So that part of the refocus is well under way.

We have also developed an improved risk assessment tool. It is being completed and we expect to undertake the training for that before the end of the year. We're also looking at the supervision policy for staff, looking at how we can support staff, and, with the

supervision policy, revising that and ensuring that that takes place. We are also developing overarching interagency guidelines which look at how all the agencies work together for child protection services. That has also been undertaken. We are looking at establishing links with a university to support the training for our staff.

MS DUNDAS: Turning specifically to page 151, which deals with the number of reports of suspected child abuse, there have been changes to how reports of abuse are being reported in the annual report. Is that again a flow-on effect of the refocus? Why have these changes been made?

Ms Hinton: The changes, I think, came from a multiplicity of sources. We had regard to national statistical systems for recording information about reports of concern about children. We'd had ongoing conversations with the Community Advocate about attempting to get a clearer statement of the situation. As part of the general refocus activity of having a clearer risk assessment process we decided to move to a situation in which all reports of concern about children were formally recorded and an assessment was taken at that time of the level of risk associated with the report of that concern, and then to move to a situation of assessing those reports that, after that initial assessment, required appraisal.

MS DUNDAS: On page 151 we have the new measure of reports of concern about children, which was about 3,000, and then the new measure of appraisals completed as a percentage of all reports of suspected child abuse, which is running at about 62 per cent. I'm trying to figure out how measures 2, 3 and 8 are connected—the reports of suspected child abuse, the reports of concern and the appraisals completed.

Ms Hinton: The reports of concern about children, the complete recording of all of the notifications that come to us from various members of the community, 3,082.

MS DUNDAS: Does that 3,082 also include the 1,283 reports of suspected child abuse?

Ms Hinton: That's right. At that point an assessment is done and a proportion of those are determined as requiring appraisal, because a number of the reports of concern that come to us are not of sufficient severity or sometimes they can be based on inaccurate information that they don't require an appraisal.

MS DUNDAS: Can you tell me how many of the reports of concern about children received appraisal?

Ms Hinton: Of the 3,082 reports of concern about children, 1,283 required appraisal.

Ms Gallagher: It's covered in the footnote.

MS DUNDAS: Okay, so when a report of concern becomes a report of suspected child abuse, it gets appraised.

Ms Hinton: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: What happens to the other reports of concern?

Ms Hinton: The others can be a range of things. They may be based entirely on inaccurate information, people who perhaps are well-meaning but don't have the full circumstances, and an initial risk assessment determines that that situation is not correct. That's why it was important to move to a situation in which the reports of suspected concern were all recorded and went through an initial risk assessment process. Previously, we regarded them as consultations, where someone might ring in and say, "There's a family living near us who look like they need support. What can we do about it?" That became quite confusing.

MS DUNDAS: I note from the footnote under measure 8 that the appraisals do take quite a length of time due to psychiatric and family assessments, but you did set yourself a target of 90 per cent. Are you going to review the processes? Are you going to amend your target in future?

Ms Hinton: We're not proposing to amend the target at the moment. Our view is that the issue about how we can continue to respond to reports of suspected child abuse is an ongoing question. The minister spoke last week about the increasing incidence of reporting of suspected child abuse and we're looking at ways in which we can address that at the moment.

MS DUNDAS: I also understand that there has been an ongoing review of foster care subsidies. How is that progressing? I think we spoke on this topic in relation to last year's annual report.

Ms Gallagher: There has been. That has been happening this year. I've met with the Foster Care Association to talk about their concerns about the payments they receive. I can't remember; we're about second highest, I think, in Australia in terms of the amount we pay foster carers. There has been a report done nationally—*The cost of caring*, from memory—which makes some recommendations about support for foster carers, of which financial support is one. The money we would be looking at there would need to be considered in terms of the next budget and that's certainly what I've told the Foster Care Association.

MS DUNDAS: So the report hasn't been finalised, but it will be finalised in time for the budget considerations.

Ms Gallagher: The review is an internal review that's going on. The report, *The cost of caring*, has been released. It has been out for some time. It takes a look at what's happening nationally. That information is being prepared for my consideration for the next budget. That's what I asked for. It was already occurring in terms of looking at *The cost of caring*, but after I'd met the Foster Care Association I sought some additional advice from the department about what the costs would be and what we would be specifically looking at.

MS DUNDAS: I noticed in last year's annual report that, through the Youth Services area, there was actually a measure of the cost per head of the ACT population aged from zero to 18 and the cost per head of the ACT population aged from 12 to 25 under Family Services and Youth Services measures. I can't see them repeated in output classes 4.4 to 4.7. I am wondering why that measure was deleted.

Ms Hinton: I'm not sure. I can't recall, but I'm assuming that, since the major consideration reflected the size of the ACT population, it was not regarded as a particularly meaningful assessment of the department's performance.

Mr Wheeler: I think we've taken it out. At a whole-of-government level there was a decision to take it out of most output measures, unless the output was of such of an expansive nature that it made sense, as Ms Hinton says.

MS DUNDAS: Okay. I think that covers the majority of the questions that I had for Children's Services.

THE CHAIR: I'm sorry to do this, but Mr Pratt has asked whether he could ask a question about the actual information for 4.4 and 4.5, rather than the financials.

Ms Gallagher: Can you give us a page?

MR PRATT: Page 58, "Youth Connection—Youth Work and Family Support Service". The program indicates that a number of parents were successfully engaged, but can you expand on how successful that program has been? How do we measure it? I can't see how we're measuring successful engagements or otherwise. How was the department, perhaps in collaboration with other departments, able to successfully engage with families at risk and is there a percentage on that?

Ms Hinton: It's quite a difficult assessment at one level, particularly about drawing causal relationships, but in terms of the youth connection area, that figure comes from the meetings that have been held with the families of young people who are disengaged from the families of young people who are disengaged who attend group activities. That's the basis for it. It refers not to the engagement with a range of other agencies which would also happen, but specifically with the families through the youth connection process.

MR PRATT: Have you been able to measure the success in engaging with those families? Can you tell us how many times you've been unable to engage with those families. I think it's a very good program, but I want to understand a little bit more the difficulties that you may encounter in trying to make that program work. We all know that that intervention is fundamental to solving a whole lot of other issues. How successful are we in this?

Ms Hinton: The issue for us, the fundamental measure of success, is getting young people back to school and, for example, reducing levels of suspension as well. The program relates quite closely to another program that's run through the youth education service and in both instances we're attempting to work with the young people themselves and with their families and the big measure of success is getting them back in school and attending.

MR PRATT: Can you measure that? Can you tell us how many successful returns there have been? Could that not be in the report somewhere?

Mr Duggan: We don't disengage with the young people until we've had a suitable outcome. So, if that's a return to school, that's a suitable outcome. In many instances they're given other opportunities in vocational education.

Ms Hinton: For example, the degree to which they're contacting young people who have been part of the program will vary according to the level of engagement, so in the initial stages there will be quite intensive engagement with a young person and their family, then as they get back into school there will be continued contact, perhaps a phone call, perhaps a meeting. So, over a period of time, it's a graduated process around that. We're struggling with suitable evaluative strategies that don't cost more to undertake than the program itself.

MS DUNDAS: To go back a couple of steps, somebody has been able to provide me with some information about the Chief Minister's directions in terms of annual reports, so I want again to raise the question of the coroner's inquiry. I understand that the annual report, as set down by Chief Minister's directions, must include information on judicial decisions and decisions that have had an impact on the operations of the department. The coronial decision that came down on 20 June 2003, do you believe it had an impact on the operations of the department?

Ms Hinton: No, I don't believe that it did. The only action that we have taken as a result of that coronial decision has been to write formal letters to individuals who had not fulfilled their obligations under mandatory reporting legislation. We wrote to them and we drew their attention to the coroner's findings.

MS DUNDAS: And these were individuals not employed by the department.

Ms Hinton: Both. We just wrote to anyone.

MS DUNDAS: If you're writing to individuals employed by the department to tell them that they haven't been complying with statutory obligations as administered by the department, it seems to me that this has been something that has impacted on the department in a significant way.

Ms Hinton: The question I thought you asked me was whether the decisions of the coroner had had a significant impact on the department, and I answered the question that you asked, which was that I don't believe that the decisions of the coroner had a significant impact on the operations of this department.

MS DUNDAS: But through the coroner's decisions you have decided to take action based on the coroner's decisions.

Ms Hinton: We had decided that we would write to individuals whom we believe should have reported, and this is part of a strategy that we've had. We just held off to see if there was any particular issues that came out of the coronial report that would impact on those letters. It just didn't seem sensible to write them when we were awaiting a coronial report.

MS DUNDAS: Thank you for clarifying that.

THE CHAIR: We will have one last question, if that's all right, and then move on to the next section because time is marching on.

MR PRATT: I have a number on 4.4 relating to outcomes, but I'll put those on notice. I go over the page to 4.5 and the intensive support program, page 61. These are areas I might have discussed with Mr Duggan casually from time to time, but I just want to see if I can get a bit more of a formal grip on this. How successful is the intensive support program, which is voluntary, in attracting young children at risk to go and do Project Saul and projects of that calibre?

Mr Duggan: The intensive support program is an amalgamated program between the Youth Justice and Family Services branches of the department and it does pick up statutory and non-statutory young people who are at risk. The program, we believe, was successful. The initial evaluation that we did in certain key areas proved very successful. The intensive support program has been metamorphosed and built into the new turnaround concept that the department is promoting, where we'll have a more constructive multidisciplinary approach to young people at risk. Building on the successes of the intensive support program, we're very optimistic that the turnaround program will continue to grow and be successful with the most at risk young people.

MR PRATT: I gather that somebody from, I think, JACS has been on the ground to look at the Project Saul activity. Are you in touch with them? Can you advise whether there's going to be a collaborative approach between both departments to perhaps formally engaging with that project and other projects of that calibre?

Mr Duggan: The whole issue about turnaround is to actually be a whole-of-government and non-government response to at-risk youth. So whatever components that we feel are suitable to value-add for dealing with these young people we'll be involved with. We do have a range of projects that we have initiated with the AFP. We're working with them on our RecLink programs. The AFP have committed themselves to turnaround, not just on a philosophical basis, but have actually allocated two police officers to work with us, so any linkages within their area of expertise obviously will be built on.

THE CHAIR: I ask that further questions be placed on notice in regard to this issue and we'll move on, because time is marching on, as I said. I thank the officers from Youth and Family Services for their attendance today. I'd also like to say that I was sorry to hear about the Weston Creek child-care centre burning down and hope that you will be able to get replacement services fixed up as soon as possible.

Moving on, are there any general questions that members want to ask? I've got some. I will begin. On page 16 there is a lovely photo. In the photo are two gentlemen, Rob Donnelly and Chris Cameron. Who are they and what do they do?

Ms Gallagher: Maybe we could ask Rob to introduce himself.

Mr Donnelly: I am director of budget and facilities. I started that role in mid-July, I believe, which was sufficient to get me in the photo but apparently not to have my name on the list for the executive team as at 30 June.

Ms Hinton: Chris Cameron is the principal of Forest Primary School and he came into the office to occupy the position of director of southside schools, with responsibility also for students with disability and student welfare, during the period of recruitment. He has returned to Forest Primary School and we have an additional three executives who were not in that photograph, possibly four.

THE CHAIR: Five, actually. Thank you for that clarification. Turning to pages 18 and 19, in your contact details—I have a major issue with this—you talk about the schools and the preschools being listed in the White Pages. Is there a reason why we don't include them in the annual report?

Ms Hinton: The reason would relate to the purpose of the annual report, which is to provide a report on the department's activities over the past 12 months and the contact people here are listed in relation to people who are looking for reports on the department's activities as a whole. Details about the schools are provided in other publications for parents and the general community.

THE CHAIR: I just make the point that I believe that, rather than making people who look at the annual report jump from place to place to find the information, it would be useful to contain that information within the annual report. That's a personal belief. Obviously, you're entitled to disagree with me on that. I think it would be useful to provide it for those people who don't have access to the White Pages at the time they're looking at the annual report.

Ms Hinton: We will give consideration to who are the major users of the annual report, but we do produce publications—for example, *Government schooling in the ACT*—in which these things are generally available, including through shopfronts, et cetera, with lists of contacts and much more information about schools. Certainly for any prospective member of the community who was interested in schools, this kind of publication would be a much more useful source of information. From our experience, whilst the annual report is available and is on the web, we don't have requests from the community for copies of the annual report.

THE CHAIR: Although one of the purposes of the annual report is to provide information to the community about the roles and functions of the department of education and, as such, it is available to the community. Even if they don't avail themselves of the printed version, they may go to the web and look for that information.

Ms Hinton: That's right. If they go to the web, they will find the information about schools in a much easier format.

THE CHAIR: I have another general comment about page 21 and the major outcomes and school achievements. I know that it's not possible in all cases, but it would be useful to have the dates that things occurred and have them cross-referenced to the places in the rest of the report where further information can be found.

Ms Gallagher: Where it says that something happened in May 2003, would you like the report to say that it was on 7 May 2003?

THE CHAIR: No, I'm talking about where you're saying that the parents and carers as partners in schooling policy was completed. When and when was it released? You refer to the high school development project being implemented and focused on areas supporting schools in aligning curriculum initiatives and the core work of schools. When did it happen? Where it's a general thing that's ongoing, obviously it's difficult to pinpoint a day or a month, but it would be useful to know in terms of a timeframe how it has actually moved throughout the year.

Are there any other general questions? We will move to the output classes. I have a general question on page 29. I know this is an area that we covered last year. I refer to the first paragraph, which says that, by law, children must attend school between the ages of 6 and 15. How does that impact on home education these days?

Ms Hinton: For the purposes of the legislation, approved home education is regarded as attending school.

THE CHAIR: It looks like the Government School Education Council has been providing fairly invaluable advice to the minister and I offer my congratulations to the Government School Education Council on their work. Turning to page 247, I note that there are six community people with the ability and experience to make a contribution to the development of ACT government schools and 10 people who represent the major education groups. Would it be possible in future to indicate where each member is from—if they are from community or education groups and which part of the education group they're from, the P&C or the AEU—so that people have a bit of an idea where they are from? Also, I have a question in regard to the council. Is Ms Jill Bailey representing the ACT chamber?

Ms Hinton: She is. We can certainly do that next year in terms of the appointments.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bailey is no longer working for the chamber, having retired. I believe that she retired at the beginning of this year.

Ms Hinton: At the time she was a nominee of the chamber. There will be occasions, of course, when nominees, whether they are from the union, the Chamber of Commerce or the parents, will change. Sometimes, in the circumstances you describe, the individual will resign. In other cases it may suit the organisation to leave that person as their nominee for a period.

Ms Gallagher: There has been some turnover on that council precisely for those reasons.

THE CHAIR: I am also curious as to the number of times the council met in 2002-03. There is nowhere in the report that I can see where it's actually stated the times that they met. It's not in Mr Braggett's report either.

Ms Hinton: I'm a member of the council and I think I have attended almost all of the meetings, but to put a figure on it is a bit difficult. Mr Cullen reminds me that it's probably roughly every two months. However, the modus operandi for the council has been to establish working parties. It has decided that it's probably a more effective method of operating when they're focused on particular activities to establish a working party to do particular work and then bring that to the council.

Ms Gallagher: That may be something that the GSEC could include in their annual report.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I note that they've put in a reasonably comprehensive report. It's succinct but, I think, comprehensive in what they've actually written in their annual report, but it would be useful.

Ms Gallagher: There's also the web site, which provides a direct link to people who are wanting to see what GSEC is up to, which is useful.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I think that's useful as well. I have two general comments on the report and then I will let somebody else have a go. While reading through the report, there were a number of things on which I found it difficult to find further information about the actual programs, further details, and the information further on in the report has not necessarily covered them. It would be useful to have an indication of where further information can be found, whether that be through the web site and actually giving the specific web site address as opposed to the general web site address. I know that that makes it easier as a whole to look through the web site. If there is a pamphlet out, it should be added as an appendix, if possible, without bulking up the report too much and turning it into the White Pages.

Ms Gallagher: Going back to the purpose of the annual report and who's using it, it's always good to look at ways of improving the annual report and some of your suggestions will be good to look at, but in terms of the sheer quantity of pamphlets and information attached to this department—believe me, I've tried to read it all—to attach them to the annual report would probably triple the size of the report and it would just be unworkable. Ms Hinton has just shown me that at the back there is an appendix which lists sources of information, including web sites and pamphlets that people might want to access. But thanks for your suggestions in terms of a bit more footnoting of things. We can look at that for next year.

THE CHAIR: The second point that I want to make a comment on is that throughout the report there are these little pretend graphs at the side which give no indication of the measurements at the bottom of them. If you are going to put in a graph, it helps to know what it is referring to. In some cases, there are details in the written information.

Ms Gallagher: They're all consistent, Madam Chair; some are less, some are more and some are the same.

Ms Hinton: We'll take it on board that you'd like different graphics.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. If the graphs are going to be used, they should mean something.

Ms Gallagher: I think the role of those is to be as graphics and the detail of some of those figures is to be found elsewhere in the annual report.

THE CHAIR: Some of them, but not all of them.

Ms Hinton: Mostly in the performance measures.

MS DUNDAS: Under the stage 3 requirements on page 189 you list that there are 106 designated work groups with HSR members selected. Does that number cover all primary schools, high schools and colleges and other offices run by the department?

Ms Hinton: The work groups do cover the full range of workplaces where departmental staff work; that is, primary schools, secondary schools, youth justice institutions, et cetera.

MS DUNDAS: I couldn't find the other number quickly. Does that cover every school in the ACT and every workplace? I thought that maybe there were more than 106.

Ms Gallagher: There are 98 schools—primary, high and colleges.

Ms Hinton: But it wouldn't be school specific.

Ms Gallagher: No, I think most schools have their own.

MS DUNDAS: There are 96 schools covered by that and the other 10 workplaces are the offices in Tuggeranong, Quamby, et cetera.

Ms Hinton: Some of our schools are small. We try to work with sensible adjustments that meet the needs of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the staff who work in the area. Perhaps Anne Thomas, our director of human resources, can add some value to that question.

Ms Thomas: Probably not a great deal at this stage, other than that the 106 work groups do cover all areas of our activities and, yes, I think most schools would have their own individual designated work group. But in some instances, where it's practicable, there will be a combination. You are quite right, Ms Dundas, that the other places will be places such as Manning Clark House, Family Services offices and Quamby.

Ms Gallagher: I think designated work groups are determined under the Occupation Health and Safety Act, which usually specifies that it's on a physical location, so Manning Clark House could be one designated work group.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, I understand that. But, because some schools are smaller than others, I was wondering whether or not you're combining schools across suburbs or, if you are combining schools, you're only doing it in places such as Gold Creek where the schools are close to each other?

Ms Thomas: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: If it's readily available, could you give us the list of the designated work groups?

Ms Thomas: Yes, I believe it would be readily available.

MS DUNDAS: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: While we're talking about occupational health and safety, Ms Thomas, on page 188 it says that there were 847 accidents, 50 of which were notifiable and were reported to ACT WorkCover in this year. I note that there were actually 804 accidents in the preceding year, with 29 reported. That's a fairly significant increase.

Ms Thomas: I don't have the historical comparison, although obviously I accept what was said about last year's. Yes, any increase in the number of accidents, whether notifiable or not, is regrettable. However, if there is an accident, we do encourage our staff to notify. That's an obligation that we have. So we encourage people to notify rather than not. Clearly, in an organisation as large as ours with over 5,000 staff on deck on any day of the week, we would expect there to be a relatively large number of accidents, minor or major—hopefully, minor—notified.

Ms Hinton: Whilst we're never comfortable with injuries of whatever kind in the workplace, the department's overall performance in terms of occupational health and safety is good. It has been recognised nationally, and our premium levels continue to be below the ACT average, which for a work force that includes youth justice, child protection, special schools, school environments, we think that's pretty good, although we are always striving to contain it.

MR PRATT: Whilst we're on this area of OH&S and accident prevention and looking at strategies to make schools a safer place, I would like to mention the queries we're getting out of places like Torrens Primary School about parking. I know essentially it is up to DUS to do something about that, but can you tell this committee what you are doing about discussing with DUS measures that need to be taken to improve school parking?

Ms Thomas: I might refer that question directly to Mr Wheeler in terms of the parking issue precisely. One of the initiatives that we have commenced this year is a system of school safety checks that schools are able to use to assess safety in regard to a whole variety of situations and environments. This has enabled schools to do their own assessments of areas in which they need to make some changes, some improvements. It's basically a self-auditing tool and we found that extremely successful.

MR PRATT: So these are safety audits?

Ms Thomas: Yes. I might hand over to Mr Wheeler about the parking issue.

Mr Wheeler: Yes, it's an ongoing issue at a number of schools, particularly as the trend of dropping off children increases. Whether it's Torrens or any other school, we go through a certain process to see what we can do to reduce the incidence of traffic congestion. We work very closely with DUS on this. We look at a whole range of things, including staggering the start and finish times by just a few minutes. If there are opportunities to increase bus services, we talk with ACTION about that, so that there's more regular public transport. We look at whether we can have pick-up and drop-down points at different points in the school, depending on its configuration and the roads and so on. Then, if all else fails, we often look at whether a bit of additional parking will help. We don't immediately jump to that, because providing a few extra parking spaces often is not the answer as you've still got a lot of students being picked up and dropped off, and you really can't provide enough space to have every car parked for a period of

10 minutes, which is sometimes all it is. But we work very closely with ACTION and very closely with DUS.

MR PRATT: Do you have sufficient money in the budget to look at, perhaps, car park expansions, or is that again a DUS expenditure over which you have no control?

Mr Wheeler: If it's on the school site, it's ours. Where we are on a public road and we are perhaps talking about decreasing a nature strip, it may be a DUS issue, but by and large parking is something that we look at. We do enlarge parking areas when we believe that's the only thing that will help, and we usually manage that within our capital works program.

MR PRATT: The chair has just reminded me that was a budget question, relevant to estimates, so I probably should plug it out.

Ms Gallagher: Following Mr Wheeler's comments, I just add that, because the pressure on those car parks is for a relatively small time each day, we have to look at other ways to manage it other than building new car spaces for 50 people to use for 10 minutes. You just couldn't build enough car parks on that place for every parent to have a car place when they came at 3 o'clock to pick up their child. There is also the issue of whether the best use of public money is to expand car parks. Probably a more practical answer is to do what Mr Wheeler has said in terms of working with ACTION and running school education campaigns with the students and parents, sending out newsletters about safe ways to exit schools, suggesting areas close to the school where students could meet their parents. Also, school populations fluctuate considerably. For example, Torrens is under pressure now because the school is very full. Across Canberra we've seen fluctuations in school populations depending on what's happening in their local suburbs at the time, so I think that we need to look at other measures than building car places.

MR PRATT: Yes, of course. And you've got the problem now, with traffic diversions, particularly around Torrens, of an increased pressure. I don't quite have the answer, but I'm just wondering where—

Ms Gallagher: I don't think there is one answer. I think it's a combination of several strategies.

Mr Wheeler: Urban Services are providing a bit of extra parking arrangements outside of the school and ACTION are also putting on a new bus route for next year. So, as well as trying to educate the parent community about how to drop off and pick up kids, we're also looking at areas outside the school. This is the sort of process we go through with any school in a similar situation.

Ms Hinton: Whilst in some schools there's a significant out of area component, it's also interesting to look at ways of encouraging children who live within walking distance from the school to walk to school rather than be dropped off. At the moment there are a couple of pilots on in a couple of schools of what they're referring to as a walking bus; there's a pick-up around the suburb, with particular walking bus stops et cetera. Some of those strategies have multiple benefits.

THE CHAIR: With Torrens, a lot of the students come from out of area, so the walking bus is not possible.

Ms Hinton: That's right.

Ms Gallagher: And that presents us with challenges more than just parking.

Ms Hinton: That's right.

MS DUNDAS: I've got another departmental overview question to get out of the way. I note, again at the back of the report, on pages 237 and 238, that you list the Assembly inquiries that related to the department done over the financial year. On page 238 you refer to the implementation of recommendations from report No 9 of the Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation of the Fourth Assembly into young adults at risk of not achieving satisfactory education and training outcomes. I do remember some debate in the Assembly about how Assembly reports were then reported on in annual reports. I believe that was specifically listed during that debate. In the future will we see responses to the inquiry into the health of school-aged children listed in this annual report?

Ms Hinton: My recollection is that at least one of the concerns was about recommendations of Assembly committees where there hadn't been a formal government response. This particular report, which was some time ago, was brought down prior to the election and there hadn't been a response to that. But I'll check those particular provisions.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, I'm sorry but I can't remember the outcome of that debate either. But as we do have government responses to the reports that have come down over the last couple years, will we see ongoing implementation?

Ms Hinton: I've been given some more accurate information, which is that, under the Chief Minister's directions, we need to include reference in here when the government's response to a report that has been brought down is complete. At 30 June, responses hadn't come out.

THE CHAIR: Yes, responses hadn't come out in that financial year.

MS DUNDAS: Okay. So in next year's annual report we can expect to see responses to health report No. 4?

Ms Hinton: Yes, and the VET.

Ms Gallagher: And the VET and probably the inquiry into the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people.

THE CHAIR: It will be a big year next year.

Ms Gallagher: It has been a big year.

MR PRATT: It's going to be bigger.

THE CHAIR: What I'm proposing to do is to finish up with general questions, have a 20-minute break and then come back and go through the output classes. I'm sorry if we're running a little bit behind time, but I'm hopeful that the output classes won't take as long as we've taken to this point.

MR PRATT: I refer to page 30 and student pathway plans. Has sufficient time elapsed since the introduction of that pilot program to get any idea of how students are reacting to it?

Ms Hinton: Yes, we've had very positive responses to the pilot program. We involved Kaleen, Caroline Chisholm, Lanyon and Calwell high schools and the eclipse program at the Canberra College. The evaluation is informing the full implementation that will occur next year, and it has given us useful indications of the way forward. Basically, students have been happy with what's happening.

THE CHAIR: Is the pilot still running and, if so, how long is it going to be running for?

Ms Hinton: No. The intention was only to run the pilot in third term to help inform the development of arrangements for the implementation of pathway plans for year 10 students in 2004 and then to progressively roll out 9, 10, 11 and 12.

MR PRATT: Is it your feeling that students feel they now have a much better understanding of where they are going with this program? Is it that much more successful than what we had previously?

Ms Hinton: The intention of this process is really about encouraging a focus on students' strengths, on their particular interests and on the multiplicity of ways in which they can develop skills to pursue their interests and pathways in different training. So it's less about developing a linear approach to a goal and more about recognising that for all of us there are multiple ways in which we can achieve particular outcomes. That flexibility is really a very, very important part of the process.

In fact, in this particular initiative we are really concentrating on the process rather than the outcome. The outcome or the goal is not to have the students with a pathway plan that tells them where they are going to go and that they can do this, this, this and this. Rather, it is to develop their skills to plan their futures and develop the sorts of skills that they need to get there.

MR PRATT: Are you getting feedback that students, particularly in year 10, feel more confident that they are having their individual cases assessed and feel a lot better about their strengths and weaknesses, understanding that?

Ms Hinton: I think if we thought that we just could do it in one term; we wouldn't have to introduce it for years 9, 10, 11 and 12 if we could achieve it all in one term.

MR PRATT: Yes, but in terms of the pilot, with the caseload that you have, is it having that effect?

Ms Gallagher: I think it's very early days for the pathway planning process. We're a couple of weeks into term 4. The pilot has occurred and it is something that I think will grow and develop with students, particularly as it is rolled out progressively. I think possibly the committee would agree with me that anything we can do to focus the minds of young people on where they'd like to head is a good thing, and that's the whole motivation behind this. As to client satisfaction three weeks into term 4, I think we'll probably have to get back to you on that; but it's heading in the right direction.

MR PRATT: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Any other general overview questions?

MR PRATT: Yes, at page 31, under Curriculum Initiatives, there is reference to the report on the education outcomes of boys. I won't go over the same questions that I asked in estimates on one of my pet subjects.

THE CHAIR: Is that actually a curriculum initiative?

Ms Hinton: Yes, it is a curriculum initiative.

THE CHAIR: Okay, because the education of boys is more than just about curriculum.

Ms Hinton: We regard curriculum as being the total of the content that's learned, the pedagogy that's involved in providing that content and the assessment of the outcomes; so it's an integrated approach. We look at curriculum initiatives in relation to particular client groups.

MR PRATT: The Martin report has clearly influenced where the department might go in terms of boys' education. Is the draft strategy that is under development based entirely on the outcomes of the Martin report, or have you pulled in other sources of learning as well?

Ms Hinton: We will always draw in other sources of learning.

MR PRATT: So have you any idea of the proportion of the Martin report—fifty-fifty?

Ms Gallagher: We know you don't like the Martin report, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Well, I like Mr Martin.

Ms Hinton: We wouldn't look at it in those ways. We'd be looking at what we were trying to achieve, the ways in which we can best achieve them and the strategies to assist schools in that process. We wouldn't look at attributing a causal relationship in particular percentages to this, that or the other.

MR PRATT: All right; that will do.

MS DUNDAS: I was just going to ask about the broadband rollout, the increased bandwidth to schools. You note that there are a number of schools that TransACT has yet to reach and you're investigating alternative technologies. Can you just expand on

the alternative technologies and ongoing discussions you might be having with TransACT to encourage them to increase their rollout.

Mr Wheeler: We're up to 43 schools. There are two areas of difficulty—

MS DUNDAS: Is that 43 schools as of today?

Mr Wheeler: About now, yes. The annual report says 36. We're up to 43. We're getting to the hard end actually in some ways. There's the well-known one, which is that some suburbs have got underground utilities, so there's nothing to hang a wire off; we're looking at wireless for those. We'll have something going in Tuggeranong probably in the next month or so.

What has unfolded for us is that there are two fairly difficult technical issues around where some schools are located. Firstly, when they've tried to go underground or they've surveyed where they might go underground—for instance, going across an oval or something of that nature—they've come across rock, which is a bit of a bummer. We've also found that we can't have the cable strung up in the air going across an oval, for example, or open space of such nature.

The other one is that in some cases the schools are actually too far from a TransACT node to make it really workable with their fibre-optic cable. They've come up with a technical solution, which we're pretty excited about and which we'll probably sign up with them on very soon. It's a form of what they call ADSL but it's not the ADSL that TransACT had a couple of years ago; it's a much enhanced version. It means that we can get optic fibre up to a certain point and then the last distance will be done by copper. Rather than using some of the fibre-optic technology, it uses a much more sophisticated ADSL type technology and that will allow us to get to those schools that are too far from a TransACT node.

Both of those initiatives we are very keen to pursue without delay and we are hoping that we can come to an agreement to get all schools, including those for wireless, connected by the end of next year; so there will be a progressive move. From the time this program started there have been design and technical issues that nobody could have forecasted at the time because it was an evolving situation. In fact, the ADSL solution wasn't available when we first went into this. In a sense we would have liked to have had all the schools connected by now, but in another sense we're very pleased that we've been able to come up with solutions for those hard to reach schools.

THE CHAIR: We will resume at 1 o'clock on the dot, which will give us an hour to go through the output classes.

Sitting suspended from 12.36 to 1.03 pm.

THE CHAIR: Output class 1.1, government primary school education: Mr Pratt, do you have any questions? We'll do both the financials and the written stuff for 1.1 at the same time.

MR PRATT: My question is in relation to the new Gungahlin Primary School.

Ms Gallagher: Amaroo?

MR PRATT: Yes. According to the report, there has been a major underspend on the school project. Reasons given for this are finalisation of design, along with major cost pressures and efforts to bring the project back within budget. Can you explain why those delays have occurred?

Mr Wheeler: When we construct any new school, there's quite a process that we go through to establish specifications. Invariably, depending on the climate at the time and what those specifications give rise to, we find ourselves eventually getting design work done, the cost planners have a look at it and give us a cost, and then we have to do what's called a value management study. They are invariably necessary for projects of this size because in the end you've got to see what you can achieve in terms of your specifications for the money that you've got. If you cannot get within that budget, you often ask for additional cover—if to not require that funding would mean that you couldn't deliver on the project.

All that has happened with the primary school is that that has taken us a bit of time. It has not been helped by the fact that in a broad sense we had a few other things to do earlier in the year with the fallout from the bushfires in a sense. There have also been cost pressures on the construction industry.

We've finished the value management study; the project is gathering speed and will open on time. But it has meant, from a budgeting point of view only, that we've slipped through that financial year barrier, so we've had to report that as such. In terms of completion and opening for the 2004 year, it's on track.

MR PRATT: The project increase from 8.6 to 10.4: does that reflect the fact that you need that additional funding to achieve the original design?

Mr Wheeler: Essentially yes. When we say original design, the design comes after—

MR PRATT: Design concept.

Mr Wheeler: Yes. What we do is work through the user specifications, then design, then get costs. A number of factors influence costs. The reason we have the value management study is that, rather than just keep on asking for more money, we go back and re-evaluate our specification and the design against the known budget. It's only when we can't fit within that without detriment to what we're trying to produce that we actually seek to increase the program limit for the project. That has happened and, as I say, that project is on track and will open on time next year.

MR PRATT: Thanks.

Mr Wheeler: When you're dealing with capital works spanning several years, the report that you get in terms of an annual report is in a sense artificial, because the project spans a couple of years. The real issue is whether you can actually bring it in on time.

MR PRATT: Because it's a snapshot.

Mr Wheeler: Yes, that's right.

THE CHAIR: On page 34 there is reference to the primary schools being involved in a quality assurance measure. I'm assuming that some of that was done by a questionnaire?

Ms Hinton: That's right.

THE CHAIR: Would it be possible to get a copy of the questionnaire and have a look at the questions?

Ms Hinton: The report on the school development process is publicly available. I suspect the minister sent it to all members of the Legislative Assembly earlier this year.

THE CHAIR: Okay. I'll have a look for it—

Ms Gallagher: I'm sure we can forward you a copy of the survey.

THE CHAIR: That would be helpful; thank you.

Ms Gallagher: The survey is only one form of appraisal through that process.

THE CHAIR: What are the other ways?

Ms Hinton: Discussions, looking at the student outcomes, looking at the school operational procedures, looking at the work that they've done in terms of curriculum—a range of factors like that.

THE CHAIR: There are 66 primary schools in total and 11 were involved.

Ms Gallagher: Because it was a five-year cycle. You didn't go through it every year. But, with the budget initiative, the School Excellence Initiative, that has been reduced to three years. So you'll have a chance, particularly in primary school, maybe to go through it twice. Some people, say in high school, could have missed the process completely because it's only four years, so we're changing that to make it a better, more comprehensive, process and that will begin next year.

MS DUNDAS: On page 137, are the changes that are being reflected in the overhead cost per student and the average cost per government primary school student what you were talking about before, Mr Wheeler, in terms of attributions of asset revaluations and EBAs?

Mr Wheeler: Yes, there are a range of actual increases through the impact of EBA, new initiatives, indexation and so on. To some extent they're masked by some of those attribution changes that we have to make. In a budget of this size, those sorts of things are sort of ongoing in a sense.

THE CHAIR: We will now move on to output 1.2, government high school education.

MS DUNDAS: I was going to use this opportunity to ask about the youth workers in high schools project. It's listed as a future direction. Can you let us know where it's up to?

Ms Gallagher: Yes. The idea, as I think we've said before in estimates, is to have eight youth workers begin school term next year. A process will be gone through to choose the eight schools that are most likely to benefit from having those youth workers start a year before the full implementation of that program. Those positions will be advertised on Saturday. A working group, which has a whole range of stakeholders on it, has been meeting to talk through how that initiative will work in the schools. Focus groups have been held with some of the students about rolling out the initiatives. It is on track. Having gone through the recruitment process, eight youth workers will start next year, with the full implementation of 17 the year after.

MS DUNDAS: And has the final decision been made on whether or not they will be employed by the department or by—

Ms Gallagher: That was made some time ago.

MS DUNDAS: And they'll be employed by the department?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, they'll be employed by the department. I can't remember off the top of my head, but there are 65-plus youth workers working for the department of education. It's not new business to us. I guess the more important thing from my point of view was to complement the school counselling program, which has been a core business of schools for some time, I didn't want to see some of that function outsourced. I think this is the beginning of something bigger in terms of how we partner with the community sector to provide support services to students. I didn't want to see the program outsourced.

I did have a lot of meetings with youth sector representatives about the concerns they had. I took them on board, but at the end of the day I think it was very important that the government stand by the initiative in terms of having it run through the schools. There were some problems in terms of how it may work if it went out to the community sector, in terms of the school's ability to direct some of the work that those youth workers were doing, the control that an employer would have over their employee and also the idea that, potentially, 17 youth workers could have 17 different employers, which in the early days I think could present some major problems for how we envisage that initiative working.

I know there is concern about the drain on youth services here just by creating the jobs; but I think that's manageable as well. From my point of view, it was very important that they be employed by the department. I had some very full, frank and honest discussions with the youth sector about what I wanted to see. At times that was in conflict with what they wanted to see. Certainly, nobody is under any misunderstanding about who would be employing them now.

MS DUNDAS: You mentioned briefly about how these youth workers will co-exist with the school counsellors. The counselling review that was done last year led to the youth

workers initiative. What else has come out of that counselling review that is being implemented?

Ms Gallagher: There are some work force planning issues that came out of that report, in terms of support for counsellors and career paths for counsellors. I might let Fran or somebody else expand on that, because there were some discussions going on with the training provider and I don't know if they can be spoken about at the moment. This was just one part of it. A lot of the emphasis of that report was very much about how we can support the work of counsellors better. Some of that was about spaces in school, how they were allocated to schools—all those sorts of things which are much more work force issues. I met with the counsellors association to talk to them about the report and areas that they saw as priorities. Then, last Friday the department advertised for—

MS DUNDAS: Yes, I saw that; thanks.

Ms Gallagher: teachers to go through a training course in terms of just opening it up a bit and being able to attract more people with teaching backgrounds to that profession.

Ms Hinton: The report provided some very useful models of how counselling and welfare services could operate in a school environment. There were, I think, three or four different models, which weren't necessarily mutually exclusively either, so you could mix and match around that. It made some very important recommendations and observations around professional supervision of counsellors, and particularly around the importance of working in multidisciplinary teams. We were very keen to work through the propositions that were developed through that report with the counsellors themselves and to connect that with the youth worker initiative. So there has been a working party, involving the counsellors, looking at what is there and at the implications for how we provide counselling and welfare services to students in our schools.

MS DUNDAS: Has there been some clarification of the responsibilities of youth workers, especially in terms of privacy? I know the minister has been made aware of young people approaching us about concerns for their privacy after discussions with school counsellors. Has that been clarified as a result of the report?

Ms Hinton: I don't know about as a result of the report; but part of the process of preparing for the implementation of the youth worker initiative next year has been to work through a framework for the employment of the youth workers and develop role statements and methods of operation. Very shortly, there will be training for the schools that will be employing the youth workers. So those sorts of issues have been talked through.

Issues of privacy are always a matter of concern to us. In the school environment, where you are operating in a collaborative and a collegiate model, there's always a tension between the teachers in the school needing to know about a young person's particular circumstances, in order to be able to take that into account, and when the young person's personal circumstances should be kept entirely confidential. That's always a tension.

MS DUNDAS: Will there be greater training for counsellors who are already in schools as part of the new initiative, to explain to them their responsibilities, so they can explain it to the students and young people who are accessing their services? I think the

confusion is arising because the students themselves are assuming that what they are telling a counsellor is confidential. If it's not, they need to be informed of that.

Ms Hinton: There's ongoing professional development for school counsellors, so the sorts of issues that you're talking about will be covered off—issues to do with privacy and reporting. But there are obligations in terms of student welfare within schools, particularly for students who are—

MS DUNDAS: I understand that, if it's a life threatening situation, it needs to be dealt with. The particular instance that I'm referring to was not a life-threatening situation and it has resulted in a very upset young person.

Ms Hinton: I understand that from time to time there may have been circumstances when it might have been better not to have disclosed the information to other members of staff. But, for example, in a high school where a student is working with a number of different teachers, if only one person in the school knows of a particular circumstance that affects that young person, the way in which the school staff can collectively and collaboratively support that young person is significantly reduced. So it's a matter of tension, and we certainly are constantly paying attention to that tension and recognising the privacy of young people at the same time.

MR PRATT: I image that tension would be managed by the principal, who would determine how far that information needs to go, surely.

Ms Hinton: Well, not necessarily. It's not possible for a principal of a school of 800 students to make those judgments about individual students. They are matters of judgment. Teachers are professionals, and that process is addressed in that way. The principal's job isn't there as a case manager of the information flow. There does need to be significant flow of information about young people across that school, but we do need to also respect privacy. There's also a tension that often arises with information to parents, too, when the parent's expectation is that they have a right to know information that affects their young person, their child; so it is challenging.

MR PRATT: Are all of the youth workers allocated to schools, or are some of them centrally managed as a resource?

Ms Hinton: We have a manager of the youth workers—someone who will supervise them—but the eight that the minister talked about will be placed in schools.

MR PRATT: All right. So of the other 65 currently in service?

Ms Gallagher: Well, they may work, say, in youth justice, youth connections, Quamby.

Ms Hinton: Youth education service.

THE CHAIR: Any questions for government high school education?

MR PRATT: Yes, please. On page 36, assessment and reporting, I notice the report again talks about the gap between indigenous students and other students in literacy and numeracy. Can you tell me whether that gap has increased or decreased on the previous

year? I think I might have asked that question in the quarterly report, but I'm not sure now.

Ms Hinton: The answers will vary each time, according to the particular areas, because we have a range of different outcomes—reading, writing, viewing, speaking, listening, and numeracy across 3, 5, 7 and 9—so you can get different answers. The numbers are quite small. The numbers vary significantly; because of the size of the cohort, a difference of one or two students can distort the figures. But certainly in the report that was tabled in the Legislative Assembly a month or so ago, the indigenous outcomes for the most part were not as high as they had been the previous year; but that wasn't across the board.

I was talking to a school principal who showed me graphs of that school's indigenous students performance compared to the cohort as a whole and to the ACT as a whole. That graph showed very significant underachievement by the indigenous students. Then he presented me with another graph which took one indigenous child out, and the result was much the same. The result for indigenous students and the cohort as a whole was very similar. So we need to be a bit wary of the statistical information, but, on the other hand, we know that the outcomes for indigenous young people are very poor compared to the cohort as a whole. That's why we are putting a lot of attention into addressing issues associated with their educational outcomes.

MR PRATT: But I presume in general that that gap is not widening, is it? The gap is pretty constant; it's not as if the performance of indigenous youth is falling off the planet? They're still trying to catch up, so the gap is—

Ms Hinton: I think we'd need a fair bit of trend data in the ACT across preschool or kindergarten to year 10 or 12. We only have about 850 indigenous students, so you start breaking those down into cohorts and you get quite small numbers. The other issue that is quite interesting is to look at the number of indigenous students in year 10 who were present in our school system in year 7. I've just seen some figures on that which show that, I think, fewer than 50 per cent of the indigenous students in year 10 were in the ACT schools in year 7, so comparability of the statistics over time for individual students and the size of the cohort is quite difficult.

MS DUNDAS: Can I just ask a quick question about how the report is compiled. Page 138, government high school education, has the number of students at 10,037, whereas page 36 has it at 10,349. That's a difference of a school.

Ms Hinton: There are two censuses—one in February and one in August. Unfortunately, the methodology around those two censuses is not identical and consequently it's a bit hard to compare them and the results are also always different between February and August. There is some movement of students in that period—some students do leave in that time—but sometimes that's the reason for differences in the numbers of students that are quoted. I'm inclined to think, as you raise the issue, that we would be better off to move to using only the February figures.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, to have consistency in the report, especially where there are schools the size of 240. That's like an entire school has just been added to the numbers, in a sense. Which figures should we be using? You've had an increase in the number of

students, be that an increase of only 100 or an increase of 300, in high schools. There has been a lot of debate around how non-government schools are ballooning over the high school years. Which set of numbers would I use to know whether or not any of the improvement plans that have been initiated through high schools are working? If we don't have the right numbers to judge, we don't know whether those programs are working or not.

Ms Gallagher: We did have a slight increase this year in the high school enrolment.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, but is that a statistical increase or an actual increase based on the initiatives we were talking about last year?

Ms Hinton: Mr Donnelly can talk in a moment about the one mentioning student enrolments, which includes special school enrolments, as opposed to the output classes where special schools are separate. However, as the minister said, overall from February census figures there was a small increase in the actual number of students enrolled in high schools in 2003 compared to 2002—and we were very pleased about that.

Mr Donnelly: On page 138, that 10,037 excludes special students in mainstream government high schools. At page 140, output 1.4, there are an additional 312 students in government high schools which, when added to the 10,037, gives you 10,349.

MS DUNDAS: Can I ask why those students aren't included in the list on page 136 as they're enrolled as part of government high school education. I have no problem with listing them twice, in terms of knowing that there are certain special education systems, but they are, for all intents and purposes, high school students.

Ms Hinton: You are absolutely right. But, on the other hand, what we're attempting to do is to attribute the costs of particular forms of education, so we have a separate output class for special schools, which includes all of the students in the high schools as well as the primary schools. Those are the full costs, so output class 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 give you the total costs and the total enrolments of government schools. I can see that, if we started to double count in that, it would get quite confusing in terms of the discussions. But the point you make is valid in terms of the way we present the statistics in other places, and we'll have a look at that.

THE CHAIR: We will now move to 1.3, government secondary college education.

MS DUNDAS: Just a very quick question: on page 222 you provide a comparison of marks for students who have completed year 13. There are 19 of them and I am curious as to whether, with such a small number of students completing the UAI again—19 out of 6,000—you think there are any possible identifications available through that table?

Ms Hinton: The decision to include that table was made by the Board of Senior Secondary Studies because it's part of their report, not the departmental report. But I think you have a very valid point, and I'm very happy to draw the attention of the chair of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies to that issue. I don't recall seeing it included before.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, it's in the Board of Secondary Studies report. I thought it was interesting that it was there, because it is such a small number out of the whole cohort.

MR PRATT: I have a question on vocational education and training and vocational courses in colleges. It's certainly a question I asked a year ago, but I don't think I've asked it since. Can you tell us a little bit more about how SNAPS is growing? How many more significant employers have signed up in the last 12 months?

Mr Wheeler: This is an ongoing program, with considerable growth. There is some improvement in the area of retail. Work is being done in the area of hairdressing as well to set up some training arrangements with SNAPS. The growth in SNAPS has been quite substantial. Is there any particular area that you're interested in?

MR PRATT: I was interested in the building industry, actually, as one. I don't particularly care where, as long as growth continues, but I am curious about the building and housing industry per se.

Ms Hinton: Certainly, it's a strong area for new apprenticeships generally outside of the school sector—a very strong area. We've been very pleased with that outcome. I'm not sure about the SNAPS area, but I do know that expanded SNAPS programs in the building area have been offered.

One of the things that are interesting about these areas is that we can tend to think about them as being growth, but we need to focus on the fact that we actually need to maintain that. Because we have growth in one year doesn't necessarily mean that will be maintained forever; you have to work at maintaining that level, both with students and with employers. So just maintenance of a level is a very significant outcome.

Mr Wheeler: We've exceeded the target for the year 2002. We're doing it on a calendar year; we had a target of 300 SNAPS and we ended up with 312, overall.

THE CHAIR: This is very minor but, being the person I am, I have to point it out. On page 38, under the heading of "College Moderation" it says that in 2002 there were 20 vocational courses. I think that should actually be under the heading of "Vocational Courses".

MR PRATT: They're certainly voc ed courses.

Mr Wheeler: It does seem a bit out of place there.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Hinton: You're right. It should be a new heading or under "Vocational Courses".

THE CHAIR: Anyway, I just thought I'd point it out because, as I said, it makes me feel better. Do you have further information on the percentage of students and the targets with the SNAPS in the figures at the back?

Mr Wheeler: Are you looking at the Vocational Education and Training Authority?

THE CHAIR: No, I was just looking for more specific information about the growth of the SNAPS.

Ms Hinton: Mr Wheeler just indicated that we had a target of 300 and—

Mr Wheeler: It grew to 312 in the year 2002.

MR PRATT: Where are those figures reflected here?

Ms Houghton: That figure was the latest count. We will probably get more. Each year we try to increase the number of school-based new apprentices. There were probably 260 last year. We set ourselves a target of 300. I can confirm we've reached 300 this year. We will probably exceed that. The last count, an unofficial figure that I took from the records in preparation for this, was 312, so we're doing quite nicely with the SNAPS. They're appreciated by industry.

As you said, in building construction, we're getting some good partners who are getting results and that's spreading. We also find that we used to get one or two parents coming along to information sessions about school-based new apprenticeships. They're becoming more popular now and we're getting a higher level of interest.

MR PRATT: Do you have industries coming forward and saying, "We have the capacity. Can you fill it?" The building industry was in that position about a year ago.

Ms Houghton: That's right. We work with a number of partners. The building fund has said that it would like to get into schools earlier, to make people aware of the great careers and jobs that will be available in the future in that industry. It has been a good partner in assisting us with school-based new apprenticeships.

Others have approached us. We've had a good start with the NRMA. They want to improve the awareness of smash repair apprenticeships to meet an industry need. At the very start, they haven't moved into school-based new apprenticeships, but we are working with them to take their taster pre-apprenticeship-type work experience into school-based new apprenticeships. We are looking for partnerships, but it was wonderful to have the NRMA come to us.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I note that, on page 223, you do have a small breakdown of the number of certificates produced but that is different from the number of SNAPS undertaken. I would be interested in having that information provided in future annual reports so that we can keep a watching brief on how well the SNAPS is doing over time. I know that they are gaining in popularity, which is a good thing.

Ms Houghton: Yes, but they don't stay on our books very long, unfortunately. They come to us for a year or a year and a half, and then we have to start again with the numbers.

THE CHAIR: Yes. That's fine.

MR PRATT: Some of these statistics would help us to better understand how successful the various performances are. A slight problem I'm having with this report is that, if

there was a little bit more about the improvement in performance in each of these individual projects, trials and programs, it would be a little better.

THE CHAIR: We might move on to special education, 1.4, unless there is anything further?

MS DUNDAS: In the discussion of the last annual report, we talked about the pilot program that was being run as a result of the special education review. I haven't seen the outcome of that pilot program and I don't know whether it has been picked up.

Ms Gallagher: Okay. The student-centred resource?

MS DUNDAS: The new model that took ages to develop, and then was being implemented through a pilot program in the last financial year. I want to know where it's up to now.

Ms Gallagher: It's certainly progressing. Earlier this year, students in special schools were appraised through that process. I sat through the process myself. It's a very comprehensive assessment process with which, because of my disability background, I appreciate being involved. It focuses on what children or young people need to get an education, rather than what they need to exist within the school. It focuses on their educational needs.

The analysis I've seen of parent satisfaction with the process indicates that satisfaction has been very high, at around 80 per cent of the people who've gone through the process, from memory. Again, a very high level of parents have chosen to go through the process, which is also good. I think 1,500 of the around 1,800 of our students who have a disability are in mainstream education, so now the appraisal process is assessing those mainstream students.

This budget year, this program has to exist within budget. I haven't seen the analysis yet, but I think everyone involved expects that the costs of fully resourcing every one of those children, based on their assessments, will increase under this model, although for some children it may mean that they get less than they're getting now. For someone who goes through a budget process that's useful because, if you're talking to Treasury about the increasing costs of special education—and we all know that is the case, if we're honest—if your student numbers are maintained, it's very difficult to argue that you need more than CPI increases in that budget.

That is why this major work has been done. The evidence hasn't been there to justify large or small increases, other than just normal increases, and that's why this work has been very important. It has been very challenging for everyone involved in it. Any time people start fiddling around with the idea of money and resourcing for students with a disability, everyone gets a bit nervous, including parents, who just want the best for their children and don't want to feel that they are at risk of losing what they have. The department has put in an enormous effort to take everyone through that journey.

I've had a couple of meetings lately with stakeholders in the disability area who are concerned about how it's all going to come out in the end, not so much with what's going on through the appraisal process. They are trying to get their minds around what

happens at the beginning of term 1 next year, once all those appraisals are finished, and we still have to talk to them about that.

We have to remain within our budget this year; I think it's \$36 million for special education. However, if all these assessments determine that we need to support students with disabilities and their teachers in schools a bit more, I would take to the budget.

MS DUNDAS: So the pilot program that was running in one of the schools can be seen as a success?

Ms Hinton: We have moved to the implementation. It wasn't really a matter of seeing whether it was a success or not, it was a matter of being able to fine-tune, through that pilot process, the recording procedures and the way in which the meetings would occur. We employed a project officer for six months, from April to September this year, to begin the implementation process. That person has finished the work and moved on and, as the minister said, the appraisals are occurring. Overall, the focus is on the educational needs of the young people and the way in which we can best meet those educational needs. That's why the levels of parent satisfaction with the process have been quite high.

We are also putting in place a system to moderate the decision-making process during that appraisal, from one student to another.

MS DUNDAS: You've seen an increase in the number of students with special needs moving from high schools to colleges. I would count that as a success, but it has had a budgetary impact. Will it be factored into future budgets and has the number of students with special needs you expect to complete year 12 now increased?

Ms Hinton: In last year's budget process, in 2002-2003, an adjustment was made to reflect increasing enrolments. If you look at the total GPO, you can see those sorts of changes.

THE CHAIR: All right. We will move on to output 2, non-government school education, on page 44.

MR PRATT: Would you turn to page 44 please, under "Inquiry into ACT Education Funding", the Connors inquiry.

THE CHAIR: I don't want to pre-empt your question, but I just want to say that we're not going to have an ideological discussion about the Connors inquiry and we're not going to talk about anything that was covered by the budget estimates discussions of the Connors inquiry.

MR PRATT: You demonstrate a terrible lack of confidence in me, Madam Chair. My views on the ISS are well known and I'm not here to talk about that now. However, regarding the decision taken by the minister to withdraw the ISS entirely, I'm curious: what discussions have you had with non-government schools and what is emerging as the best way to reallocate that funding into the non-government sector, as you said you were going to? What is coming out of your discussions with non-government schools?

Ms Gallagher: That was a very clever interpretation of the chair's direction, Mr Pratt. As I've said in budget estimates hearings—and later in question time, in an MPI and perhaps even when speaking to a motion before the Assembly on the interest subsidy scheme—the matter has been referred to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Non-Government Schooling, on which are representatives of parents and friends of non-government schools, APFACT; the Catholic Education Office; the Independent Schools Association and some community members—the major stakeholders.

They haven't got back to me yet with their recommendation about how that money should be allocated to the non-government schools. There is a variety of alternatives: it may go to increase per capita grants to each child in the schools or to fund specific things within the schools. It's all up in the air. We've said to the non-government school sector that they should tell us how they want to see that money reallocated. In case they recommended an interest subsidy scheme, in my meeting with them, I asked them to be mindful of the fact that the government has already made its position clear on that and I urged them to consider other alternatives.

As the money becomes available in small amounts—because there isn't a great deal of money this financial year—there is a bit of time for the ministerial advisory committee to report to me and for me to make a decision. About \$370,000 becomes available at the end of 2005-06. It was very oversubscribed and we will be paying for those that are in the scheme already until about 2019.

MR PRATT: Sure. In relation to the ministerial advisory committee, is it too early to be able to tell what other major issues the new committee is raising?

Ms Gallagher: It's not new: it's been around for some time. It will be formally established through legislation.

MR PRATT: Sorry, I meant the current team.

Ms Gallagher: They've been around for some time. They provide advice to me on the budget regularly, indicating the initiatives they want to see. I attend their meetings and I went to the last one. They've invited me back for one later this year to continue those discussions.

At the last meeting I had there, they took a view on the education bill—which is another issue affecting them—that they didn't have the time to consider it as a committee and so preferred to have consultations independently with me and departmental representatives. The interest subsidy scheme, budget priorities and that legislation were some of the things they were looking at when I met with them last.

MR PRATT: Thanks.

MS DUNDAS: The number of registered schools dropped by one and the number of registration reviews increased by one.

THE CHAIR: Which page are you on?

MS DUNDAS: Page 141, quantities number one and number two. I know those are very small differences, but is there any explanation for those two changes?

Ms Hinton: The answer was that we had to project the figures for 2002-03 and there was some thought that there might have been another school but that did not transpire.

MS DUNDAS: So the 2002-03 target for the number of registered schools wasn't the number of registered schools you had for the year 2001-02?

Ms Gallagher: It was the target.

Ms Hinton: No, it was the target or estimate. As we have said in this place before, sometimes the word "target" there really means "estimate".

MS DUNDAS: Yes, okay. I don't think the government should be targeting the number of non-government schools it wants.

Ms Hinton: No.

MS DUNDAS: It is more an estimate based on discussions you have had?

Ms Gallagher: Yes. Registration of schools takes a long time so you would do that if you knew there was one in the pipeline, and there is one that I know of.

THE CHAIR: Okay, we will move on to output class 3. On pages 47 and 48, there is a reference to two reports, one on the industry training advisory arrangements and the other on the review of the training package implementation. I don't believe these have been presented to the Assembly. Could I have a copy of those reports?

Mr Wheeler: Yes. I'd need to check to see whether the one on industry training has been put on the web, but certainly all stakeholders in the review of the industry training advisory arrangements got a copy of that consultancy report. The training package review was actually a national review being done through ANTA and I would have to take advice on whether it has published that or not yet.

THE CHAIR: No, I understand that that review was undertaken by somebody local, by Mr Brendan Mulhall.

Ms Houghton: Yes, it was the Brendan Mulhall report. It was commissioned for internal use to make sure that we were implementing training packages and getting advice in leverage areas. It was a very specific review but it turned out to be quite wonderful for us: it gave us some directions, it gave us a way of dealing with the change in industry advice and it indicated for us the top three or four areas in which we could get some leverage and get our numbers up.

It is available; it's certainly not secret. It has been well used by the internal clients and we thought it was a great step forward for us.

THE CHAIR: I've heard comments that it's an excellent report and that is why I wanted to obtain a copy of that particular review.

Ms Houghton: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: If I could get a copy of it, that would be great.

Ms Houghton: It is on the website.

THE CHAIR: Okay, no need to provide me with a hard copy. I'll go to the website then. Does that apply to the industry training advisory arrangements review?

Ms Houghton: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Fantastic.

MS DUNDAS: Without breaching commercial-in-confidence principles, can you tell me about the successful tender that took more than 50 days to complete?

Mr Wheeler: It was for the process by which the adult community education grants funding is made available through the council. We didn't say so in the annual report, we chose not to, but the branch sent quite a few people to help in the recovery centre and one of them happened to be the person who handled that contract, so we fell behind a bit.

MS DUNDAS: Okay, thank you.

MR PRATT: I have one more question. It relates to workplace agreements and staffing profiles. Can you give me a general overview of the department's situation now in negotiations with teachers for the forthcoming phases of EBA development, please?

Ms Gallagher: Yes. The negotiations are ongoing and they're occurring weekly. For some external reasons, the agreement won't be negotiated until next year regardless of how many meetings we have. Basically, we are awaiting the outcome of the New South Wales claim. The New South Wales claim is being arbitrated in mid-December and the unions, probably quite rightly, are positioning themselves to make sure that their negotiations are based on that decision, once it has been handed down.

I have regular meetings with the AEU and the view is that negotiations will really intensify again in February next year.

MR PRATT: Are you terrified about the patterns that might emerge in New South Wales and whether we can conform to them?

Ms Gallagher: I'm always terrified in this job, Mr Pratt. I'm permanently terrified.

MR PRATT: This is a very open minister. Do you have any idea what sort of money they're talking about across the border?

Ms Gallagher: Their claim is 10 per cent a year. The government has offered 3 per cent. The commission usually comes down somewhere in between the two. We will have to be mindful in all areas of government of what New South Wales is paying its public sector workers. However, a reasonable outcome in New South Wales would be welcomed here.

MR PRATT: Okay, thanks.

MS DUNDAS: The ACT government provides minimal funding to both the University of Canberra and the Australian National University and has a responsibility to appoint members to the boards of both of those universities. We don't see, through this annual report, or any other annual report that is considered by the Assembly, what the ACT government is getting for those resources or how the ACT government is contributing to the management of the universities through the boards.

Ms Gallagher: The Chief Minister makes appointments to the board.

MS DUNDAS: But the resources all go through as well.

Ms Gallagher: Again, not through education.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Gallagher: Perhaps that is a question for the Chief Minister.

THE CHAIR: It's a question for the Public Accounts Committee.

MS DUNDAS: I'll ask it there.

Ms Hinton: Sorry, some responsibility may lie with the arts area in relation to the funding of the Institute of the Arts.

MS DUNDAS: Okay. The CIT has noted that there are problems with student accommodation and is looking to construct facilities at Bruce campus. I'm sure, Minister, you're aware of the student accommodation problems that are facing students at the other tertiary institutions. This does affect the ACT. Do you see it as within your purview to make any comment on how tertiary students in the ACT are being looked after?

Ms Gallagher: I was asked this in the last week, because it was in the media then. I think comment from the government on the issue of student accommodation where it relates to the Uni of Canberra and the ANU should come from the Chief Minister's office because that is not something that I have control over. The Chief Minister did say that he would be working with the Commonwealth and those universities to look at ways to solve the student accommodation problems.

I'm very interested in what more we can do with regard to CIT student accommodation. I've just seen some mock-up plans for the accommodation that is to be built at Bruce, which looks very good. If we can do some more of that for the CIT, then we will look at it again in light of the increasing pressure on student accommodation. Once the Bruce model is up, it'll be fantastic but I don't know whether we can do more. I'll have to speak to Mr Veenker about it.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Can I say, in closing, that I was a bit distressed when I started reading my annual report and it fell apart on me.

Ms Gallagher: You didn't get a good copy?

THE CHAIR: No, we didn't get good copies. Our pictures are in black and white, too.

Ms Gallagher: You can't have mine because I've written on it.

THE CHAIR: I do have some questions on notice from Mr Hargreaves for the youth and family services areas, so I'll pass those over to you, Ms Hinton, to pass on.

Ms Hinton: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: If committee members have any questions for the department that they want to place on notice, please get them in by the end of the week. Thank you very much for your time today and good luck with your bets if you placed any.

The committee adjourned at 2.03 pm.