



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND
YOUNG PEOPLE**

**(Reference: Annual and financial reports—Department of Education and Training,
Canberra Institute of Technology)**

Members:

**MS M PORTER (The Chair)
MR M GENTLEMAN (The Deputy Chair)
MRS V DUNNE**

Participating members:

**MS K MACDONALD
DR D FOSKEY**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2005

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms S Leyne (Ph: 6205 0490)**

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 9.31 am.

Appearances:

Ms Katy Gallagher, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Support, Minister for Women and Minister for Industrial Relations

Department of Youth and Training

Dr Michele Bruniges, Chief Executive

Ms Anne Thomas, Executive Director, People, Information and Resources

Mr Craig Curry, Executive Director, Education and Training

Ms Julie McKinnon, Executive Director

Ms Anne Houghton, Training and Adult Education

Mr Rob Donnelly, Director, Director, Budget and Facilities

Mr Michael Bateman, Director, People, Information and Resources Network

Ms Kathy Melsom, Director, Student Services and Equity

THE CHAIR: I declare open this hearing into the 2003-04 annual and financial reports and welcome the minister and her officials. I need to read an opening statement.

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 action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say in 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.

This morning we will be hearing from the Department of Education and Training. If any questions are taken on notice, the committee would appreciate responses within five working days of the hearing. It is the responsibility of the witnesses to ensure that they meet any commitments that they have made in regard to the provision of information or answers to questions on notice.

The secretary will email a transcript to all witnesses as soon as it is available and I expect all the questions to be asked in the hearing rather than some being placed on notice at the end of the hearing. We will have about half an hour, maybe a little longer, of general questioning and then we will go through the report by following the output classes and we will try as much as we can to keep the questions in chronological order for you.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Gallagher: Thank you, chair; yes, I would. Firstly, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to appear this morning for the first time in front of this newly-formed committee.

In terms of the reporting period that we are looking at this morning through the 2003-04 annual report, I think that it is fair to say that there were some difficult times for the department. We had some changes in the executive staff and we had matters being dealt with in child protection while child protection was still part of the department. But, aside from that, I think that the department travelled very well and I think that the annual

report is a testament to that. It has a lot of good news in it. It shows that our education system is very strong from much of the testing that we are seeing both nationally and internationally.

A whole range of initiatives was launched during this reporting time, including the school excellence initiative, which is a government funded initiative to ensure that our government schools remain the best that they can be. We also had an emphasis on curriculum renewal, with a task force being established and a discussion paper—*Every chance to learn*—as the basis for some community consultation about curriculum renewal. I think that if you talk to anyone in education you will find that ensuring that you have an appropriate curriculum that is up to date and giving to students what they need is probably the key element of providing education, and that has benefits across the entire education system in the ACT.

There was also the Education Act, which was passed in March 2004 but did not commence until 1 January this year. It was an enormous piece of work, pulling together four pieces of legislation and making sure that we had an act that reflected the modern education system that we have in the ACT. In terms of students with disabilities, the SCAN process was commenced—it is now being finalised in the non-government sector—and for the first time the level of need of all students with a disability in the ACT education system is being assessed. In relation to vocational education and training, we saw large increases both within schools and outside schools in the training network and we are seeing those trends continue outside this reporting period.

It is probably best that we take questions now. I seek the direction of the committee in relation to output class 4, which is in relation to the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, as it is now. There is an overlap in that the office is contained in two different reports. I understand that this hearing is about education and training. If you were happy to leave output class 4 to another time, I would just like that clarified for me.

MRS DUNNE: That was our understanding.

Ms Gallagher: Good. Okay.

THE CHAIR: I have a general question. On page 32 of the report there is a brief reference to school-based management. I am aware that this has been under review within the reporting period. I thought that perhaps a fuller explanation of the application of this policy could have been included in the report to give readers an idea of its effectiveness overall. Could you briefly address this?

Ms Gallagher: Is that the first dot point on page 32?

THE CHAIR: Yes. There is a very brief reference to school-based management, but I cannot find anywhere else a fuller explanation of the effectiveness of that.

Ms Gallagher: I am not sure if it is contained in this reporting period, but we did have a review of school-based management. It could have just fallen outside this annual report. I will let Anne Thomas explain it. The reference in the annual report is to the school resources group and one of its roles is to monitor school-based management, but we did have a review into school-based management and that review came back saying,

essentially, that school-based management is going okay.

Schools love it; they like the flexibility it gives them. But there are some areas in which increased support centrally from the department would be useful and we are acting on that review now. I guess the most prominent one we have had discussions on has been cleaning within schools. The department has met that challenge and increased central support to schools, which was the area in which the review found schools to be lacking, probably in experience and in the capacity to deal with those contracts. I will let Anne Thomas fill you in.

Ms Thomas: A review of school-based management was undertaken and the final report of that review was received at the end of this reporting period—in May 2004. The school resources group, which is a group of school principals and senior executive staff in the department, considered that evaluation and gave some advice, initial advice, to the minister early in this financial year, 2004-05. The minister has asked us for more detailed advice and that group has worked on responding to the various recommendations.

As the minister said, essentially the overall theme of the evaluation was that school-based management was strongly supported by the schools themselves, but there were lots of recommendations to do with providing greater support by way of training to principals, to registrars, to office managers, and to aspiring principals because, as you probably know, there has been a fairly high turnover, given the age demographic of our school principals. They are the sorts of initiatives that we will be working on this year, certainly in terms of that review, but I think that once the final report of the school resources group goes to the minister we will be able to say more about those recommendations.

MRS DUNNE: Madam Chair, I have a question on a related matter, something that is topical because it is in the paper today: the matter of voluntary fees at ACT government schools. Perhaps Ms Thomas can answer this question. How much do schools depend upon the income from voluntary fees and, to an extent, how much is there cost shifting to the parents?

Ms Gallagher: I can answer that. Roughly, about \$3 million a year comes from parental voluntary contributions. That is made up of the voluntary contribution for the term plus other contributions for specific subject study. So it is quite a small part of the government schooling budget, but it is still considerable. We would still rely on that money to support schools.

MRS DUNNE: That is the point that I want to get at. You have said, minister, that you rely on that money. Essentially, you are saying that it is not the cream on the cake. I have to say as a parent that it actually came as a shock to me today to realise that when I was asked, for instance, to pay an art levy that that was entirely voluntary. In fact, my experience of two government colleges over the past few years of, for instance, an art levy, is “no levy, no start”, to the extent that my experience last year was that they were waiting for parents to pay the levy so that they could go out and acquire essential materials so that the children in the class could get on with their art. How do you, as a department and as a government, address that?

There has been a very strong message in today’s paper. This morning, one of my staff

pulled off as a random example the financial requirements in one of the handbooks. I will not mention the college because I do not want to make a particular fuss about the college; it just happened to be the first one that was pulled off. It says that each student enrolling for the first time is required to pay a deposit of \$90 against textbooks and other curriculum materials borrowed from the college, and then you read further that it is a non-refundable deposit.

For this school there is a \$160 a year parental contribution. It does not say that it is a voluntary contribution. Then there is a range of fees, varying from \$10 to \$80, as subject levies per unit. It does actually say that it is voluntary, but that is mentioned once in two pages and the rest of it is about levies and these sorts of things. How much of this is cream on the cake and how much of it is fundamental functional money, as was the experience of my children at a senior college where they could not get materials until the parents had paid the art levy?

Ms Gallagher: The same situation came up last year, I remember, and I had a discussion with the department. In fact, Craig Curry sent out a direction or note to schools saying that they need to make it clearer that all contributions are voluntary. What I can say after the events of the past couple of days—I only got the P&C report yesterday—is that we have not been strong enough on that and we need to be stronger on letting people know that these contributions are voluntary. But we also need to have a discussion about the extent to which that goes towards, for example, overseas trips for the French class.

I think that we need to have a discussion with the P&C and other education stakeholders about the extent of some of the costs. I am thinking of overseas excursions, really, as the only ones where we would have to start saying that I am not sure that we could fund that for somebody who could not afford to go. Maybe we need to have a discussion about those types of expensive excursions and whether they exist in schools at all for that reason. But I think we need to be stronger about it.

I should have said at the beginning that I have been joined by Michele Bruniges, the new chief executive of the department of education. We had a brief discussion yesterday about getting stronger on this and the department centrally having a set of words to go out to all schools as the only words that they can use in their information to parents. The problem we have is that some schools do very well—I think most of them do very well—in letting parents know that these contributions are voluntary, but some schools are not doing the right thing. I saw some evidence of that last year and I came back to work yesterday and it had arisen again. I think we need to deal with it.

The other thing that the government has done is to extend the school equity funding. It goes to 15 schools and we doubled that fund. We could probably double it again and it still would not meet all the need, but we have doubled that fund. Also, in the election we announced that we would be establishing school support funds of, on average, around \$5,000, depending on enrolments. We will work that through to schools for them to put in their accounts for those students who are struggling to meet costs for, say, excursions or other costs at school.

I should say also that, in Mr Curry's advice, schools were asked to start those support funds last year. They were not provided with any money for them, but we felt that schools had some flexibility in their bank balances to support those funds initially and

then, of course, the government made a decision that it would provide some money additional to that on a yearly basis to make sure that there is some cash in there from the government to support those students in need. So there is a range of things happening but, to be honest with you, Vicki, I do not think, as evidenced from what the P&C is saying, what some parents said on radio today and what is in the paper, that the message has got through.

MRS DUNNE: What you have talked about, minister, is a set of words to address a particular issue, but my question was not about a set of words. Is there sufficient funding in things like automotives, building construction—an area in which there are known skills shortages—and metal fabrication where there is a standard fee plus a fee for materials which is undefined? If courses are relying on a voluntary contribution from parents, does this mean that they are not funded sufficiently? Should you not be funding the curriculum item in each of the schools more appropriately, rather than putting money into a fund and then having people who are feeling the pinch having to come and say that they cannot meet their contribution and taking the contribution out of that fund and putting it into another item within the school operating budget?

Really, if kids are doing an art class in a government school, which is my personal example, I would expect it to be resourced so that they are not sitting waiting for the parents. In my case, the art teacher—name excluded—actually asked if I could pay in cash so he could go and buy something that afternoon. That says to me that you are running a course and the teachers providing the course do not have the capacity to provide the materials. I can afford to pay the levy, but at the school that my children went to there would have been lots of people who would have found it particularly difficult and they should not be excluded from metal fabrication, art or automotive technology for want of \$50 a term.

Ms Gallagher: No. I guess the point you are raising is whether there is enough money in government payments for education to support the educational activities of schools. The government does not fund the individual curriculum items. What happens is that the department makes school-based management payments to the schools and they determine the allocation of that money in consultation with their school board and school community. The department, of course, pays the salaries of teachers, but the school-based management payment, which all schools support, goes into supporting the choices they make about the courses.

I would be surprised if you could find anyone who could stand before you and say that education has got all the money it needs. You could always put more money into education, but the school communities determine their priorities, how they are going to be made within the schools, and there should be enough money to pay for materials for the courses they offer so that parents should not be not required to compulsorily pay that fee in order for their child or young person to participate in that class. That is the message we have to get out.

MRS DUNNE: Can I have an assurance, minister, that there will not be repeats of the experience that my family had last year whereby kids were actually sitting waiting for the voluntary parental contribution to come in so that they could buy, essentially, paint and paper or, in the case of metal fabrication, presumably sheets of metal?

Ms Gallagher: The assurance I can give you is that we will be making it very clear that parents do not have to pay their voluntary contributions to the school.

MRS DUNNE: That does not answer the question.

Ms Gallagher: Vicki, I would be crazy to say that I could give you an assurance that what happens in one classroom to one family will not happen again.

MRS DUNNE: But it was not to one family; it was all the 20 or 30 kids in that class who were sitting waiting for materials.

Ms Gallagher: You want me to say that that will never happen again in any of our schools.

MRS DUNNE: It should not happen.

Ms Gallagher: I am saying that it should not happen, but I cannot sit here and say that it will never happen. I am saying that it should not happen and I am saying that I will work with the department to make sure the message is loud and clear about contributions from parents both for attendance at school and for subject levies, and we will go strong on it. It is a key part of public education. It is not a new thing. People were talking about it being in the Education Act. It was in the free education act before that. Nothing has changed, but obviously there are some problems and we need to increase central support to schools. We need to make it clearer to schools. No doubt I will get feedback from schools that this is putting hardship on them and we will have to have a look at that when it comes. But that is the assurance I can give you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, I think the minister has answered the question.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I want to ask a question about provision for staff training and professional development in the department. On page 60, mention is made of the opportunities for staff to increase policy skills. Are these opportunities similarly available to the teaching staff?

Ms Gallagher: Page 60; I am just having a look.

MR GENTLEMAN: Under key learning and development priorities, point 3.

Ms Gallagher: Mr Curry is the person to talk about professional development. A key part of the teachers certified agreement is the emphasis on professional pathways and professional development. I am sure that Mr Curry can fill you in on the details.

Mr Curry: Mr Gentleman, the department has a professional learning fund for its teaching work force of approximately \$1 million and a committee comprising members of the department, principals and the union determines priorities and considers applications for funding. Applications come generally from schools and from sections of the department. The professional learning activities that are run through the year, generally out of our centre for teaching and learning at Stirling, are really priorities in professional learning to address the department's priorities and the schools' priorities. In addition, schools will set aside professional learning funds within their own budgets.

As the minister referred to in the previous answer, the school board makes decisions about how funding is allocated to a range of priorities across the school, and professional learning will be one of those as well. So there is the central fund and there are the school-based funds. I would have to say that, compared with other jurisdictions in Australia, we would probably devote more funding to professional learning per capita than any other jurisdiction because we see it as such an important thing to keep our work force up to date and to ensure that professional learning is an integral part of their professional life.

MR GENTLEMAN: And similarly with the awareness programs, mentioned on page 75, for executive and senior managers?

Mr Curry: In terms of their professional learning?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes.

Mr Curry: There is also a principals' professional learning fund. That is an agreement through the EBA whereby one per cent of the salary for principals is actually taken aside with agreement and used for a professional learning fund just for principals. Again, there is a consultative committee that meets and determines the priorities and considers applications from principals. Many of our principals attend conferences interstate and this is the process whereby we can look at those applications and support them in those activities.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just clarify that, Mr Curry? Is the one per cent of the principals' salaries a levy on the principals' salaries or a contribution from the department equivalent to one per cent?

Mr Curry: I might get Ms Thomas to answer that.

Ms Thomas: At the time that the certified agreement for principals was being negotiated, not the most recent one but the one before, the principals agreed to forgo one per cent of the increase that they otherwise would have received as salary and that is held in a fund within the department and used in the way that Mr Curry described. So, in a sense, it was offset; it is not a levy per se.

MRS DUNNE: It is not a levy per se, but it is a pay rise forgone.

Ms Thomas: Yes, that is right.

MR GENTLEMAN: Similarly, will the mental health first aid training pilot program for staff equity contact officers mentioned on page 53 be available to the teaching staff in the future upon implementation?

Ms Gallagher: I would imagine so. Mr Bateman will answer that question.

Mr Bateman: The staff equity officers are generally classroom teachers in schools. The training program is just starting. At the end of last year we had training for the deliverers and the program will start this term. The target areas initially will be principals, deputies

and the staff equity officers.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Bateman, could you elaborate on what a staff equity officer is?

Mr Bateman: They are contact people within the schools. They are contact points for equity and diversity issues within the schools.

THE CHAIR: Under 4.1, risk management, and 5.1, human resources, the report makes mention of significant risk to the department and education in the ACT posed by the age profile of the teachers in particular. The report also mentions the active steps the department has undertaken to address the challenges. It states that over 300 additional teachers and seven new principals were recruited in the period. Could I be pointed in the direction of where the information can be found within the report as to the age profile of the work force at that time? Under 8.3, I can see the staffing profiles listed as classifications in employment status. I was just wondering whether you could point me in the direction of that information.

Ms Thomas: That information is not contained within this report. The analysis of staff by demographic is not published as a routine matter in the report. However, we could certainly provide you with that information if you would like us to do that. That is easily available.

THE CHAIR: I would be grateful for that.

Ms Gallagher: For the chair's information, I can say that the average age of the teaching work force at the end of 2004 was about 42 years, down from 43 years in 2000, and 20 per cent of teachers are in the 50 to 54 category; so you can see that that is an issue for us, particularly with many choosing to retire at 54 years and 11 months. But 52 per cent of the teaching work force is over 45.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I want to congratulate the government for the excellent work in promoting environmental education in schools, as mentioned in the report at page 70, through the water wise and no waste programs, as well as the work of organisations such as SCRAP in ACT government schools. It seems to coordinate well with the excellence in environmental design of the Amaroo school as seen on page 50. Are these measures to develop a comprehensive and integrated environmental education program across ACT government schools?

Ms Gallagher: Certainly from when I went to school, compared with my daughter in year 2 now, there has been a significant increase in the amount of environmental education going on in schools. Many of our schools have excellent programs going on. Farrer primary school springs to mind with some of the work it is doing in environmental science. I think it has won awards under the no waste program for some of the work it has done. Amaroo school is a fantastic school. Once the school year settles down, it would be interesting for the committee to look at that school.

I have not been out to the high school yet; it has only just opened. I will go out once all the kids are settled. But it is a fantastic building in terms of the emphasis that has gone into making sure that it is designed in a way that can take advantage of the environment around it. Also, the government has recognised schools as big users of energy and in the

election we committed, I think, \$5 million to implementing some greenhouse gas reduction initiatives across Catholic primary schools and government schools over the next four years. These are our citizens of the future and this is where the education needs to be. I think it is fair to say—I am sure that Vicki would agree with me—that our children know a lot more about being wise and safe with their environment than we knew.

MRS DUNNE: Do they?

Ms Gallagher: You have teenagers.

MRS DUNNE: They do not know how to turn off lights.

Ms Gallagher: I know from my own experience that a whole term was spent on wetlands study, because there is a wetlands near the school that my daughter attends, and the wetlands study was brought into maths, science, sociology and SOSE, I think it is called. All of those subjects were dealt with in a way that the wetlands could be included. I think that some fantastic work is going on in environmental education. I do not know whether Craig wants to add anything there.

Mr Curry: I think you have covered it well, minister. You may have read in the *Canberra Times* about the minister turning the first sod at Birrigai. Of course, it is one of our key environmental education centres. It also has a base at the Jerrabomberra wetlands to look at issues around the environment and water resources. The schools have also been involved in a sustainable schools pilot, in conjunction with the Australian government, the Department of Urban Services and the Office of Sustainability, and I just have to say that this whole issue of environmental science or environmental awareness is really covered by schools in a range of ways, depending on how they might focus on it or actually point to it within their curriculum and the curriculum that they offer. Certainly, it is generally a key focus today. I guess it starts with issues around sun sense and wearing hats and a whole lot of other issues, depending on the age appropriateness of the children.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the report makes several references to environmental initiatives. I noticed that included in them was the piloting of a hybrid car in the fleet. I am not quite sure how many cars are in the fleet, but I hope that that was a success. I also noticed in 7.3 a reference to the upgrading of guidelines and specifications in cleaning contracts and the use of chemicals in the cleaning of schools. I was wondering whether someone could explain the implications of that for the acquisition of cleaning contracts, the benefits and challenges that arise from dealing with it with the contractors and how it has perhaps improved the effectiveness of cleaning within the schools.

Ms Gallagher: I might let Rob Donnelly answer some of that because he has been involved with the prequalification process for cleaning contractors in the schools. I am sorry, I cannot find the reference under 7.3. Could you give me the page number that you are working from?

MRS DUNNE: Page 69, under the reference to the Commissioner for the Environment. The reference in the second paragraph to previous commitments to upgrade guidelines, specifications and contracts.

Mrs Gallagher: There were some issues around contract cleaning in schools that were brought to my attention by the LHMU, as the cleaners' union. To begin with, the issue was that cleaning contracts were being awarded to contractors that could not afford to pay award wages. The work was started and other issues came to light about the storage and handling of chemicals and how that was managed around the schools. All of that work has been completed. We have just gone through the second round of the prequalification processes for cleaning contractors. I understand that about 44 have succeeded through that process out of 65 or so.

Mr Donnelly: It would not be that many.

Ms Gallagher: Right. Actually, I did make a note of it somewhere because I thought that this might come up. Maybe it was about 55. Yes, 44 were approved out of the 55 that applied. So that process is being shown to be robust. I will let Rob talk about what that means in relation to page 69.

Mr Donnelly: The department, as the minister has just outlined, has been going through the process of, I guess, tightening up the monitoring of cleaning contracts within schools, which had previously been devolved entirely to schools, with very little central support or central guidance. A couple of years ago it was found that the quality of the monitoring and management of those contracts varied widely from school to school, so the cleaning prequalification process was put into place to ensure that cleaning was delivered to a common minimum standard across all schools in the ACT and also to ensure that cleaning contractors working in schools met those standards and were assessed against those standards centrally.

It has fringe benefits, of course, in simplifying the assessment process for schools because the department assesses the compliance of a tenderer with occupational health and safety and the financial components of a bid and then each school only needs to assess the components which relate to whether the contractor has put in a bid which will result in the school being effectively cleaned. In terms of the prequalification, the guidelines which the prequalification documents specify include requirements that chemicals used in cleaning schools comply with certain environmental guidelines. For example, some of the ammonia and chemicals of the past would not be used in schools anymore.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Donnelly, can you explain how the prequalification process sits with what I understand is a voluntary code within the cleaning industry about occupational health and safety, workplace relations and a whole lot of safety issues as well? I recall from an answer to a question on notice that in the prequalification process you do not recognise or require people to be signatories to the voluntary code. Is the prequalification more stringent than the voluntary code or does it follow the voluntary code to some extent? How do they sit together?

Mr Donnelly: The prequalification process requires cleaning contractors who are looking to bid to clean ACT government schools to meet a certain number of benchmarks in relation to OH&S and industrial relations in particular, but there are also a number of other criteria which cleaners are assessed against. Cleaners who are signatories to, I think, the code of best practice employment in cleaning gain some exemptions from

having to prove some aspects of their industrial relations and OH&S compliance because signatories to that code are subject to a separate audit process that allows the department to be relatively assured that contractors who are a signatory to the code are meeting those obligations. However, the department does not require people to be a signatory to that code. They can demonstrate compliance with those IR and OH&S obligations in another fashion.

MRS DUNNE: You are saying that the people who are signatories to the code are audited separately by the code administration. How do you audit the people who are not signatories to the code and is your auditing of a higher standard or are your requirements higher than the code or comparable to the code?

Mr Donnelly: We had a process of randomly selecting cleaning contractors in schools for audit. I would say off the top of my head that the requirements of the department's audits are roughly similar to those in the code. They are certainly not identical, but both are designed to achieve the same purpose, which is to ensure that cleaners are meeting their industrial relations obligations and OH&S obligations.

MRS DUNNE: Do the OH&S obligations actually include ensuring that the work is done and the school is clean?

Mr Donnelly: No. Ensuring that the school is cleaned to a standard is a contract management issue which is dealt with primarily by the schools, because they are the people on the ground who are able to notice if the bins are not being emptied or if the floors—

MRS DUNNE: The toilets are not being cleaned.

Mr Donnelly: Yes, exactly. However, the prequalification process has added some extra teeth to that and, if a school is not having any joy with the cleaning contractor when it notices things are not happening, it can invoke the support of the department. I guess in a worst-case scenario where those problems continue for a period, the cleaning contractor can be de-qualified, if you like, and therefore will lose access to bid for work at any ACT government school.

Ms Gallagher: I want to add something to this answer. I guess the big difference between the code and the prequalification process in relation to the code containing OH&S and industrial relations matters is that the code requires a certified agreement between the union and the cleaning contractor. The union wanted us to make the code mandatory for government cleaning contracts in schools and we thought that it was not a fair thing to say that anyone who wanted to work cleaning government schools had to have a certified agreement with the union, and that is the big difference.

So, as much as I like unions and have a lot of sympathy with what the LHMU is doing in protecting cleaners' rights, the government took the view that potentially it would have been against federal legislation anyway to enforce a closed shop in the cleaning of schools. So what we had to do was to acknowledge that there were some issues there that needed to be managed centrally and acknowledge that the unions had this code that they were asking employers to sign up to. That can exist of itself, but we had to have a process that was a level playing field for all, including those who did not want a union

certified agreement.

MRS DUNNE: So, for the people who are not signatories to the code and therefore do not have a certified agreement for their staff, do you have requirements about the non-code, precertified people? Do they have to employ staff or are they allowed to employ contractors?

Mr Donnelly: There are two categories of contractors who can become prequalified. There is a company prequalification and what we call a proprietor labour prequalification. Companies need to directly employ staff members and pay award wages in accordance with the cleaners' award.

MRS DUNNE: Do you check that that happens?

Mr Donnelly: We check that that happens. Proprietor labour can employ proprietors of the company—directors—directly and not necessarily meet all the conditions for those people who, obviously, in addition to contributing their labour to the cleaning of the schools, also have a management interest in the company.

MRS DUNNE: I want to follow up on what happens if someone is not complying in some way. What assistance does the department give a school that might be having problems with a cleaner? One hears stories of schools that have had particular problems. There were problems at one school—I will not name the school—where the toilets were getting to be a bit whiffy and the kids were not having drinks at lunchtime and were not drinking during the day so that they could avoid using the toilets. I will tell you later, minister, which school that was, and it was a year or so ago. What are you doing to assist schools to deal with cleaning contractors who may not be meeting their responsibilities?

Mr Donnelly: The first point I would make is that, since the introduction of prequalification, the number and the frequency of those sorts of complaints from schools have drastically declined. The school will always contact the cleaner in the first instance and will deal with issues directly with them. If they have no joy in dealing directly with the cleaning contractor, schools will contact the department. The department will then have a meeting with the cleaning contractor and explain the problems that the particular school is having.

If that contractor is also cleaning other schools, we generally have a ring around and make sure that similar complaints were not happening in other schools managed by the same contractor. We would make it very clear to the contractor at that meeting that the department will not tolerate and the school will not tolerate cleaning of less than the standard which has been contracted for and we would then outline the full range of potential repercussions, which could range from cancelling the single contract right through to removing prequalification, in which case the contractor would be ineligible to clean any government school in the territory.

DR FOSKEY: I have a couple of questions that relate more to omissions than inclusions, with your grace, chair. The first question relates to the report of an inquiry that was conducted in the last Assembly. Whilst it was not within the ambit of the education committee—it was under the health committee—it did have some recommendations that related to schools in particular. I note that they are not reported

upon in the annual report. Consequently, I am seeking some information here that you may be able to provide to me now or on notice.

I am referring to the report on the health of school-age children. The inquiry was conducted by the health committee in 2003 and I am going to ask in particular about a couple of recommendations. First of all, while the government responded to the recommendations of the report, we are looking for reports on the progress of their implementation. I would appreciate being told where I might find that information. As to a couple of those recommendations in particular, could you advise me, first of all, in relation to recommendation 42 of the report? Perhaps it would be a good idea for me to read it out, given that probably most people do not have the report. The committee recommended that:

the Government undertake a review of all anti-bullying programs used in schools, and in consultation with students, teachers, parents and experts in the field, develop and/or implement an existing program based on the principle of restorative justice in all schools.

What I am looking for is whether the proposed audits of existing school policies and programs addressing issues related to bullying, harassment and violence have been conducted and, if that review has been completed, I would like to be advised as to its recommendations.

I can pause there or go onto the second recommendation that I am a little concerned about. What do you think, chair?

THE CHAIR: I think that you should pause there.

Ms Gallagher: We do have an officer here who can talk to you about that. We do report against committee inquiries and reports in the annual report. You will note on page 201 that we have done so in relation to the VET report and it gives you a progress report. I am just wondering whether this report fell outside of this annual report, which is why it is not in the annual report, because we are required to give updates. Possibly, it was in the last annual report or will be in the one now.

MRS DUNNE: A lot depends on when the government responded.

DR FOSKEY: As it was in 2003, I would say that it would have fallen into this period.

Ms Gallagher: It could have been in the first half of 2003, Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: May 2003, perhaps.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, the secretary points out that in the health report there is reporting on the health of school-age children, but you have some carriage of it and that does not seem to have been picked up there. Perhaps it is an oversight.

Ms Gallagher: Okay.

DR FOSKEY: In fact, the health report omits to report on those recommendations that

refer to school-age children, which is why I am bringing it up here.

Ms Gallagher: Okay; fair enough. We will have to look at that and make sure that those recommendations are included when we have cross-agency reports or reports that go to particular agencies and have an impact on others, and I can think of many that do that.

MRS DUNNE: Perhaps Dr Foskey's question might be answered by providing a fuller answer on notice.

Ms Gallagher: I think we probably do need to take it on notice, but if Dr Foskey wants to ask a general question about what is happening about bullying in schools—

DR FOSKEY: I think I will keep it general and not go onto my other specific point. Is that all right?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

Ms Melsom: The department, under its national safe schools framework, has adopted a process of determining that all schools have policies and practices in place to ensure that students' needs are met with regard to bullying, harassment, student neglect or abuse. Schools are now in compliance with the principles laid down in that national safe schools framework. We continue to work with and support schools as they move through this exercise to ensure that there is a level of consistency and that all schools are aware of this initiative.

MRS DUNNE: When you say that schools are in compliance, what does that mean in practical terms on a day-to-day basis for a child who might be experiencing bullying?

Ms Melsom: Schools have procedures and practices in situ to ensure that children are supported and that they are educated to work effectively in that sort of environment. In other words, schools are adopting initiatives such as restorative justice practices. That is a particular initiative but there is a whole range of others. That is about helping children to understand their rights and the rights of other children and to operate in a manner that is fair and equitable in the school. Some of those successes are working extremely well in schools. For example, one school reported to me that the use of what it terms a time-out or recovery room has reduced by 60 per cent, that is, the whole school engaged in a process that was much more positive and supportive of all children in that school environment.

MRS DUNNE: For whose use was the time-out or recovery room—the bully or the person being bullied?

Ms Melsom: I guess it is not specifically for that purpose. It is for use in a school where children might need a little bit of quiet time. Its use can arise over any incident that might occur, either in the classroom or in the playground.

MRS DUNNE: Is there support given for teachers? I was reading an article that appeared, I think, in the *Weekend Australian* magazine. There was quite a lengthy piece in that magazine on bullying. I point out that there were no examples in the ACT, but one of the clear messages was that often school authorities were saying, "This is kids

growing up and you have to expect this sort of thing,” which I think is a pretty unacceptable approach. How much support is there in your programs for teachers to be brave and forthright enough to deal with difficult and bullying children? How do you overcome the fact that teachers might also feel intimidated by these children?

Ms Melsom: We have an officer who works directly with teachers and who provides professional development and support for them as they go through a process of learning more effectively to provide a supportive environment in schools. Therefore it covers initiatives such as those that you have suggested. So those aspects of supporting teachers and giving teachers strategies to deal with bullying as an example in schools are covered as part of that professional development program.

MRS DUNNE: Are those strategies implemented in all schools in the ACT?

Ms Melsom: The national safe schools framework is for all schools in the ACT.

MRS DUNNE: That does not answer my question. Are they implemented in all schools?

Ms Melsom: Again, schools are required to adopt them. It is difficult for me to answer your question specifically and say that they are. But six schools in the ACT have been identified as part of the national program in that they are considered to be highly successful in providing this safe school environment initiative.

MRS DUNNE: I do not want you to name them but are there any schools that are not coming up to standard?

Ms Melsom: I do not believe so.

MRS DUNNE: You do not believe so?

Ms Melsom: No.

DR FOSKEY: On page 207 of the report, appendix 8.3 provides a breakdown of staffing profile by classification and employment status. However, you do not need to look at that page because the figures I want are not there. That leads me to ask the following questions. How many full-time equivalent school counsellors were employed during the year? Did the number of full-time equivalent school counsellors drop over the course of the year and, if so, by how much? Has this trend continued beyond the reporting period into the latter half of 2004 and this year? Why has it occurred and what is being done to redress the situation? I have another part to that question but I will leave it there because it goes off at a tangent.

Ms Gallagher: That is a specific question that I am happy to answer. If we can answer it before the end of the hearing we will do so, otherwise we will take it on notice and get that necessary information.

DR FOSKEY: The next part of my question is: how many full-time equivalent youth workers were employed during the year? What was the turnover of people from those positions during the year? If that figure was high, as we suspect it was, why do you believe that occurred and what is being done to rectify the situation?

Ms Gallagher: There were eight youth workers during this reporting period. The full complement for each high school will be in place for the 2005 school year. There was some turnover. I am certainly aware of two people—and Kathy might be able to answer this question more accurately—who left for a couple of different reasons. This is one of those initiatives that was fraught with danger from the beginning. The community sector had a very strong view that workers going into schools should be employed by the community sector. The government had a different view—that they should be employed by the department and that it, as their employer, would have some control over their work in schools. I do not say that in a negative way.

In my view it would have been difficult if the community sector had youth workers employed by 17 different employers. Those employers would have placed different demands on them and they would have had a view about the work that was being done in schools. We wanted those people in schools working with teachers and counsellors. We felt it appropriate that the Department of Education and Training employ them. Many youth workers have come from the youth sector. Another issue was that the government, yet again, was poaching good community service workers and paying them better wages, which caused some concern as well. I have met youth workers in schools. In the first year they were chosen to go into schools that were identified as having the greatest need.

Out of all the high schools these were the eight that were prioritised. Whenever I went around I saw youth workers doing excellent work. I visited Lake Ginninderra high school towards the end of last year and from all accounts from teaching staff youth workers had fitted in very well. The work is there for them and they are certainly very busy. I think that it is a great initiative. Kathy might correct me if I was wrong or add any information.

Ms Melsom: The minister is correct in that eight youth workers were appointed. The turnover resulted in the loss of two people; one for medical or health reasons and the other because the individual determined that he or she was not comfortable in the position and would seek employment elsewhere. We have gone to the field again and we have had a strong field of applicants. We have therefore filled all the positions for the commencement of this year.

The other thing we have done in support of these people is to introduce a team co-ordinator so that youth support workers also have support beyond their own school environment. Obviously they will work as part of the team of people in the school who provide support services beyond the school environment, that is, the counsellors and other support workers. They work in coalition and in cooperation with them.

DR FOSKEY: Did the position of team coordinator just begin this year?

Ms Melsom: No, we established it part way through last year for the obvious reason of connecting and supporting those youth support workers.

Mr Curry: I just wanted to add a little more about school counselling which will partly answer Dr Foskey's question, although we will get back to you with the data. You may or may not be aware that traditional school counsellors are really in some ways rare beasts. First of all they are trained teachers with at least two years teaching experience.

Over and above that they need to have psychology qualifications so that the psychologists board can register them. That group of people is quite difficult to train and recruit into our system as it is such a small jurisdiction. All the jurisdictions have the same sorts of issues.

In addition to that we have said that those people have focused a lot of their work on psychometric testing. It is our view—a lot of reports tell us—that students often need a lot more than psychometric testing; they need real counselling support and youth support. So that is why the government accepted the recommendation from the counselling review that a multidisciplinary approach is more effective. We are looking at the whole range of needs that children have in government schools. In that traditional model the school counsellor will be only one part of the multidisciplinary team and youth support workers will be another.

The government recently announced that additional people would be introduced as part of those teams to support students in high schools. That is the approach we are taking. We are still trying to recruit traditional school counsellors and we have offered fellowship programs through our training development funds for people to do post-graduate qualifications at Canberra University to see whether we can recruit more people to that team.

MRS DUNNE: I wish to clarify something. We talked earlier about not doing output class 4 but there are things in it relating to pre-schools and early intervention.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I have some questions relating to early intervention.

Ms Gallagher: Output classes 4.2 and 4.3.

Meeting adjourned from 10.33 to 10.51 am

THE CHAIR: We will deal now with output classes and try to keep them in chronological order. The first question relates to output 1.1.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I refer to quality and effectiveness measures and to national benchmark testing in literacy and numeracy on page 178 of the report. In primary school testing in ACT government schools, primary school students in years 3 and 5 are producing excellent results in both those areas. That appears to correspond with high parent and student satisfaction in the area, which is great to see. Minister, could you comment on and provide some context for those results?

Ms Gallagher: As you said, Mr Gentleman, and as outlined in primary school education and in the results from ACTAP testing, years 3 and 5 students are doing extremely well. These results have been confirmed by results for last year, which have improved on the results outlined in this annual report including, for the first time, indigenous year 3 students who achieved a similar outcome to non-indigenous students at that age cohort. It is probably the first time that that has been achieved anywhere in the country.

We do not want to yell too much about it because it could change next year with our small indigenous cohort. The results are extremely good. Parent satisfaction in primary schools is good as well. This annual report would have covered probably the first stage of the school excellence initiative. The old school development program involved looking at schools every five years. Parents at those schools would go through that process and look at what was going on in those schools.

As a result of the school excellence initiative that has been changed to every three years. Parents and school communities look at what is going on in their schools and they have an input into that process. I do not know whether Craig wants to add anything. We are happy with the initiative but there are still areas in which we can improve. We lead the country in this form of testing and we would like to stay there. Last year's results identified some areas in which there is room for improvement, in particular, around the year 5 level. We will be working in those areas. We are pleased with the results but we are not complacent.

MR GENTLEMAN: I refer to cost measures on page 179, output 1.1 and specifically to the reasons for material variance. The result of the overhead costs per student is lower than both the original and the amended target. That appears also in relation to outputs 1.2 and 1.3. The note in the report states:

The result is lower than the original and amended target due to improved allocations methodologies and better identification and exclusion of centrally controlled direct costs in the current year.

Could you elaborate on those processes?

Ms Gallagher: I will ask Mr Donnelly to explain those processes.

Mr Donnelly: The overhead cost per student is basically a reflection of all those costs that

are not directly attributed to schools. So many of our central office costs are calculated in that number. As we go forward through the years and we get more precise in allocating costs directly to schools, that overhead cost per student can change. During 2003-04, having had a look at our overhead model, we have managed to reduce some of those central costs. We have managed to allocate some of those central costs directly to schools, which results in the overhead cost per student declining.

MR GENTLEMAN: In a number of the output classes I note a reference to higher than expected total costs for the financial year in order to provide additional funding for the various stages of the teachers enterprise bargaining agreement. Minister, could you address the question of the successful outcome of the teachers EBA positions not only in relation to their significant wage increases but also in relation to the extension of their access to part-time work and the increased parental leave provisions on page 58 of the report? Is the ACT government willing to address the concerns that have been raised elsewhere in the report relating to the ageing demographics of the work force and the recruitment of high quality staff to the ACT Department of Education and Training?

Ms Gallagher: There is a fairly straightforward answer to that question. The simple answer is yes. If you pay good wages you get people wanting to work here and stay in employment. We are now almost on a par with New South Wales—a bit behind and a bit ahead—with the different stages of the certified agreement. When it comes to settling wage claims for teachers something that will always be a challenge for any government in the ACT is: how would it manage that? Teachers in the ACT have a range of different conditions from teachers in New South Wales.

When it comes down to it the important issue for teachers is what they get in their pay cheques. As you know we have had strikes. The biggest strikes since self-government happened on my watch last year. I did not enjoy them too much. I do not think anyone did. There were very difficult negotiations and we are about to enter into them again. Towards the end of this year we will start talking with teachers again about a replacement agreement. At the moment we are well placed but like all certified agreement rounds that can change. It depends on the ability of the government to meet the wage demands of teachers not only here but also across the country.

MRS DUNNE: I have a couple of related questions. It appears in a number of output classes—I think you touched on this, Mr Gentleman—that there is a substantial increase in the average cost to a government school of a primary school student. That is seen in other output classes as well. There was an amended target but the result is above target. That really relates to the new teachers EBA. Was the amended target worked out before the EBA was finalised? Is that why the target does not bear much relationship to the final outcome?

Mr Donnelly: Precisely. The amended target was based on the position at the end of the passage of the third appropriation bill. If I recall correctly, the offer on the table at that stage was around 3 per cent per annum. Calculations for the amended result included additional funding which was appropriated in the second and third appropriations of 2003-04 to meet the offer that was on the table at that time. Between the passage of the third appropriation bill, the printing of the budget papers and the printing of the annual report, the final agreement was struck, which provided teachers with 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 3 per cent over 18 months or two years of the agreement. The difference

between the amended target and the result reflects that increased amount.

MRS DUNNE: I just wanted to clarify that. I also wanted to touch again on the overhead figure. Page 179 of the report shows a decrease in overheads. Correct me if I am wrong, Mr Donnelly, but is that for each student?

Mr Donnelly: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: In the financial statements on page 150 there is a substantial increase in supplies and services. By my calculations, that amounts to a 19 per cent increase in spending on supplies and services over 2003-04. Are those expenditures on supplies and services therefore entirely internal to the Department of Education and Training? They are not supplies and services for school students?

Mr Donnelly: As I recollect it, the vast bulk of the increase of that line item related to items for children, youth and family services and therefore it is not part of the government schooling output.

MRS DUNNE: So the accounts on page 150 and on previous and subsequent pages relate to the whole department, therefore it probably would be unreasonable to get a breakdown of just education. So you are saying that the extraordinary increase in costs relates to children, youth and family services?

Mr Donnelly: I am advised that there is a component for both education and for children, youth and family services. But you are correct; the figures on page 150 relate to the whole department and not just to government school education.

MRS DUNNE: I will not ask for a breakdown; I think that would be unreasonable.

THE CHAIR: We will deal now with output 1.2. The report lists the percentage of young people who proceed from year 10 to secondary college. It records a 2 per cent positive variance, which is good news. Could you inform the committee how many students do not attain the year 10 certificate and how that compares with any national benchmark?

Mr Curry: I am not sure whether I could give you an answer about the number of students who do not attain the year 10 certificate. I would have to get some advice on that. A number of components are involved in the year 10 certificate—academic results, behaviour, participation in the program, and so on. But it is not the same sort of certificate as the year 12 certificate, a much more important certificate that is tied in with the whole year 11 to year 12 process. Rather, the year 10 certificate is a certificate of completion. It shows the record of what students achieve. I could get advice on the number of students who do not receive the certificate, but at this point in time I would not like to give you a figure. I could get back to you.

THE CHAIR: I am happy for you to take that question on notice.

Ms Gallagher: I was looking at some figures in the report of the Productivity Commission that show that the number of students participating in and completing our year 10 certificate is the highest in the country. From memory I think it is 90 per cent.

THE CHAIR: I was wondering how that compared with national standards.

MRS DUNNE: Last night I was looking for something to beat you with but I could not find anything.

Ms Gallagher: I am sure there is something there.

MRS DUNNE: But not in that area.

Ms Gallagher: I will wait for it then.

Mr Curry: I think your question was: how many students received the certificate as opposed to a retention question?

THE CHAIR: I guess it was both. It was also about retention. The report obviously states that we have a higher than expected progression to years 11 and 12.

Mr Curry: Yes, certainly.

THE CHAIR: But the question is: if they do not get to year 10 or attain a certificate, does that preclude them from going on?

Mr Curry: Yes. Students without a year 10 certificate are not precluded from moving into senior secondary college.

THE CHAIR: It does not preclude them?

Mr Curry: Not at all.

MR GENTLEMAN: That is an excellent achievement—a higher than targeted percentage of year 10 students in ACT government high schools proceeding to secondary college education. Minister, can you comment on whether that percentage rate has been impacted on by the operation of the student pathways plan for year 10 students and the exhibitions program for year 9 students?

Ms Gallagher: We would like to think that they had an impact. I do not know how you would measure that. We have been putting in place measures in recognition of the fact that students in years 9 and 10—this is recognised throughout the country and the world—need extra support in moving to post-compulsory education. That is something we want to see them moving into. We have set some pretty high targets for ourselves in the Canberra plan. We want to see 95 per cent of students receive a year 12 or equivalent certificate. In an effort to ensure that that happens the exhibitions program has been fantastic.

If you talk to students who have been involved in the exhibitions program you will establish that they love it. I think the pathways plan was put in place in 2004. Of year 10 students, 90 per cent had a pathway plan. In 2005 all year 9 students will be required to do the pathway plan. Young people, their leaders and their mentors in schools are mapping out a way forward. They want to know where they will be and they want to

know what subjects they will focus on in their progression from high school to years 11 and 12. They want to know what they will do after year 10, whether it is training or whether it is a university education.

Our career counselling initiative forms part of that process. When I was a year 9 or year 10 student not a great deal of emphasis was placed on what I wanted to do. In fact when I arrived at the ANU, on the first day I sat down and said, "Tell me what to do." I had not actually thought about it until I turned up at university. I do not think that is the case for students now. They are required to think about it much earlier on in their compulsory education time. So we would like to think that it has an impact. We want the number of year 10 students going to college to increase. Although it is very high at the moment we would like to see the number of those who commence college also completing year 12. So the programs have worked.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister can you clarify whether the figures in the quality and effectiveness measure, which is further down the page, include those year 10 students who proceed to apprenticeships or further vocational education and training.

Ms Gallagher: The report states, "who proceed to government secondary college". Are we talking about that figure? The percentage for year 10 students would not include students who exited high school and went on to training. That would be measured under another output, for example, commencements of training, although that would not necessarily reflect year 10 students.

Mr Curry: The figure really refers to students from government high schools who move into government senior secondary colleges.

Ms Gallagher: We have implemented destination surveys, or a training pathway guarantee, when students are exiting.

MR GENTLEMAN: So those figures could be made available?

Ms Gallagher: We have just started following up students who are leaving year 12, not year 10, and who are not going into some sort of training or education. We are following up those students individually through phone calls—I am told that it is not too early in the morning—and we are seeing whether or not they would like to return to training if after a few months they have not found something that they want to do. So we are pursuing those year 12 students. We are not excluding year 10 students, although we are not encouraging them at the year 10 level either because we do not want them to think that they should not go on to years 11 and 12.

As those surveys have just started I have had some verbal briefings. I have not seen a complete analysis of how that has worked this year. It will be interesting to see one. Victoria is putting a lot of emphasis on tracking individual students who are leaving school and who are not moving on to some sort of other training, education or employment. It is supporting those students who want to come back and who are finding it difficult.

MRS DUNNE: I ask the minister a question that I should have asked in relation to output class 1. There is a small negative variance in the projected number of students in

high schools but there is a substantial variance in the projected number of students in primary schools.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: Can you account for that? I am not really fussed about the 31 kids who did not enrol in government high schools. I am really more concerned about the 500 or so kids who did not enrol, which was projected, in government primary schools.

Ms Gallagher: We are seeing the biggest shift of students exiting year 6 and going into non-government schooling. Over the past three years—from 2001 to 2004—there has been about a 1.6 per cent decline in government school enrolments. The flip side to that is that there has been about a 1.8 per cent increase in non-government school enrolments.

MRS DUNNE: So it is not a decrease in the size of the cohort?

Ms Gallagher: That is decreasing as well by about 3 per cent. I will check the figures for you. I know that the cohort is declining and that it will decline further. Over the past five years there has been a 1 per cent decline and over the next five years we predict a 3 per cent decline in overall enrolments across the system. So the number of enrolments is getting smaller. The noticeable point is that parents are choosing to send their children to non-government schools. That is happening from the figures I have seen. There is evidence to show that year 6 students are exiting government schools and going into year 7, although that is changing a little as non-government schools increase their capacity for years 11 and 12. We are getting a proportion of year 11 and 12 students back into the government system for. That seems to be the area where the change is most marked.

MRS DUNNE: You have had a somewhat unexpected decline in the number of students in government primary schools. You were saying, minister, that there was a similar trend to increase enrolments in non-government primary schools that counteracted that.

Ms Gallagher: They are not just leaving in year 6. I see the point you are trying to make. We have had this discussion on a number of occasions. In the past few years we have also seen a number of schools within the non-government school system increase their capacity to take different years. We are seeing those changes. It is something that we have seen around the country. The number of non-government schools has increased and the capacity of those schools to take more enrolments has increased as well.

MRS DUNNE: So you are just seeing this as an expansion of choice?

Ms Gallagher: I am not worried by it. I do not think I can be because the non-government system is our partner in education. It relies on enrolments in order for it to thrive as much as we rely on them. In a sense we both coexist and we are competitors in getting business through student enrolments. At the moment we have fairly harmonious co-operation in relation to 95 per cent of issues. I am not upset at the enrolment shift.

MRS DUNNE: It certainly saves you money.

Ms Gallagher: The argument that has been put is that we save money as a result of students going to non-government schools. It is not an argument that is necessarily true. We still have the cost of running a full operating system, regardless of enrolments. If you lose 10 students from one school you do not realise a profit from that. You are still running the school and you still have the same number of teachers. It is not necessarily reflected in some of the figures that I have seen that it is a huge saving. We have high mobility in Canberra. We have parents who are prepared to make a choice.

We have a thriving non-government system that is expanding and wanting to expand all the time. Whilst it remains at about 1.1 to 1.6 per cent, I am not going to get too upset about it. Of course, if we saw huge shifts that did not reflect national trends that would be something I would be worried about. At the same time I have to say that we like to promote the public education system as the system of choice for parents. We like students to enrol in the government system but for many reasons parents choose to make other decisions. It is not something about which I can get too defensive.

MRS DUNNE: The fall in primary school enrolments, at 3.3 per cent, is twice what you have said is desirable but it is not something about which you are going to get fussed. If 650 children do not turn up, that is basically the equivalent of a fairly large primary school not turning up.

Ms Thomas: Perhaps I should just clarify the nature of the target. The nature of the target is really not so much by way of projection; it simply reflects the number of students that existed in the system at the beginning of 2003. I think the first footnote explains that. The point you raised earlier was whether the target itself comprehended the projected decrease in enrolment as a good one. The answer is, no it did not. It simply reflected the situation as it existed in February 2003, whereas the result is the result in February 2004. So I guess you are looking at a combination of factors, including the projected decline in the cohort.

MRS DUNNE: But if you look back over the figures the target in the 2002-03 budget showed another 500 students more than the target in the 2003-04 budget, which is 19,443. I am sure that if I went back I would see declines of a similar proportion. So we are seeing declines from target to outcome of in the vicinity of 500 children. That is a substantial number. As you were saying, minister, in a sense you are not saving the money because it is 10 children here and five somewhere else and you cannot recoup that in any way. But when you look across the system you are losing the equivalent of a primary school a year in enrolments—from what you project to what you are receiving—and that has huge implications for costs over time.

Ms Thomas: I guess the point that I was trying to make was that in a sense it is not really the projection; it is the actual enrolment at the time. If we projected, I think that 19,443 would have been somewhat closer to 18,794 because it would have taken into account the actual projections that we know are happening. You are right: we know that there will be a significant decline in the age cohort of primary school aged children now and into the foreseeable future.

MRS DUNNE: So the message from that, Ms Thomas, is that projections are slightly unreal?

Ms Thomas: The projections are fine but the target, if you like, is not really a projection. I suppose that is the point that I was trying to make. It is not really a projection.

MRS DUNNE: So one is a projection and one is a target?

Ms Thomas: It is probably a misnomer in the sense that the target is the actual result at a particular point in time, that is, February 2003. The result is the result in February 2004.

MRS DUNNE: So that figure of 19,444, which is the budget figure in the 2003-04 budget, was actually as a result of the census?

Ms Thomas: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: The result in the result column, the 18,794, was a result of the census a year later?

Ms Thomas: Yes, that is right.

DR FOSKEY: Just to follow on from that, the recently released Productivity Commission report on government services details the fact that the ACT has the lowest proportion of students in government schools of any state or territory, with 60.8 per cent of students. I know that there are incredibly complex reasons for that, but I am just wondering whether the government is looking at other jurisdictions to see whether they have taken any measures that have been successful in retaining students in the public education system. Is that an aim of the government?

Ms Gallagher: When we compare the ACT to other states and territories—and this is where some of those figures can be a bit misleading—we have to remember that when we look at the metropolitan figures for, say, New South Wales we will find that the level there is similar to what we have in the ACT. When we take whole states into account we have rural areas where the only provider of education is the government and that has an impact. But we also have a level of choice. We have a small jurisdiction where travel is very easy.

If you choose a high school in Belconnen and you live in Civic that is quite an easy trip for you or your child to make on a bus. We know—and this is not true for many non-government schools in the ACT—that for some of the high fee-paying schools we have a level of income in the ACT that supports parents to make choices. I was careful with the way in which I put that because a lot of parents who send their children to non-government schools are not high-income earners by any means. They make many sacrifices in order to support that choice. When we put those three things together we see that enrolments in non-government schools in Sydney or Melbourne are quite similar to enrolments in Canberra.

We have to discount the fact that we do not have rural education providers, that we are highly mobile and that many parents have an income that could support sending children to particular schools. That is not to say that we do not want to continue to promote government education or to increase enrolments in government education; we are looking at how to do that all the time. Look at our initiatives to promote excellence in

government schools and to promote government schools as a whole—an area that quite often is fraught with danger. Quite often we read only about the bad things that happen in government schools.

The department has put in a lot of work. You see in the paper all the time smiling students, new programs that have been implemented and programs that teachers have initiated at the school level promoting government education. In high schools we have seen parents making choices about where they send students. We have put in youth workers and placed an extra focus on pastoral care. There is a perception that non-government schools do better around the pastoral care of students than do government schools. I do not necessarily agree but I think that is a perception. So we are working on all those areas.

Over the past three years we have invested an amount of money in government education. All those measures have been implemented to promote government schooling, to make it a viable choice for all parents and to give all children a wonderful experience of government schools. We will continue to do that work but, at the end of the day, there are options for parents in the ACT. We are seeing parents making those choices. I believe that they make those choices based on the individual needs of their children. I know many families who have a child in a Catholic primary school, the local primary school or the Anglican high school who have made those decisions. I do not necessarily think that that is a bad thing.

DR FOSKEY: Output 1.3 refers to 86 per cent of students being satisfied with their school. What kinds of indicators were used in determining that level and did students have an involvement in determining those indicators? There is a second part to my question. I understand that the high school development program was implemented to address perceived low levels of youth satisfaction with high schools, with half a million dollars allocated to it over four years for each of those years. What has that program done to address youth satisfaction levels to date? Would you rate it as successful?

Ms Gallagher: I will start and then Craig can continue. I think it has been successful. From memory I believe an initiative of the previous government started the high school development program. We have now funded the school excellence initiative and we can give the committee a copy of the survey that comes out. It certainly seems to me that students in primary school are a lot happier. They have a higher satisfaction level than students in high school. I think there are probably a number of reasons for that.

The survey identified areas of improvement and, from memory, we saw big increases in dissatisfaction in high schools about the lack of respect for other people's property or belongings in schools. I will let Craig talk about this in more detail because I cannot recall it at the moment. Where students have identified areas in those surveys they have been acted upon. They identify issues that we want to implement the next time schools go through that process.

Mr Curry: The survey reports to a very small number of high schools that participated in the school development process for that year. We are not really looking at all the government high schools; we are just looking at a very small sample. To answer part of your question: as part of the school development and review process, parents and staff are extensively surveyed and students have their own set of surveys. So students are

surveyed against a whole range of issues about curriculum, safety, how they are responding to what the school is offering and the programs in which they can participate. As the minister said, we look at the strengths coming out of those areas and we build on areas for development.

We report on that in our annual school development report, which is available. I am sure, Dr Foskey, that we could send you a copy of the development report for that year. So those are the sorts of things we are doing. The high school development program then looks at reflecting that. It has focused on issues around vocational education courses being offered in high schools and middle schooling practices, which probably relate to your earlier question about whether we are looking at research and what is happening in other jurisdictions. What is good practice and how will we make schooling relevant for high school students? How will we engage them more in what is happening?

In middle schooling we cater for the needs of young adolescents who are not ready for senior secondary type programs but who are still wanting quite a high level of pastoral care in their school. Those are the sorts of things that the high school development program has looked at. It has a representative steering committee with parents and citizens associations, unions and a whole range of people to look at its priorities. Its priorities tend to reflect what comes out of reports such as this.

MRS DUNNE: Again there is nearly a 4 per cent decline in the number of enrolments in secondary colleges. This is where I would expect to see more students coming back into the system. There is a fairly common practice of people coming out of year 6, spending years 7 to 10 in a non-government school and coming back in year 11. Again, we are seeing a nearly 4 per cent decline in enrolments. Looking back a year, will we see a similar decline? I know that this is probably the first day of school for year 11. Are we going to see a similar decline this year? If so, does anybody have any idea what the causes are? If you have any idea what are you doing to address this issue, or are you just using it to save money again?

Ms Gallagher: As you know, it does not save us a great deal of money.

MRS DUNNE: That is what you say.

Ms Gallagher: Well, it does not. There are eight colleges and we have to run all of those colleges to full operation capacity.

MRS DUNNE: So long as the parents pay the levies.

Ms Gallagher: I think we need to have a look at the targets and the result in terms of how this portrays itself in these output classes, because I do not think they necessarily tell the exact story of what is happening. The cohort is declining; we know that. I am trying to think of the schools that have expanded the capacity for years 11 and 12. St Francis Xavier is one and I know there are plans on board for more expansion into years 11 and 12 in the non-government sector that will have an impact on our enrolments in government secondary college education. But, as I have said, we have set the target of 95 per cent of students. We also see a drop off, of course, with people choosing not to go on to year 11 and 12, although I am not sure how that fits within those figures. We have set ourselves a target of 95 per cent of students achieving a year 12 certificate and we are

putting in place measures to encourage students into years 11 and 12.

I think there are probably a variety of factors. I want to have a look at how that measure is worked. You have alerted me to the fact that it is probably a bit of an issue, but it is not something that I can get defensive about. Whilst doing whatever we can to encourage students into government secondary college education, all the indicators and documents are telling us that we are going to see further decreases, from preschool right through.

MRS DUNNE: I have just two issues. Correct me if I am wrong, but this is not the first year that St Francis Xavier has gone to years 11 and 12? I thought they had started at least last year.

Mr Donnelly: From memory—and it is from memory only—I think they commenced in 2003.

Ms Gallagher: With a year 11.

Mr Donnelly: Yes, with a year 11.

MRS DUNNE: So the impact for St Frannie's should have been taken into account.

Mr Donnelly: They started with a year 11 cohort in 2003, so they would have brought their first year 12 cohort on in 2004, if my recollection is correct.

MRS DUNNE: So that that could be part of that. I am not asking you to take this on notice for an answer back here, but, having been alerted to the problems here, perhaps the budget papers might better reflect the realities and perhaps there might be some review of the figures and how the figures are presented for the next budget papers.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: I am more concerned about the number of students who begin at college from year 10 because I am aware that it is a mighty transition for a lot of students. Forgive me if I am reading the questions incorrectly, and please correct me, but I see that 85 per cent of year 12 students receive a year 12 certificate. Fifteen per cent is reasonably significant but I am also wondering whether there is any monitoring of students who enter college and then for some reason or other just leave. There may not be anything official about them leaving; they just stop turning up. I am just wondering if any work is done to follow the pathways of students who do stay in the public system but just fall out.

Mr Curry: You have raised a couple of issues there. There is a whole range of reasons why students leave some time during the college period. It could be that they actually move out of the territory, that they find work or that they go into a CIT course—it goes on and on. There is a range of reasons that we try to look at in terms of why that figure is 86 per cent at the end of year 12.

The minister has already mentioned that we are looking at tracking our students—the pathway planning, which commenced this year in year 10. We are going to move from year 9 through to year 12 and that will be a way of really personalising our approach to

students so that we are moving with them and they have a mentor in their schools.

The training pathway guarantee, which the minister mentioned, is a way of actually contacting students at home to see why it is they have left, where they are going and whether we can support them back into something, particularly back into CIT. There is a whole range of things we are doing. I guess it can be read as a fairly bold measure but it might be that they have deferred their studies. It might be that they are ill and are not going to continue their studies. There is a range of reasons and we need to look at those very carefully. It is quite complex, as you would understand.

MRS DUNNE: Are you saying, Mr Curry, that you do not really know why people might commence year 11 and not complete year 12 in a lot of cases?

Mr Curry: No. I am not actually saying that. I guess what I am saying is that there is a range of reasons, that we are aware of and that colleges tell us when they are tracking and chasing up students, as to why students may not finish their years 11 and 12 program.

MRS DUNNE: Do you keep figures on that or is it just a gut feeling indicator?

Mr Curry: In terms of these reasons?

MRS DUNNE: Yes. Do you in any way formally track someone who enrolls in year 11 but does not come out the other end?

Mr Curry: Schools have a reasonable amount of that information on their MAZE records in terms of what is happening.

MRS DUNNE: But is there an across-the-system look at that information?

Mr Curry: I do not think there would be at this point. I guess the information I am giving you is more anecdotal in terms of our regular meetings with the eight college principals about what is happening in their colleges.

THE CHAIR: If there are no more questions on 1.3, we might move on to output class 1.4, where I have a question: the number of students in special schools was slightly lower than the target and in mainstream education slightly higher. Does that mean that some of the young people who would previously have been accessing special schools are now accessing places in special education programs in mainstream schools?

Mr Curry: Yes, that is correct. I guess that is because of the whole choice issue for parents. If they are seeking the quite highly supportive environment of a special school, or they are really wanting more of a mainstream environment for their student, we respond to that by opening learning support units if we have the cohort to do that. That is really the response. It is about parent choice. We want parents to see that they can receive the same sort of educational support for their child with a disability whether it be in a regular class, a learning support unit or a special school. So it goes back to that issue.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MRS DUNNE: I just wanted to discuss a little the middle figure under cost, the average cost per government special education student in a mainstream school. The result figure is \$21,347. So does that exclude children at special schools like Malkara?

Ms Gallagher: Yes. That is the one above, the \$37,889.

MRS DUNNE: Okay, yes. I am sure you will see where I am going with this fairly soon. How does that figure compare, in terms of the gravity of the disability, with a child in a government school? You are talking about children in mainstream education and I am just looking at the figure there of \$21,000 to support a child in mainstream schooling. What is the range of severity and would there be a comparable range of severity in the non-government sector?

Ms Gallagher: The nature of a child with a disability in a government special school would be higher than that in a mainstream school and in a non-government school. I guess the issue for us has been that we have not understood the level of need in the non-government sector. We did not have the information that would provide us with that detail. But we have been working with the non-government sector—that work is almost completed—so we do have an understanding of the level of need and the nature of the students who have a disability in the non-government system. There are some students in the non-government system who would have a need equal to a student in a mainstream government school but, on the whole, students in the government system—and we have many more of them—have a higher level of need, in terms of whatever additional support needs they have as a general rule, than those in the non-government sector.

Mr Curry: Can I just add though, Mrs Dunne, that that figure is really a bit misleading because it actually includes our learning support units, which non-government schools do not have. So, if you take all our learning support units that have a pupil-teacher ratio of about 1 to 6 and an STA, the cost is much greater. Probably what we need to do in future is have another figure in there for the students in regular classes or mainstream classes. That is probably the figure that you would be more interested in because—

MRS DUNNE: I am interested in both, but I think you are right that there needs to be some further breakdown, because there are added costs in, say, the autism units and other units as well. But there would be children in mainstream classes who would still have access to teachers aides—

Mr Curry: That is true.

MRS DUNNE: and it may not be because of a particular intellectual disability; it may be a physical disability. It would be very good to get some breakdown of those costs. I would ask you to take it on notice, but if you cannot provide it for this period I will understand, but I would like to see more rigour in these sorts of figures, for everybody's sake, so that we are actually comparing apples with apples.

Mr Curry: That is right.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: But at the same time I make the point that perhaps there are

non-government schools that would like to provide special learning units but cannot because they do not get the funding for it, and that is because, as you have said, you do not actually understand the need.

Ms Gallagher: We do now. I have not seen the data that has come out of SCAN but once this process is finished—it is being finalised—we will have a very good understanding of the level of need in the non-government sector for the first time. I have said on a number of occasions that, if that shows that we are not meeting our responsibilities to those students, we will address it. It is just that I have not had that information. Thankfully, everyone has worked cooperatively in order for us to get that information because of the commitments I have given that, if it shows that we have not put enough money in, as some of the non-government school communities are telling me, we will address that.

MRS DUNNE: So when do you think that the information from SCAN will become available?

Ms Gallagher: I think it is almost finalised. I had a briefing yesterday, having just got back to work, and a brief is coming to me shortly. By that I do not mean tomorrow.

MRS DUNNE: Not Friday when you say soon?

Ms Gallagher: Soon.

MRS DUNNE: Soon means Friday.

Ms Gallagher: We want to get it finished as quickly as possible because it will help inform budget discussions.

DR FOSKEY: Under this output, the government reports that 92 per cent of parents of students with disabilities were satisfied with their children's education. How does this figure compare with the level of satisfaction expressed by these parents during the new process for student centred appraisal and individual learning plans? Could information also be provided about the level of satisfaction of parents with the new process for determining level of resources available for students with a disability?

Ms Gallagher: So, Dr Foskey, you want to know essentially the complaints or the dissatisfaction that parents have had with the SCAN process, individual learning plans and the outcomes?

DR FOSKEY: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: Again, I am not sure we have got a percentage figure of that to hand you straightaway. I think I have had this discussion with you before. My observation of the process at a distance, and from meeting with several parents through the process, is that it is always a difficult process when you are talking about adequate resourcing for students with disabilities. The number of complaints or letters that I would have received from parents has been very low—much lower than I thought it would be. Having come from the disability sector I thought there would be a lot more concerns than have reached me. Craig might want to add something.

Mr Curry: I was just going to add that there are two processes as an outcome of the points that are allocated to a school on behalf of a student as a result of the appraisal process. One is that the school can ask for a review of the process. The second is that the parent can appeal the outcome of the process. We have had only one parent appeal, and we are certainly not receiving a stream of letters from people unhappy with the amount of resourcing that they are getting at this point in time.

Ms Gallagher: The government has, of course, in the budget, increased support for students with a disability. We have allocated an extra \$4 million and we have made election commitments to match that, again recognising that, whilst the number of students with a disability is not increasing at a great rate, the level of need and the nature of the disability is changing and the support requirements of those students are increasing. We have to recognise that by putting more money in. It is about \$39 million.

DR FOSKEY: I have one more question and then you might not hear much more from me for the rest of the morning. We are aware that there is a long list of children waiting for assessment with CHADS, many of whom will end up with a diagnosis of autism or some other disability. While the length of the waiting list and the waiting time for an assessment—we have had reports of students waiting for up to two years for an assessment—are questions for another minister, we would just like to know what the department is doing to meet the needs of these students who have not yet been assessed and to provide to their schools the necessary resources to ensure good educational outcomes for these students with a disability, and their classmates, who, of course, are affected by them in some cases prior to that assessment taking place.

Ms Gallagher: Dr Foskey, again you are talking about a situation where you might have a year 8 student who is—

DR FOSKEY: I am really talking back at the early primary level.

Ms Gallagher: Okay. So you might have a student in the school already who is waiting for some sort of diagnosis or therapy?

DR FOSKEY: Yes, so that the resources necessary to support them—

Ms Gallagher: What happens at the school level is that resources are put in to ensure that that child's needs can be met because that child comes to school every day.

DR FOSKEY: But it will be a sort of anecdotal assessment of the needs rather than based on thorough testing at this point.

Mr Curry: I guess one of the things we have to be clear about is that the additional points that a school attracts through, say, a SCAN process because a student has a diagnosis are, in fact, in addition to the school. But every other resource in the school is also available to that student—they are enrolled in the school—so, if that student has a set of needs, the school has a responsibility to look at how it can best meet those needs, regardless of whether the student has a particular label or not.

We continually attempt to promote that we are a comprehensive, inclusive system. Yes,

they may or may not get additional resources because they get a diagnosis. A diagnosis does not necessarily mean additional support needs above and beyond the capacity of the school. But we would expect the school to do their best for that student, as they do for every other student.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will go on to output 2.1. Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, on page 186, output 2.1, where you compare the cost measure information provided for government and non-government schools, it is apparent that information related to the cost per student is absent from the non-government schools. While I realise the funding arrangements are very different for non-government schools, why is it that this kind of information is not recorded from non-government schools?

Ms Gallagher: I am not sure I understand your question. Is it because the cost down the bottom is a cost per school as opposed to a cost per student; is that your question?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: Rob can answer that.

Mr Donnelly: Mr Gentleman, I guess the key reason for that is that, unlike government schools, with non-government schools we do not have information on parental contributions. So while for government schools we obviously maintain records of parental contributions, which are quite a small percentage of—

MRS DUNNE: And voluntary.

Mr Donnelly: and a small voluntary percentage of the school's revenue, independent and Catholic schools have a significant source of revenue which is not sourced from government funding, either Commonwealth or ACT. Accordingly, while we might be able to publish government funding per student, that would in no way be comparable to an average cost per student in the non-government sector.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thanks.

MRS DUNNE: On the only costs figure that is there, you have registered fewer schools than projected but the cost per school is considerably higher than projected—5½ per cent more than projected. What has brought that about? Is that entirely as a result of salary rises in the department of education or what are the other factors?

Mr Donnelly: That result is partially as a result of the salary factors you have just outlined but also because there is one less school. Perhaps I will go back a step and explain what the just over \$1 million total cost in relation to non-government school funding relates to. The ACT government funding for non-government schools is predominantly territorial. This is going to get a little bit complex, so you will have to bear with me as I explain it. The department gets two sources of government funding, which can effectively be thought of as two buckets. One of those is known as government payment for outputs and relates to all those factors that the department has control over. The other is territorial, and our territorial payments are really payments that we are administering on

behalf of government rather than those payments that we have discretion to make or not to make. If you go to the third measure in output 2.1, the \$118 million, all of that \$118 million is territorial funding which the government provides to non-government schools, whereas the \$1 million, which obviously pales in comparison to such a large number, is really the departmental costs of administering the Non Government Schools Office. So the grants to non-government schools are part of the territorial grants and represent that \$118 million on the third measure, whereas the \$1 million relates to the administration costs, the salaries of people in the Non Government Schools Office, a share of the year 11 and 12 assessment and other testing, et cetera.

Having outlined that, the increase in average cost is partially in relation to the fact that the people who make up part of the salary costs in that \$1.1 million have had pay rises which were not reflected in the amended target. Secondly, the vast bulk of it actually relates to the fact that there was one less school assessed. Those costs are predominantly fixed and therefore your average cost per school rises.

MRS DUNNE: Why was there one school not assessed if it was planned to be assessed? Do you have a sort of working program that says, “This year we will do schools A, B and C” but for some reason C dropped off the list?

Ms Gallagher: This is about a school seeking to become registered.

MRS DUNNE: These are schools seeking to become registered?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, it is the American school.

Mr Curry: The American school was seeking at the time to be registered and it did not proceed with its application.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for mentioning the American school, because it reminded me of the other question I was going to ask. There was some discussion the other day about the opening of the Islamic school and it was reported that the opening had been delayed because of changes that had been required by the department of education. Could somebody elaborate on that?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, unfortunately the Islamic school could not open at the time that they had wished to, because of inadequate toilet facilities. So there was an assessment done, it was agreed that work would be done to make sure that those standards were met, and hopefully that will happen soon.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you. I have another issue in relation to non-government schools. It relates not so much to the annual report but to the education act that has just commenced. In the old provisions for the granting of scholarships, the minister had the capacity to give bursaries, exhibitions and prizes to a variety of schools, including non-government schools, but under the new education act that seems to have been deleted so there are only scholarships and prizes for government schools. You are looking perplexed, minister. Was that an oversight?

Ms Gallagher: No, it has been raised with me before. I am just trying to think where it came up last. It could have come up in the election campaign. The junior bursary scheme

operates across government and non-government schools. In fact, we have made commitments to increase that scheme. So that still operates unchanged.

MRS DUNNE: But under the old legislation there was specific provision made for bursaries and scholarships and the like to be available to non-government schools and there is a trust fund to do this; but the new education act is silent on non-government schools. Is this intentional?

Ms Gallagher: I am finding someone to answer the question about what has changed.

MRS DUNNE: My notes remind me that section 35A of the old Education Act, the 1937 Education Act, had provision for a trust fund and that non-government schools could have access to the scholarships that came from that trust fund. I presume that is where the money for the junior secondary bursary comes from?

Ms Gallagher: It is a different scheme. We might get back to you on that.

Ms Thomas: Mrs Dunne, the money for the junior bursary scheme comes via territorial funds. It is appropriated through our territorial funds by the ACT government, so it falls into the same bucket—not the same bucket; it is a separate bucket—as the \$118 million, so it is a sum of money the department receives that is not discretionary.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. In that case, could somebody get back to the committee and tell us the source of the money, how much money is allocated for the junior secondary bursary and give us a breakdown of government and non-government people who are accessing that. Could someone also give me a breakdown or a rationale for why there seems to be quite a marked change between the old Education Act and the new Education Act in limiting access to scholarships to children from non-government schools.

Ms Gallagher: My understanding—we will get back to you with a comprehensive answer to all of those elements—is that the new act does not reduce my capacity to award awards, scholarships or bursaries to students in the non-government sector. It does not invoke a responsibility to do that, but it does not reduce my capacity to do it.

MRS DUNNE: I would like an exposition on how that works, please, minister.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister; you will take that one on notice?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, we will get back with all of those.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Donnelly: In relation to Ms Dunne's question about the amount in the junior bursary scheme, at the bottom of page 170 of the report it notes that \$226,000 was paid for the junior bursary scheme in 2004 and I can confirm that that is ACT government not Commonwealth funding.

MRS DUNNE: It used to be Commonwealth funding. In a former life—more long ago than I care to remember—I had something to do with the administration in the Commonwealth, before self-government.

THE CHAIR: We might move on to output class 3.1 now. Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, on 3.1, page 188, I notice there is a slight drop in the percentage of employers satisfied with their employees' new apprenticeships training in the quality and effectiveness measure. Do you have any information on why this might be the case, considering national concern in relation to skills shortages?

Ms Houghton: Is the question about the slight drop in employers' satisfaction with the training their apprentices are getting?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, and whether there is any national concern in relation to the skills shortage.

Ms Houghton: I think the two things are related. Eighty-four per cent is still pretty high on anyone's ratio when you are dealing with a cohort such as apprentices—they are very individual. I think 84 per cent is pretty high when you consider that only 85 per cent of employers are satisfied with CIT training—it is about the same ballpark figure.

We have instituted new measures when talking to employers. We are not just asking them how satisfied they are: we are starting to ask them how important certain aspects of the training are. So next year we will be able to say, "Are we doing the sort of training that you want? Are you happy with that sort of training?" We have kept an eye on these satisfaction levels. We felt we had to unpick them further to ask employers more specific questions, which we can then pass onto our registered training organisations.

I am not worried about the satisfaction levels—on a national average they are very good. While skills shortages are in dispute, I think apprenticeship training is the crowning glory. We have increased the number of apprentices; we have increased the number of trainees. We are feeding young people into trades at record levels. We are doing exceptionally well in automotive. We are doing exceptionally well in building and construction. In other areas, traditional trades are going down—the commencements are going down—but in the ACT we are slowly building them up. That has been because of cooperation between new apprenticeship centres and cooperation with the group training companies—they have made a big difference—with our registered training organisations and with CIT.

I really think that the commencement of apprentices and trainees is addressing skills shortages. Unfortunately it takes three or four years for them to come through the system. So the news is very good for skills shortages, and training is playing more than its part in addressing skills shortages.

Having said that, there is a lot more to skills shortages than taking on apprentices. It is the demographics that you have been talking about with school ages. It is young people's perception of what they want to do. Some trades are not providing the wages, the conditions or the hours that young people find compatible with their lifestyles. There is a list of probably 10 or 12 variables that we need to think about when talking about skills shortages.

Ms Gallagher: At the end of the day, in some areas of skills shortage—take bricklaying

for example—there is a choice to be made by the young person entering training about where he wants to go. Whilst we can say, “We’d really like many of you to become bricklayers”, the desire of the young people at that time is showing us that they are thinking of other areas such as carpentry, which is always highly sought after. Many people want to be electricians. I think tiling is another one. Industry bodies are working with TAE and national industry bodies to look at ways to attract people into areas of skill shortage.

Ms Houghton: I just add one statistic I have with me. Electrotechnology, which the minister mentioned, is a big area in which there are skills shortages. You cannot find someone to do your security systems. It is a really big problem. In 2004, we think we will graduate 48 electrical apprentices. That is a big rise. On our projections, by 2007 we will have 96 graduating. We are building the capacity. As they come through the system, we will be able to address the skills shortages at that entry level.

MRS DUNNE: Would it be possible—you might be able to point me in the direction where I might find this information Ms Houghton; if it is not accessible you can take it on notice—to get some sort of breakdown, say at the end of the reporting period, of the numbers of people in particular avenues of training? We often bundle together traineeships and apprenticeships. But there is often a different level of training and there is often a different orientation.

I would like to see some sort of breakdown about where we are in terms of who is going into traineeships as opposed to apprenticeships; what industries they are going into—say through the traineeship level—and, most importantly with a traineeship, what level of qualification you come out with at the end. What are the long-term employment prospects for someone who goes through a traineeship? For instance, do you think about the success of the traineeship? Is the person employed in the industry say six or 12 months after he or she has completed the traineeship? I am particularly thinking of traineeships.

Ms Houghton: We can certainly give you a breakdown of apprenticeships and traineeships. With what you have asked, you would probably get 40 to 50 pages of printouts.

MRS DUNNE: No I wanted something much more indicative. Perhaps you can direct me to where I might find it.

Ms Gallagher: Some of it is in the VETA report.

Ms Thomas: Yes, there is quite a lot in the VETA report. On page 117 there is some of the information that you have asked for.

Ms Gallagher: In percentage terms.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. I will start there and, if it is not there, I will come back to you.

Ms Houghton: We have a wealth of data.

MRS DUNNE: I do not particularly want to be bombarded with 40 pages, because that

becomes useless to anybody.

MS MacDONALD: I have a question on 3.1—vocational education and training. There is a big surprise there. I have been looking at the back of the report on the response to the *Pathways to the Future* report. That ends at 30 June 2004. Can you give us an update? What has happened since that time?

Ms Houghton: We have done an update. We have the figures. But, as you would understand, we have to wait until the end of the academic year to be able to tell you how many teachers have done certificate IV. I have got it here. It will be on the web. As you can imagine, at this time of the year, there is a bit of a cue to update reports. The work is done.

MS MacDONALD: Yes. To make it easier, you could give me a brief overview.

Ms Houghton: Some highlights?

MS MacDONALD: Yes.

Ms Houghton: Yes. The good news is the return to industry. We have sent 24 college teachers on return to industry, which is a very big part of the report. We have trained 31 high school teachers in the certificate IV in workplace assessment. This has been a big change from when this report was put out. I think they are the highlights. I can go along with you and talk about the focus on career education. We have given 25 scholarships to our teachers for postgraduate career guidance. They were some of the highlights. As I said, it will be on the web very soon. The work is done.

There are things that I am not able to report as completed. The reception area at TAE—recommendation 19—has not been made as user-friendly as you want it. We still have a phone and a locked door, which we hope to be able to improve. I still think that will happen. We have the legal area of family services still at TAE and we perhaps thought we could share a reception. But, given the nature of the clients and the high level of skill you need to staff a reception for the legal side of family services, we felt it was inappropriate to ask our untrained staff to deal with that area.

So recommendation 19 has not been picked up, but it is certainly within the next round of refurbishments at TAE. Generally I think we will be able to sign this off. We will certainly give you an update and talk to you about that. But it is really only the reception that we had committed to do but which has not been done.

MS MacDONALD: I know that the huge increase in new apprenticeship take-ups has been a topic of much discussion in budget estimates. That is reflected in the increase in commencements. The target was 4,800 and you got 6,339 in the 2003-04 year, which this report is delivering on. I congratulate you on having dealt with that. Has it shown any signs of slowing?

Ms Gallagher: Not yet.

Ms Houghton: Keep watching; keep watching. The end of 2003 was the start of that steep increase. That was perhaps the flow-on from the focus that “Pathways to the

Future” put on vocational education. We were able to advertise after that. If you remember, in that period there were advertisements on theatre screens. We were focussed on building the new apprenticeships. It was spectacularly successful.

Historically, those peaks usually drop and we have a commencement graph that looks like a wave. The wave is just slightly peaking. But it certainly has not dropped as it would have been expected to. I think that is good news. Vocational education and training finally has its place in the sun. People are realising that it is a career of choice. There are real jobs out there and, with the skills shortages, they will be jobs for life.

MS MacDONALD: I know that there is a huge skills shortage in the construction industry. Can you tell me in what other areas within the ACT you think there are skills shortages?

Ms Houghton: A lot of work is being done on skills shortages. As I said, we cannot just say, “Look it’s training; it’s apprentices”. There can be skills gaps where you just cannot fill the positions. There can be recruitment difficulties. As I said, people do not want to work on building sites in winter. It is quite complex. The highest level of unfilled vacancies constantly on the books—the additional ones, apart from all the construction trades—is in automotive; it is very hard to get mechanics. I mentioned electrotechnology. It is one word that covers a whole raft of occupations—everything from refrigeration and security to cabling. Basically, the whole modern world has to be supported by people who are qualified in that electrotechnology area. That is a very big area.

We are told there is a huge shortage of bookkeepers. The range is large. We really feel that there is a very complex set of work behind saying, “Where are the skills shortages?” I can tell you, from a training point of view, that we are putting our effort into business admin, electrotechnology, construction, automotive, childcare and aged care. There are huge gaps in the employment area there. There is a need for better qualifications. Community services is an area we want to support and we do support it. That is the broad brush from the training area.

If you want to go into more detail, the business council will tell you that the sorts of people missing from Canberra at the moment are managers, project managers and young people who have tertiary qualifications plus 10 years experience. We could have a wide-ranging discussion on skills shortages.

MRS DUNNE: There is a 14-year lead time to meet that skill shortage.

Ms Houghton: Yes, that is right. We are doing our bit, but we are only the entry level solution to skills shortages.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We move onto output 4.2.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. In 4.2 there is a substantial increase—a 32 per cent increase—in the target number of children eligible for assessment. I think Dr Foskey touched on this earlier. Can someone explain the more than 30 per cent increase in children attending early intervention. What is the relationship between that and the point touched on by Dr Foskey, which is the waiting list—is it called CHADS these days?

Ms Houghton: Therapy ACT.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, I can never remember that one.

Mr Curry: Are you referring to the high number in the result column?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Curry: That is a higher number because it is what we call a “throughput” measure. It is measuring the number of young children who go through our early intervention programs. I guess the people in the programs work hard to get the young people out of early intervention and into more regular settings. The places get freed up as the students move through. It is a bit hard to predict how many will leave during any one year. That is why it is a big measure. It is a “throughput” measure of the number of students, through a year, who have gone through the program.

You asked about diagnosis, et cetera. Our perception is that there are no young children waiting to get into these programs. There is sometimes a perception by parents that they are waiting because they get a referral and a diagnosis when the child is about 12 or 18 months. But these programs start when the child is two. So the parents might perceive that they are waiting for early intervention for those last three or four months. In fact they are not.

The referrals come from disability, health, GPs and paediatricians. Our belief is that there are other services available for those young people aged nought to two that do not necessarily come from education.

MRS DUNNE: So this “throughput” measure does not in any way relate to the assessments that are going on for say people waiting assessment for autism or something like that. This is a difference measure.

Mr Curry: No. The autism is generally diagnosed a little bit later on. No, it does not relate to that.

Ms Gallagher: But they are separate, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Are these children going through Therapy ACT or are they going through other—

Ms Gallagher: They may well. They probably would.

MRS DUNNE: But are there other avenues?

Ms Gallagher: They would have some contact with Therapy ACT.

MRS DUNNE: But are there other means of their being assessed and going into programs other than Therapy ACT?

Mr Curry: Yes. They might have an assessment from the GP. They might have an

assessment from health or they might have an assessment from our early intervention school counsellor. Is that what you are asking?

MRS DUNNE: The question is: are these programs run by Therapy ACT?

Ms Gallagher: No.

Mr Curry: No, these are our programs.

Ms Gallagher: My understanding is that they are essentially early preschool type arrangements. It is an early start to preschool.

Mr Curry: There are 14 of them that we operate.

Ms Gallagher: Where there is a need they can move around a bit, depending on where the students are located.

MRS DUNNE: What is the target or the client group for these programs?

Ms Gallagher: It would vary, for example, a child who had Down syndrome—children who would benefit from an early start to an education program. From memory—I do not know whether I am entirely correct—I visited one where a range of children with differing needs accessed a kind of preschool setting. They are small groups. There is a different range. Some are small and some are large—depending again on the nature and the need of the child.

Mr Curry: That is right. There is a range of students—from those with significant disabilities through to students who are suffering a developmental delay, and one would hope that the early intervention would work to correct that in some ways.

THE CHAIR: If there are no more question on 4.2, we can move onto 4.3.

MRS DUNNE: I have some specific questions in relation to preschool and the government's commitments to increased funding. It is a specific constituency related issue.

During the last conversation I had with the director of the Baringa childcare centre in Spence, she told me that she still had five children in her care who were eligible for preschool but who were unable to attend Spence preschool, which is across the playground from the Baringa childcare centre.

During our last conversation I was told that those five children will not be able to access preschool there. Therefore their parents have decided that they will not access preschool. Since the enrolment period closed, Baringa preschool has had two more children come in this year looking for access to preschools. That gives them seven who are unable to access preschool at Spence.

It is my understanding that at least two families have left Baringa childcare centre because they cannot access preschool at Spence. I am sure that you will be aware of this, minister: someone who is working drops the children off at preschool at 9 o'clock and

somebody picks them up at 1.30—the time varies. When parents need to be at work at 9 o'clock, or possibly earlier, they cannot take their children to preschool; they are dependent upon their childcare—whether that be family day care or, in this case, a centre—to take their children to preschool and pick them up.

Someone in family day care probably has more flexibility. But because of groups of children at centres, there is not the same level of flexibility to address the childcare needs. My experience is that some children of my constituents at Spence are going to preschool and some of the cohort is left out. Between five and seven children wave goodbye to their mates who go across the playground to preschool and those five or seven children stay in the system there.

The answers that you gave to my questions seemed to be that it was just too hard, that these children did not meet the requirements and that that was tough. Given the government's commitment to extending funding and extended hours for preschool, what are you going to do to address the needs of these children whose parents just say, "I can't do preschool"?

Ms Gallagher: There is no easy answer to it. I regret that you think that my view is that it is too hard and that it is bad luck. That is certainly not how I feel about preschool education. I think it is a very important part of any family and particularly the child's entry into formal schooling. The problem we have in the ACT—and it is one that we experience across the school system—is that we have, from memory, 88 preschools, with an enrolment of around 3,700 students.

Where preschools are operating full time, they are 50-place centres. Amaroo is a 100-place centre. They might be even larger this year with the transportable—150. That is two sessions of 25 students throughout the week. You would know this from your experience with preschool.

Spence is a part-time preschool. The number of enrolments by September the year before the school started were not enough to justify moving Spence to a full-time preschool. That was based on the information the department had at the time. In fact, they had 30 people seeking a spot at Spence. In the four preschools around Spence—McKellar, Giralang, Flynn and Melba—there was existing capacity. For example, in McKellar there were 10 places. Of those enrolments of 25, 13 I think were attending from Baringa. It is certainly clear that there has not been any unfairness in terms of children attending Baringa and getting a spot at the preschool. It is about managing the enrolments.

I am happy to look at Spence again if you are saying that seven children are now missing out. The department can review the situation at Spence. Decisions are made because we have to make employment decisions about where teachers are going to be. At the time the decision was made, there were not the numbers to justify—and I am still not sure there are—moving Spence to a full-time preschool when there was existing capacity in the other suburbs.

The criteria for enrolment at a preschool are that you live in the suburb, you are a certain age—four by 30 April—or you participate in a childcare centre in that suburb. They are on par; no priority is given to children not in childcare centres but living in the area. They are the two criteria.

MRS DUNNE: Are you saying that those are equal?

Ms Gallagher: They are equal. That is my understanding.

MRS DUNNE: Can you tell me whether Spence preschool took any out-of-area enrolments?

Ms Gallagher: I cannot tell you immediately. I cannot imagine they would if the preschool were full. If it had 30 enrolments for a 25-capacity centre, then I imagine out-of-area enrolments would be very unlikely. But I will check that for you. As I said, I will have another look at Spence.

When you raised your concerns on behalf of the constituents, some of the enrolment papers had not been received by the department. It is my understanding that they were not aware of the number that came to light after your discussions at Baringa with people having no success accessing Spence.

In light of the fact that you are saying that there are now seven children, the best thing that we can do is have a look at whether there are out-of-area enrolments. From the information I am now looking at, I understand that one child who attends Baringa is registered as being from New South Wales.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I am aware of that. To my knowledge, four children who are ACT residents are in Baringa. They have been there since they were quite young in expectation of going to Spence preschool.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, okay.

MRS DUNNE: These parents do not have the flexibility of parents not in centre-based care.

Ms Gallagher: Yes I understand that.

MRS DUNNE: There is an expectation that is not being met. In the course of the conversation that I have recently had with Baringa, they appear to be waiting for an answer to their correspondence with you. Have you answered their correspondence?

Ms Gallagher: I got back to work yesterday. I am not sure whether Simon Corbell, acting on my behalf, has responded. I will check that out as well. I have worked through my in-tray and there was no letter to Spence preschool for me to sign. I will check that.

I have also been advised that, when decisions are made about enrolments, priority is given to students who register before the first Wednesday in September, which is when we ask people to enrol so that we can make those staffing decisions. That may have impacted. From a discussion I had with the department at the time, there were possibly some late enrolments coming through Baringa. That may have had an effect.

I will look at Spence. I will chase up that letter in response to them. As I said, I have been on leave for a month. I will check out where that has gone. Believe me,

I understand very much the difficulties for parents who are using long day care and accessing preschool, having been one of them myself. So I am very sympathetic.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I have one last quick question, which you can probably take on notice. I thank you for the comprehensive list of external sources of labour you have provided under 8.2—not in one of these output classes obviously—and the staffing profile in 8.3. I am unable to find the number of volunteers utilised in providing services to ACT schools in either. I am aware that a large number of volunteers provide services in the education system. I would like you to give the committee an estimate of how many that would be in the reporting period and how many hours each volunteer has worked in total.

Ms Gallagher: We might not have that in five days. We are not required to report against that in the annual report. Getting that information from the 97 schools and 88 preschools might be quite intensive in terms of time because it would have to be sourced from each school. But we will look at what we can do.

THE CHAIR: I understand that that might be very complex if you do not have those figures at hand. Could that be reported on in the following year?

Ms Gallagher: It might be something the committee takes a view on. I do not know whether you will make a report about this. But certainly, if the committee has a view about that, we will look at that and respond to it.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I would be really happy for full-time equivalents. I am not asking for a breakdown per volunteer per hour, by any stretch of the imagination.

Ms Gallagher: Perhaps if the committee forms a view on what they would like we can have a look at responding.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

MRS DUNNE: If we have finished the output classes, I would like to go back to a couple of questions. On page 155, under 3.13 headed “Payables”, there is a substantial increase, in terms of proportion if not in money, in what I presume are accounts more than 60 days overdue, from \$4,000. It does not seem much when you say “\$4,000 to \$17,000”, but that is a substantial increase in proportional terms. Who were these monies owed to and what steps are in place to ensure that these monies are now paid more promptly?

Mr Donnelly: We will have to take that one on notice.

MRS DUNNE: I may have missed this. Does the student pathway plan include students in non-government schools?

Ms Gallagher: No.

MRS DUNNE: Why not?

Ms Gallagher: We do not dictate to non-government schools what they should do. We

are about supporting these students through transition. We work very closely with them and have the shared initiative on career education, career counselling, which many of their students will use. But it was a government initiative in government schools. I am not sure the non-government schools would accept in a welcoming way my telling them that they had to have pathway plans for their year 9 and 10 students, as per the government system.

MRS DUNNE: Have you offered expertise or assistance in setting up pathway plans?

Ms Gallagher: The department and the non-government sector meet frequently to talk about areas of mutual interest in schools and cooperation. Part of the career education initiative is putting in place these pathway plans. It is a shared initiative, which we have funded across the non-government system. A group that has representation from the non-government schools meets on the career education initiative. No, I have not said to Geoff Joy, “Would you like pathway plans in year 9 and 10 in your schools?”

MRS DUNNE: The non-government school sector has not asked for that?

Ms Gallagher: No.

THE CHAIR: Thank you minister and officers who have attended this hearing today.

Meeting adjourned from 12.34 to 2.03 pm

Appearances:

Ms Katy Gallagher, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Support, Minister for Women and Minister for Industrial Relations

Canberra Institute of Technology

Mr Peter Veenker, Chief Executive and Director

Mr Peter Kowald, Acting General Manager, Corporate Services Division

Mr Vaughn Croucher, Dean, Learning Services Division

Ms Leanne Cover, Acting Senior Manager, Directorate Support Unit

THE CHAIR: We will resume the hearing into the 2003-2004 annual financial reports and welcome again the minister and the officials who have joined us for this session. I also welcome Dr Deb Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I would just like to read this statement to you before you start to give your evidence. 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 in 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.

This afternoon we are considering the annual report for the 2003 calendar year of the Canberra Institute of Technology. We intend to finish at 4 o'clock and we will go through the questions in some form of chronological order according to the report as best we can. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Gallagher: No, thank you, chair. I am happy to just move to questions.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Do you have an opening question, Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have a question that was actually left over from this morning. It is in relation to output 3.2, the CIT, of the department of education report. It relates to the number of publicly funded course enrolments by students—a significant increase due to the increase in enrolments in shorter duration programs. How is CIT responding to this increase and the associated pressures?

Mr Veenker: We find, given the broad range of programs that we respond to, that demand does vary from time to time and the length of courses that people wish to pursue does change a little bit from year to year. Overall, our contact hours, the nominal hours that we deliver, have been fairly constant and usually just over the target. That was the case again. It is certainly a tight situation and we try to meet the needs as best we can. Some areas of the institute are more popular with students than others, and from time to time we transfer load between the various parts. But, overall, we have been able to cope.

MR GENTLEMAN: A significant increase in course completions by students is noted

in the quality and effectiveness measure of the department of education report. It is explained as being due to the higher number of enrolments and an increase in programs offered with multiple exit points. Is this indicative of an increasing demand for flexible learning options such as those provided by CIT and do you have any information on the reasons behind those significantly higher enrolments in VET in the ACT?

Mr Veenker: Without actually seeing that one, I think there is a reference to similar material in our annual report. We are finding that most of our students are mature age or have left school. Some choose to formally finish and seek the certificates that are then available to them. We have encouraged them to do that and our software now, which is a banner system, does prompt students, if they have completed their program, to apply for a credential.

There is a series of credentials that are part of a certificate or a diploma. For example, a number of certificates are stepped into a diploma program. People are claiming those as they go through and I think that is a good thing. The way that we have been able to remind people that they are entitled to a certificate once they have completed X number of subjects or modules and then continue on perhaps to finish a diploma is probably the major explanation for that variance.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thanks for that, Peter.

THE CHAIR: I know that in previous hearings, into the 2002 report, the committee recommended then that more detailed information be supplied about activities of the performance of the individual faculties and I note that in this report that indeed has been addressed in that separate descriptions are given regarding the performance of each faculty. I am finding it difficult, because of the narrative style of that report, to actually drill down and make comparisons between faculties. I am not sure whether that would be useful information to me, but I am finding the narrative style a bit difficult to deal with in that regard. Am I making myself clear?

Mr Veenker: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: It is more of a comment.

THE CHAIR: Yes, it is more of a comment to you that the narrative style makes it hard to compare across. Thank you.

MR GENTLEMAN: I have a couple of questions for the minister about specific issues raised in the body of the report. On page 85, under the equity and diversity provisions, it notes that there are carers and nursing mothers rooms on several campuses. In the interests of ensuring maximum access for mothers returning to work and seeking further training, can you advise whether there are plans to ensure access to such facilities on all of the CIT campuses?

Ms Gallagher: I think that is probably a question for Mr Veenker to answer.

Mr Veenker: We endeavour to provide mothers rooms where possible, but we do also deliver in the workplace and we deliver in outreach situations from time to time. To make a blanket statement that we would be able to do it everywhere would be very

difficult but, certainly, on the main delivery sites we would endeavour to make sure that was the case.

MR GENTLEMAN: Similarly, the issue of safety on campus is one for serious consideration and I note that steps have already been taken to improve that situation; page 88 outlines that. Has consultation with the CIT Student Association and staff unions taken place on this issue and, if so, has action been taken in response to this consultation?

Mr Veenker: The Occupational Health and Safety Committee is a very active one within CIT and has full staff representation, including representation from the unions, and we also have regular consultation with CITSA, which is a student association and they have a board. In addition to that, CITSA is represented on the CIT Advisory Council and can raise matters of this nature; they also can do that through the Resources Board. We respond as soon as we hear of a situation that needs attention.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you for coming today. This is my first chance to greet you, so let us hope that you are able to assist with my questions. My first observation is that this is the annual report for 2003. When will the report for 2004 be available, just for my own interest?

Mr Veenker: That is being compiled now and my colleague Peter Kowald will be able to advise us on the due date, but it is only weeks away.

Mr Kowald: It should be around 11 March.

DR FOSKEY: Okay.

Mr Veenker: I might be able to add a little bit of information that you might find helpful. Because we are part of the national training effort, the calendar year is our reporting year rather than the financial year, which makes it fairly difficult in terms of the way we operate and to actually make sense of some of the figures. It is because we are part of a national system that we report on a calendar year basis.

DR FOSKEY: Some of my questions will probably actually creep into calendar year 2004 and, hopefully, you will be able to assist. This is related to the performance against purchase agreement targets at page 17 in the report. Again, we have no information about 2004 but perhaps you would know, having this information amongst your ready statistics, whether there was a drop in IT enrolments in 2004, and if there was a drop was this balanced against other enrolments?

Mr Veenker: The drop in IT enrolments continued in 2004 and demand is still soft in 2005. There are other areas that are attracting far greater student interest. We hope that student interest will be regenerated as more employment opportunities come about, but this is Australia wide and it is both domestic and international students.

DR FOSKEY: Have the numbers of international student enrolments been maintained and do you think there is a potential for expansion in this market?

Mr Veenker: The number of actual international students has been fairly static for a number of years. In 2003 there was a series of international events, including illnesses, that I thought would impact on the overall numbers, but they have remained stable at about the 600 mark. We think that international students provide a huge benefit to CIT and that the international students, as well as our domestic students, greatly benefit from this activity. We are of the view that we would like to increase that number and we could probably accommodate a thousand quite easily without compromising the quality of what we offer. We think that would further enrich campus life and the activities within classes.

DR FOSKEY: And how is CIT responding to the existing skills shortages in the ACT?

Mr Veenker: We are very conscious of the fact that some employer groups have advised us that from time to time they have skills shortages. We have been making classes available to try to address demand as it surfaces. But in some areas, of course, there might be a skill shortage but students are not necessarily willing to take on the program in the numbers that we would like. However, it is pleasing to see that apprenticeship numbers in the traditional trades have increased, as have some other areas that are of a technical nature, which will, no doubt, assist in terms of meeting some of the skills shortages in the ACT and in the region.

MRS DUNNE: On the subject of skills shortages, what role does the CIT have, if any, in identifying skills shortages or are you just responding to what people are saying are skills shortages?

Mr Veenker: Our role for some years, through what was the national training system, was that a jurisdiction would have a planning arm and they would purchase activities from us. Within the ACT we had that arrangement too. The purchase agreement has now been phased out and it is more of a service level agreement. So our input is largely to do with the discussions about what should be in there, which is based on our intelligence from talking to employer groups and the feedback we get from students. The hard data and the trend figures we look at, but we also rely on TAE, part of the department, to actually look at the overall strategic approach that they want to take and where they want to buy or where they want to fund places. But we do have the opportunity to work together.

MRS DUNNE: So you are really responding to other people rather than doing that analysis yourself to some extent?

Mr Veenker: In part that is correct. But I should qualify it, in that we do have the opportunity for healthy discussion. CIT have put more effort this year into working more closely with our alumni and with our advisory networks to the faculties, so that we can actually provide even more data about where we think the skills shortages are. They are not always that easy to quantify. You might hear that they cannot find a recruit, cannot get a bricklayer. But it is not easy to actually get the hard data.

MRS DUNNE: One of the things that has increasingly struck me—and this is probably more of a philosophical level of discussion—is whether, apart from in the traditional trades, apprenticeship is necessarily the best way of addressing those skills shortages. As

we were discussing this morning, in the electrical type trades, an apprenticeship may not be the best means of addressing the particular skills shortages, which might be better addressed by a more intensive and shorter program or something like that. Do you see an evolution in the sorts of course offerings to address skills shortages? Your answer is not going to be taken down and used against you; it is really a philosophical discussion.

Mr Veenker: I do see an evolution. Over the last probably five to six years, or maybe even the last decade, we worked hard to respond to industry with industry competencies and to package that up into training packages, certificates and apprenticeships. I think in the quest for a national system it may have been overly complex. Breaking that down now more into, say, a shorter course in plastering, bricklaying or one of the other areas—basic cooking, which might not be the full apprenticeship in cooking—I think will be a way of getting a faster response and may stop some of the leakages that currently occur where apprentices do not complete their apprenticeship because of various things, including terms and conditions and salaries.

So it may escalate and they have a series of skills that they might be paid for at a different level so that they do not rush off and do something else. If we design the system correctly and still have a degree of national consistency, that can still be, if you like, a step into a more formal program later on which might become an apprenticeship. We have used the word “apprenticeship” a lot and then we tagged it with “new apprenticeship”. The idea behind that is to reassert the importance of an employer and a training provider and both working together to help the student. But certainly some people would equate the word “apprenticeship” with quite a long training program and workplace situation with a minimal salary for quite a while.

MRS DUNNE: I suppose that goes to the heart of it: you say that people might be able to identify skills shortages and you may be able to put on courses but you cannot necessarily get people to enrol in the courses, because they do not see that there is an opening for them, that there is a shortage, or the area is not an attractive one for myriad reasons. Bricklaying in Canberra in the wintertime springs to mind as a career choice you may not go to immediately.

Mr Veenker: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: So what role does CIT have in that really complex equation? You can identify, in cooperation with the people you work with, where the shortage is, and you can provide the courses, but you cannot necessarily make the horse drink at the trough.

Mr Veenker: We have worked with schools and colleges at information evenings and we have invited career advisers into CIT to experience the type of training facility that we have got, including looking at all the equipment and what actually happens in vocational education and training, so that they can pass on better knowledge to prospective students. We have worked hard on that. As a personal objective for this year, I have set a target to work even more closely again with schools, and in particular principals, to see whether we can pass on the message to a greater extent about the opportunities of vocational education, to not always think about academic. We have tried it for quite a while, but I would like to do more again.

MRS DUNNE: Do you perceive that there are areas where you can offer a different

mode of teaching or a shorter course, such as you said in, say, plastering, or basic bricklaying? Do you have all the facilities and skills and support to do that, and is the only problem that you are not actually getting the customers through the door?

Mr Veenker: It is a matter of moving around some of the capability that we have currently got. We are fully stretched at the moment, so it does require some movement of existing capability, where demand might be soft in some areas, and possibly some retraining. The facilities at CIT we continually update. With friendly employers, there is also the opportunity to offer sometimes in the workplace. School based apprenticeships, where some of the schools bus in students to CIT to experience training first hand at CIT, is a good initiative and it is one that is not always that easy to implement because of fundamentals like timetabling. Nevertheless, they are things that we are very conscious of and we encourage our deans of the various faculties to pursue that. I think the level of activity there has increased, in particular over the last couple of years, especially the use of some of the facilities at Fyshwick in the welding, automotive type area and at Reid in the commercial cooking type activity.

THE CHAIR: Under the Faculty of Communications and Community Services, on page 27, the second last paragraph, the report mentions a number of achievements as part of the digital divide program. It mentions the development of an online resource/information hub for roving tutors, and I was wondering if you could explain this in a little more detail please?

Mr Veenker: This was an initiative from the Chief Minister's Department and it was designed to address people with minimal computer literacy. The way we have tackled that is that a number of roving tutors or support people have been given some training and then they assist more senior citizens to update their computing skills. Some of the areas that we touch on are in the annual report. We have been doing this since 2003. In 2004 the numbers increased slightly, they declined a little bit towards the end of 2004, and we would expect for the first half of this year that we will probably have in the vicinity of seven to eight tutors.

THE CHAIR: As opposed to the 13 that are mentioned.

Mr Veenker: That is right. Demand has slackened off; people coming in and wanting to register for the program have slackened off a little bit. Overall, there are probably other community services available, perhaps through libraries or neighbourhood houses, where people are able to access a similar service. Nevertheless, it has been a successful one, but it has dropped off a little bit. We would expect for the first half of this year to have between seven and eight tutors and, depending on the individual's needs, it might be two to eight hours per week, and it could be an eight- to 10 -week program.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

DR FOSKEY: I have a question on degrees and associate degrees. At present CIT delivers degrees in design and forensic science and an associate degree in science and offers early stages of degrees which are eventually delivered by the University of Canberra in childcare and hotel management. Are there any plans for CIT to expand its delivery of degrees and associate degrees?

Mr Veenker: The short answer is that, where there is demonstrated student demand and we have capability and we think that there is a genuine industry need, we would like to respond to that. We do want to make sure that the long-term view is taken into account and that we talk to other tertiary providers about that as well. The associate degree is new in that it has not been around in Australia for very long, but you probably know it is very well accepted overseas. It is a two-year qualification and it does often move on into a bachelor degree program. It is not uncommon for institutes like this one, internationally, especially in the North American area, to offer associate degrees and they do have currency in terms of what they offer globally. It is also not uncommon for polytechnics and community colleges, in particular the polytechnic system in New Zealand where you have a range of locational challenges, to complement what is offered in the university system by offering more vocational type bachelor degrees, and that is what we have responded to. As more genuine opportunities arise, we would like to respond to those.

I think the forensic degree is a good example of how this normally evolves. We were offering through our major client, the Australian Federal Police, an advanced diploma in forensic crime scene investigation. The sophistication of the science work that needed to be done was really at degree level but they wanted it very much applied in terms of crime scene, and they were the client who requested that the appropriate level should be at the bachelor level. So that is the type of response that would trigger us then to put in the effort to move it from advanced diploma to a bachelor program and seek all the accreditation that is required. It does require careful planning because of resourcing and staff delivery requirements.

MRS DUNNE: Do you see, Dr Veenker, that we are going through the sort of process that we saw in perhaps the eighties in that polytechnic type institutions, or institutions which are more hands-on, start providing degrees and then we go through this process of turning them into universities, which we did with the CAEs in the eighties. It seems to be a sort of evolutionary circle. I see that there is a great need for those sorts of technical type programs that have a higher level of accreditation, but are we also running the risk of having a sort of creeping credentialism, that in some way a good certification from a polytechnic institution is devalued. Are you addressing that as well?

Mr Veenker: I think that there is in part a creep. It is a global creep, though, especially in the developed world, and it is because of the increased sophistication of the areas that we are training in. The mass requirements in many of the apprenticeships and a lot of the certificates and diplomas are considerably higher, as is the knowledge of electronics and other systems now, than they were before. For Australian students to not have that recognised as at an appropriate level globally—and many of our students aspire to work globally or work with Australian companies that trade internationally—we might be doing them a disservice if they cannot get to stage 1 because they have got on their resume a certificate when in fact internationally they might be recognised as something a bit higher. So in part the creep is right, but it is in response to those things. That does not mean that we devalue in any way at all the range of other programs, and that is why I think CIT is a complex organisation because of the range of those 300 programs that we offer.

MRS DUNNE: I did not mean to imply that you devalue. One of the officials said this morning that vocational training is now seeing its day in the sun. I hope that is correct,

but I suspect that there is still a long way to go until it is the case that people value it for what it is—as a valid career path that requires real expertise. If there is a tendency, valid or not, to go towards turning some of these courses into degrees—I take your point about the necessity in some cases—there is a risk that subliminally or unconsciously we are at the same time saying that people who are achieving certificate level training are doing something which is less important. How do you address that? It is all part of addressing the skills shortages and finding the right way to get people to participate in lifelong learning.

Mr Veenker: Yes. Firstly, I do not think CIT should be a degree factory in any way at all, so it would be very limited in the areas that you would work to that level in. Secondly, students do want to be valued and they want the rigour of their programs properly recognised. Therefore, we make every effort to ensure that the graduation and the information that we provide about our courses to prospective employers and parents reflects, if you like, the importance and the rigour that has gone into that particular course.

To some extent I am amazed when a number of our students who are doing certificates ask for robing at graduation. But they are entitled to do that and are very proud. So in fact it is a series of signals and signs, which we are looking to get out into the community, to show that this is something of real value.

You mentioned lifelong learning. The other thing that we are really keen to do is to ensure that the programs they do do not require a repeat as they move into either another area, like a university, or another program within CIT; that we genuinely recognise the skills, competencies and knowledge they have and that they do not have to serve additional time because of academic chauvinism of some other people who say, “You have got to do two years of this degree because you have only got a certificate,” when in fact, with proper negotiation, proper discussion, you might find that the level of credit transfer should be higher than that. We are strong advocates of massaging that, although that is probably not a good word.

Ms Gallagher: I have had a discussion with Mr Veenker, the University of Canberra and the ANU and our view is that we are probably reaching a point now where it is worth a discussion about what role we think each institution has, to ensure that we do keep accessibility to CIT for those entry levels that you are talking about, Mrs Dunne, and that, whilst it can offer degree and associate degrees and can even expand that area of its work, it does not reduce its capacity to take in certificate and apprenticeship level qualifications.

That is something that the leaders of those institutions and I will be discussing this year, because the national training agenda is not clear. University education, it appears, is beyond the reach of some in terms of cost. I think we need to have a discussion about where all those institutions see themselves being and where they want to go, so that we ensure a range of options for all those students who want to access them.

MRS DUNNE: So, apart from the degrees that you currently offer, you are proposing this year an associate degree in music?

Mr Veenker: Yes, that is correct.

MRS DUNNE: Is there anything else along that line?

Mr Veenker: We are looking at possibly engineering. You will notice that the University of Canberra and ANU numbers are not all that high in the areas that they offer in. Because the University of Canberra is dropping engineering, we think that, working with the ANU, there is probably room for an associate degree because Australia is very short of engineers. We think that the associate one might be the right way to step it in; that it will have greater acceptance nationally again, as well as internationally, at the associate degree level rather than advanced diploma level. That may well be in building construction, which is a higher level—but you would articulate in from an apprenticeship. So we are looking at that. There are some science areas that we are also looking at. Again, the major employers in that are CSIRO and ANU itself where they want high level paraprofessional and professional staff to support the research efforts and the scientific efforts, which again is applied.

MRS DUNNE: So it is applied; it is hands-on stuff?

Mr Veenker: It is technical, applied, yes—but at the higher level.

THE CHAIR: If there are no more general questions, we will move on to the corporate objectives and start with corporate objective 1.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, on page 71, I note in relation to the key output targets measure at (iv) that the explanatory note explains the introduction of a new graduate survey as a motivation for lower than target satisfaction rate for CIT graduates. Could you please elaborate on the nature of the new survey and how this will be incorporated into future targets to achieve maximum graduate satisfaction with the educational services provided by CIT?

Mr Veenker: I would be happy to respond to that. We, again, work to a national system and from time to time the states and territories change their methodology of collecting data. We set the targets in consultation with Treasury and we try to stretch ourselves on those targets. The graduate satisfaction before was out of 10. So, if a student was satisfied or well satisfied at a six out of 10, we would call that a satisfied student. The measure now is out of five. So, if the student was to say four out of five, that is highly satisfied and we would put that in. So there is a different methodology on what you count and what you do not count. They changed the way you count it. So we might have to think again about what is a realistic target that still stretches us, but the new measure will give a lower figure.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Veenker, you have “nominal hours supervised” in your report and in the department of education’s report it is “number of annual student curriculum hours purchased from the Institute of Technology”. The target figure is the same in both but the outcome figure is different. Are we actually talking about the same thing with a different name or is that because we are reporting over different time frames?

Mr Veenker: In part that is it. There was a change in the national way of counting things. Now it is a nominal hour, rather than a curriculum hour.

MRS DUNNE: I see.

Mr Veenker: There is a little definition of “nominal hours supervised”.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I was just trying to marry the two. Apart from the fact that we are talking about two different time lines, we are also talking about something that has changed in its definition over the period.

Mr Veenker: Yes, that is correct—a minor change.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. I am not going to quibble over the number. I just wanted to understand it.

MR GENTLEMAN: I am pleased to see a significant increase in enrolments during the reporting period, particularly in relation to the work of CIT and the government in addressing the national skills crisis so positively and providing such accessible opportunities for our community. I wanted to ask your opinion on the impact of these increased enrolments of the work mentioned on page 22 in building links with schools in the territory and the development of a schools pathway plan for ACT government high school students.

Mr Veenker: Is that under “Links with Schools” on page 22?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I am sorry. What was the question? We got distracted.

Ms Gallagher: Could you repeat the question, please?

MR GENTLEMAN: I asked for the minister’s opinion on the impact of the increased involvements of the work mentioned on page 22 in building links with schools in the territory and the development of the schools pathway plan for ACT government high school students.

Mr Veenker: It has been tremendously successful in terms of moving from the colleges into schools and offering a wider range of experiences to students. It was well supported by the staff in those areas and the thirst for more in terms of having our students. It might be very basic automotive—it might be building an engine again for a lawnmower—but it is applied and it shows people that there are actual situations you can work on under the supervision of our staff. It has been successful in terms of what the students and staff from those schools tell us, and they certainly are keen for more vocational education and training in their curriculum.

MRS DUNNE: This is probably a question not so much for the CIT but for the department, and it should have been asked this morning. Do we have figures on the number of people who have done vocational training, in years 11 and 12 in particular, who actually continue in vocational training when they finish? Do they move on to CIT or to some other training provider, and is there a direct link where somebody who is doing, say, hospitality at school goes on to hospitality at CIT? Do we know whether we are just giving people a taste for vocational training or are they actually building on their

vocational training that they have had at school?

Ms Gallagher: I was just looking behind me for Anne Houghton, because she is the person who could answer that. I would imagine there are statistics on that in some form that I will undertake to get back to you on. VET is measured very highly by a number of organisations, national and locally. I imagine we do do that, because we measure what is happening in school-based apprenticeships and VET in schools, and it seems like a natural flow, but I will get back to you.

MRS DUNNE: In some ways it is a measure—not the only measure, by any means—but a measure of the effectiveness of school-based training.

Ms Gallagher: Exactly, rather than just an uptake in the number that want it, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Because there is often what on the surface would be quite valid criticism. You know: why aren't these children—who are doing a lot of this in the school system—in the training system; and is it our propensity to keep people at school to Year 12, where they might be actually making better progress if they were in a more training oriented environment? Once upon a time, people who did apprenticeships left school at Year 10 and started then. I suppose the question is—and I do not know that we know the answer—are we actually providing the right service to people who might be more in the truant stream?

Ms Gallagher: And are those students following on with that training once they have got a taste for it?.

MRS DUNNE: You have a taste for it, but you might have a bad taste.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: And you need to measure it.

Ms Gallagher: I think that is why, when we set that target of 95 per cent, we also made it clear that it was year 12 or equivalent, so that the training is recognised as being one of those targets.

MRS DUNNE: So we are not corralling people when they should be somewhere else.

Ms Gallagher: Exactly.

MR GENTLEMAN: I have a question on corporate objective four. I am pleased to see such a commitment to staff and their development articulated in the corporate objectives of CIT and that a variety of professional development and educational opportunities for staff at all levels is clearly significant. The amount of expenditure is noted on page 93. On page 43 it is mentioned, however, that the net cash outflow was better than budget because, among other initiatives, the teacher professional development fund was not expended during that reporting year. Could you clarify what percentage of the teacher professional development fund was not utilised and comment on how this might be put to greater effect in the future for the benefit of the CIT staff and students?

Mr Veenker: I will ask Peter perhaps to provide additional detail on this. There are a number of activities that we invite staff to participate in and we offer a number of experiences within CIT that are clearly professional development where they do not necessarily access their fund.

The fund is there for staff to work with their supervisor to say, “Well, I want to spend my entitlement on this, this and this. Is that consistent with what CIT wants to do?” Some of the expenditure on that has not been as rapid as we would have liked. When we have quizzed staff about that, they have said, “Oh, we’re interested in banking it for a couple of years and then, because we think in this particular way, we will be able to afford a conference that perhaps we weren’t able to get permission to go to otherwise and we think it’s still important and we’ll do it this way.”

So there is an element of banking in it. The other part, of course, is that the professional development money that has been allocated will eventually go back to the division or faculty if it is not spent, in which case it will then be individually determined or determined at the faculty level how it is spent. The exact percentage I do not know off the top of my head, but Peter may.

Mr Kowald: The amount of money that goes to that purpose is about \$300,000 per year. My very rough estimate of the amount that is unspent in recent years is about 30 per cent that carries over, and I would also like to mention that the origin of this money is part of the certified agreement negotiations where teachers agreed that a 0.5 per cent component of their salaries would go to this purpose. That has happened twice, so it is a continuing feature of staff development funding in CIT and, as the chief executive mentioned, because of that it will become a more significant component as the years go on because it will grow in size. We would expect that, because of that, maybe the banking motivation might decrease a bit as more money goes into it.

MRS DUNNE: I have some general questions on the corporate objectives.

THE CHAIR: You would like to go back to some general questions that you could not read before?

DR FOSKEY: I have some general ones, too.

THE CHAIR: Okay. I think that is the last corporate objective, so we might go back to the general questions.

MRS DUNNE: There are a couple of issues that I wanted to touch on. One was the issue that seems to be, at this time of the year, contentious for all tertiary institutions, and that is the matter of student accommodation. You have made particular inroads with student accommodation in the last year or so. Do you see that you are meeting the accommodation needs for CIT students now, or is there still an unmet need?

Mr Veenker: The opportunity to access some additional housing was made available through the flats in Civic. That has provided an opportunity for us to direct students to additional capacity. Our accommodation is currently full or booked, with about half regional students, half international students. We help students who are in financial difficulty from time to time, but there is probably capacity for cheaper housing for

students who might have a crisis situation or those who just have very low income generation capacity. The interim measure will help address that.

MRS DUNNE: What was the interim measure?

Mr Veenker: There is additional accommodation that we, ANU and UC have access to.

MRS DUNNE: The old Currong flats? So that is an ongoing arrangement this year?

Mr Veenker: Yes. We have access to that this year.

MRS DUNNE: For the entire year?

Mr Veenker: That I am not sure about, but certainly for semester one. So that solves the immediate problem. Home stay continues to be popular for students in their first year—not always for the remaining years, as they become more acquainted with the ACT. There is probably room for us to access further accommodation. We expect that demand from regional areas will also continue to grow, especially with some restructuring that is happening in New South Wales. We would expect to pick up more students from around Bega, Eden and those sorts of areas—that Illawarra has been servicing in the past—and if we get the international numbers that we hope for then, yes, there would be more demand.

MRS DUNNE: So would you see another building project or another series of building projects to address that?

Mr Veenker: We, in our tentative planning for the future, would like to have more student accommodation on our key campuses. I am particularly referring to the campuses that students like because of the central location and where English language is delivered; so some form of student accommodation around Reid, perhaps even on the Reid campus in a minor redevelopment, and certainly Bruce.

MRS DUNNE: Have you got room at Reid to build anything more?

Mr Veenker: It depends how clever you are in putting things together.

MRS DUNNE: On the subject of bringing in people from the regions—and I understand that there is some restructuring of things going on on the South Coast—what sort of regional co-operation is there between CIT and TAFE facilities in the region? Do you have much interchange between you?

Mr Veenker: Through the network of TAFE directors Australia, we have the opportunity to talk about issues and, of course, we have contact with Illawarra from time to time. There is a very centralised system in New South Wales and some of the trade delivery has changed a little on the South Coast. That is why I am predicting additional numbers. Currently 20 per cent of, for example, our apprenticeships come from New South Wales.

MRS DUNNE: Your students come from New South Wales but are they doing apprenticeship training here. Are they employed here, or are they coming backwards and

forwards?

Mr Veenker: No. What it means is that they might be doing a block release type of arrangement and coming up to study with us, but they work and live somewhere else.

MRS DUNNE: Also on a regional subject, do you see with the technical high school mooted for Queanbeyan that there will be a role for the CIT in supporting that? The minister is nodding.

Mr Veenker: Yes. I think that it is in the interests of the people in the region for us to work closely with that new development. It may well be that people residing in the ACT would like to avail themselves of some of the services that will be delivered through that new entity. I expect that some of that delivery might very well occur not only in Queanbeyan but across the border in the ACT as well. We would be looking to cooperate as best we can to make sure that we maximise the range of offerings and that we provide appropriate support where we can.

MRS DUNNE: And also presumably to make sure that there is no unnecessary overlap?

Mr Veenker: Yes, where I can.

Ms Gallagher: The reality of the landscape is that Queanbeyan is going to get this technical college and we have all got an interest in making sure that we are partners in what is offered there and what is offered here. I know that Mr Veenker has been asked to speak with some people about the technical college and he is going to do that, which I think is fantastic. There are quite a few players in the ACT meeting to discuss the role of the technical college. I am going to be part of those discussions. It just makes sense. From a political point of view, I might not have liked the idea, but it is coming and I think that for the best outcomes for all students we need to work together.

There are some issues. It will have to be registered in New South Wales as a New South Wales school, and what that will mean for year 11 and 12 students from the ACT who might want to use it I do not know. We have different year 11 and 12 systems, so there are actually some very serious discussions to be had, but everyone accepts that they are coming in around the country and we will make the best of it now.

DR FOSKEY: I have some general questions. These questions relate to environmental performance, reporting page 102. It is pleasing to see the topic addressed, but what we see here are fairly broad measures that were taken that lack any quantification of impact. I am not sure whether there has been any attempt to quantify their impact. I am aware that there has been an attempt by the student association to take some leadership on environmental performance, but that they feel that they have had minimal support from CIT senior management and the CIT board. You might want to comment on that.

Unfortunately, the Commissioner for the Environment did not request CIT to provide a report. Consequently they did not, which is a missed opportunity for us to find out more about measures that could be taken to improve CIT's compliance with its ESD targets. It is noted that in the 2005-09 strategic plan the CIT made a commitment to work to reduce our ecological footprint, and that is great, but I would like to know two things: how can that be achieved and related; and how can CIT more effectively respond to the ACT

government's ESD targets? Sustainability is probably the better phrase now.

MRS DUNNE: In fairness, there are not necessarily ESD targets that institutions can meet.

DR FOSKEY: No. That is why I am changing it. I mean, the ANU green program does set a fairly high standard, but it is obviously something that CIT has at least a rhetorical commitment to and has taken some measures towards. I think it is probably fair enough to ask these questions.

Mr Veenker: I was aware and briefed. I encouraged the student association to work with agencies like VisyBoard on recycling initiatives. I was unaware of any other initiative or activity that the student association put forward. Concerning the openness of the institute: it is very easy to get to senior management; it is very easy to table issues or concerns through the way we are structured; and the membership allows that very easily as well. So I am unaware of any particular concern.

We treat waste reduction very seriously and also the way we manage waste and the way we design our buildings and use energy and disposable materials. In fact, the amount of paper we use has decreased dramatically as we change communications strategies within the institute. The way we use power, gas and water is very much with conservation in mind. However, the hard data is not there, if that is what you are requesting. I would be happy to look at that, to enhance further reporting.

MRS DUNNE: It would seem to me that the report is a bit light on for detail where it refers to your environmental, economic or social outcomes. If you have a reduction in energy consumption, surely, even by looking at your bills, you should be able to quantify that to some extent, although you would initially have one big bill. Perhaps for future reports you should look at quantifying some of that.

Mr Veenker: Happy to do that.

Mr Kowald: Can I also mention that CIT began many of its major energy and water saving measures in the early 1990s. We achieved major gains then and we felt that we were among the leaders in doing that before everyone else. We find ourselves in a slightly difficult position in that we feel that we have achieved so much but then, with the recent emphasis on water conservation, how much further can we go? That has been the difficulty. But we are committed to it. We have a solid history of achieving in this area across the board.

MRS DUNNE: Perhaps you should also be singing your own praises.

Mr Kowald: Yes, obviously.

DR FOSKEY: In relation to page 84, which is a report dealing with preventing fraud—you might want to expand on this—has that instance of fraud from 2002 been resolved and, if so, could you update us on that? Have there been any other instances of fraud identified since then in 2003-04 and how were those resolved?

Mr Veenker: The matter referred to there has been satisfactorily resolved. The staff

member in question has left the service—there was a public service inquiry—and the police in this particular instance did not want to pursue the matter after a thorough investigation. This is a big organisation and, from time to time, we do hear of things. I must say that on the matter referred to here no financial or academic fraud was actually proved. Nevertheless, a breach of some policies and guidelines did occur and there was a misconduct finding against the staff member.

We continually upgrade our systems and continually audit. We provide ongoing in-service education to people about their responsibilities and we constantly review delegation instruments to make sure that we are flexible enough to operate in a really good way with maximum protection. So, in terms of risk management, I am very confident that, operating in this current environment in this world, we are doing as well as we possibly can. But certainly from time to time there will be matters that will no doubt come to our attention.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, it is unclear from reading this—excuse me for being dim if it is blindingly obvious—are there one, two or three instances of irregularity? Because it says in paragraph 3: “One instance of possible fraud reported in 2002 remains under investigation.” Then it says “late in 2001.” That was presumably the matter you adverted to there?

Mr Veenker: Yes, that is right. There are really two.

MRS DUNNE: Okay, and then it says, “A further matter is the subject of an internal investigation.” Is that a third?

Mr Veenker: No. That is related to it. There are really two.

DR FOSKEY: And the equipment losses is a separate concern altogether?

Mr Veenker: Yes. Actually, I am pretty proud of that figure, compared to some other institutions. I mean, when you have open access to a lot of facilities, including computer banks and things like that it is not that high. But, yes, it is ongoing and we have camera surveillance, we have CIT cards, security cards and things of that nature. But we do sustain robberies from time to time.

THE CHAIR: This morning we talked about the risk that the whole of the ACT education system had been under and could possibly continue to be under with regard to the age profile of teachers, and also the strategies that have been put in place to actually address that. I note on page 90 that you give the staffing profiles. In the other report, which we discussed this morning, the age profiles of the teachers were not given. Within this institution, do you have a similar challenge with regard to the age profile of the teachers that you are able to access or is there not so much of an issue in this regard?

Mr Veenker: It is slightly different, but the challenge is not dissimilar in that for good teachers of vocational education, we want them to have industrial experience. So they would complete whatever their basic qualifications are, often diplomas or degrees, teacher training and industrial experience. When they come into the service, they are probably in their thirties, so it is skewed a bit that way.

We have staff who have served us for many years and we are actively managing appropriate knowledge transfer and thinking very actively about succession planning and providing rotation opportunities for various staff, especially ones who see a longer term career with us, so that they can diversify their experience. You would have noticed from the figures over the past couple of years—and they go back for a decade or so—that there has been growth in vocational education and training, but not necessarily greater spending. So it has been largely growth through efficiencies. Reinvestment in further staff development is very necessary now and we are keen to rejuvenate some of our teaching ranks with other people. We would expect over the next couple of years, looking at our age profile and knowing what we know about super schemes, that we will have a requirement for additional teaching staff and some senior administrators.

Ms Gallagher: Just to follow on from that, the CIT did go through an EBA round at the same time as the government school teachers, which delivered the same pay outcome. It is my understanding from my discussions with some of the teachers at TAFE and Mr Veenker that this is assisting in recruitment to those positions where there are vacancies, whereas, before, our salary levels may have acted as a disincentive for people to make a shift into the TAFE system. So, as Mr Veenker said, there is a range of things, but salaries and investing in salaries are an important part.

THE CHAIR: Sorry about going back, but I just noticed that page 18 of your report talks about the ACT adult migrant education service, run through the CIT on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. It was successful in obtaining two research grants for the adult migrant English program and research centre at Macquarie University for generic skills for white collar workers and meeting the needs of male learners. I thought that was rather interesting and I was wondering what effect that has had on the delivery of that particular program?

Mr Veenker: The feedback from the students was that they enjoyed it and that it helped them a lot in terms of lifting their English language skills. In particular, the program that mainly male participants wanted to participate in often involved working in trade type situations and using English for specific purposes. They were able to build their confidence a lot quicker that way and we thought that that was something that we would like to do more of.

THE CHAIR: And does the CIT have a lot of opportunity to do research programs? Does it have to bid for research money?

Mr Veenker: No, we bid for that.

THE CHAIR: You bid for that?

Ms Gallagher: It is a competitive world out there.

THE CHAIR: Yes. So how much success have you had? Are you satisfied with the amount of success you have had in this area of attracting research funds?

Mr Veenker: With AMES, it is highly competitive. In the eight years that I have been here I have been totally astounded at how successful they are. There is hot competition for this money and they have done very well. The other part that is unique to CIT is our

centre where we undertake research largely to do with education. We often partner universities but we have also won research grants in our own right. Not many other TAFE type institutes pursue that activity. It has accrued huge benefits to our system nationally but also into CIT itself, for example, work on how adults learn, how you better create a working situation that also supports learning.

That type of research has been of tremendous value to us. That has been through the centre for research operating under the acronym of CURVE. They have won ANTA money, NCVR money and they have often won private grants as well, so I am pretty happy with that. I do not think they could do much more.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any more questions?

MRS DUNNE: Yes, if I may. There are various references throughout about international links. There is a section on international links, which I now cannot find, of course. But not everything seems to be covered there. International initiatives on page 24 mentions the Korean University of Technology and Saudi Arabia and various things through the languages school, but I also notice under “design” there are some international links there. The exposition on page 24 does not seem to be entirely exhaustive.

Mr Veenker: No, because some of it is—

MRS DUNNE: Buried.

Mr Veenker: I should not say “buried”. I nearly did. But it is embedded in what the faculties do, because they have a high degree of freedom to operate, but we do coordinate it centrally. A strong strategic objective under the new plan is internationalisation. The reason for that is that it was not only about the inbound students; it is also about making sure that we are achieving at the best international standard and we think that we can do that best by not only servicing students from our region but also getting our students, as part of their study program, to have the opportunity on full credit to do a bit of study overseas.

So, the Cook Islands—a small example, but a good one—where two Cook Islanders came here. We helped with their training in the Cook Islands in hospitality and tourism and then they came here, studied at CIT and worked in one of our local establishments. Now two of our students are in the Cook Islands because the work experience that our students are getting in an international resort situation is so different to the work place experience that they could get here. So the link with the training provider in the Cook Islands was good.

But then there are other links, too. I was chair of the post secondary international network of polytechnics and community colleges. The benefit of that is that we share information and have the opportunity for staff to visit one another, as well as for students to work in different areas. The most recent initiative is with probably the best polytechnic in New Zealand—after Auckland University—which is Christchurch. It is more a university now. There have been a number of program idea exchanges and there will be student visitations and exchanges. In the design faculty it has been largely with Asia, and Singapore was part of that. So it is a very important push, from our

perspective, to make sure that we overcome the isolation of Australia and actually help students on full credit. Universities have done this for a long time, but we have not in our sector of education. We are trying to do that now.

MRS DUNNE: Perhaps again next time there might be a more fulsome exposition, rather than having it embodied. I do not read these word for word. I go looking for particular things and that was something that I was looking for, but then I was finding it in other places as well.

Mr Veenker: Yes, that is correct.

MRS DUNNE: Take that on board before the end of March.

Mr Veenker: I will.

THE CHAIR: Well, thank you very much. If there are no further questions, I think we might wind up and have an early mark.

Ms Gallagher: It is a rare but welcome outcome. Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. Thank you very much to everyone for attending.

The committee adjourned at 3.18 pm