



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

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

(Reference: Briefing on school standards authority)

Members:

**MS M PORTER (The Chair)
MR M GENTLEMAN (The Deputy Chair)
MR S PRATT**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 29 APRIL 2008

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr S Lilburn (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 that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the committee office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

WITNESSES

BRUNIGES, DR MICHELE, Chief Executive, Department of Education and
Training.....**1**

The committee met at 10.02 am.

BRUNIGES, DR MICHELE, Chief Executive, Department of Education and Training

THE CHAIR: Good morning. Thank you very much for appearing before us to give us a briefing on the school standards authority. Have you read the yellow card that is in front of you?

Dr Bruniges: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, I do.

THE CHAIR: For the record, I move:

That the statement be incorporated in *Hansard*.

The statement read as follows—

Privilege statement

To be read at the commencement of a hearing and reiterated as necessary for new witnesses

The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and rebroadcasting of these proceedings in accordance with the rules contained in the Resolution agreed by the Assembly on 7 March 2002 concerning the broadcasting of Assembly and committee proceedings. Before the committee commences taking evidence, let me place on record that all witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to submissions made to the committee in evidence given before it.

Parliamentary privilege means special rights and immunities attach to parliament, its members and others, necessary to the discharge of functions of the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, if the committee accedes to such a request, the committee will take evidence in camera and record that evidence. Should the committee take evidence in this manner, I remind the committee and those present that it is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly. I should add that any decision regarding publication of in camera evidence or confidential submissions will not be taken by the committee without prior reference to the person whose evidence the committee may consider publishing.

I also have a few housekeeping matters which I need everyone in the room to observe:

- all mobile phones are to be switched off or put in silent mode;
- witnesses need to speak directly into the microphones for Hansard to be able to hear and transcribe them accurately;

- only one person is to speak at a time; and
- when witnesses come to the table they each need to state their name and the capacity in which they appear.

Amended 14 March 2008

THE CHAIR: For *Hansard*, would you introduce yourself and state your position and go into the briefing? We are expecting Mr Pratt at any minute. He did say he would be here. At the moment it is just Mr Gentleman and me. I am sure Mr Pratt will be here shortly.

Dr Bruniges: My name is Michele Bruniges. I am the Chief Executive of the Department of Education and Training. First of all, thank you for the opportunity to come along today and provide a briefing on the school standards authority and the paper that has been the subject of discussion within the community.

The original discussion paper included a number of elements. The first one referred to teacher registration and looked at the current situation around teacher registration that built on a great deal of work that had been conducted across all sectors here in the ACT and led by an independent chair, Cheryl O'Connor. In that registration section of the school standards paper, it really laid out the current situation, looking at factors that indeed affect the quality of teaching. It looked at the teacher registration project that was part of consultation in the ACT community.

The second component looked at curriculum frameworks and indeed the introduction of our new curriculum framework across all sectors—Every Chance to Learn—and looked at some potential roles and what that meant for us as the ACT education community. It also picked up the notion of student achievement standards, and, indeed, some of the work that is embedded within the curriculum framework, looking at what we expect students to know and to be able to do as a result of time spent in schools.

It also looked at the notion of the registration of non-government schools and home education, which we currently do within the Department of Education and Training and those functions. It also looked at schooling standards and looked carefully at our operating context from a national perspective. That includes the introduction of the first national test that will occur in Australia in all jurisdictions from 13 to 15 May this year. All sectors in all jurisdictions will participate in that national test. What that means for us as the ACT community is that once we have that data set, where should we store it and what should we do with it?

They were the major elements in terms of the notion of a discussion paper. At the moment the department is looking at the responses that we have received from that initial discussion paper, and we will be putting a brief to our minister about the feedback that we have received for him to inform his future decisions.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any immediate questions, Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple.

MR GENTLEMAN: You go first.

THE CHAIR: That is quite a lot of cover, but where do you see the major challenges for us? Where are they? Are they in the teacher registration area or are they in the standards area? Where do you see the major challenges?

Dr Bruniges: I think the teacher registration one is a major challenge for us. If you look across other jurisdictions, we are in a situation in each state and territory where there are different models operating, and I am certainly happy to provide a summary to the standing committee of the different models across each jurisdiction.

THE CHAIR: That would be very helpful.

Dr Bruniges: What we do see when we look in each jurisdiction is, for example, if I take our nearest neighbour, New South Wales, they do not register teachers. What they have chosen to do is to accredit teachers. They have got the New South Wales Institute of Teachers where they primarily look after the professional learning needs of teachers and quality assure professional learning. They also accredit pre-service education, so they look at the university sector, and they do what they call accredit teachers.

Teachers in New South Wales have to have criminal record checks and qualification checks that are done by the Office of Children and Young People in New South Wales. They can apply to the institute to become fully registered or provisionally registered. The idea behind New South Wales was to give a professional voice to teachers, as opposed to an industrial voice. It is quite a complex set of arrangements in New South Wales, and that differs from somewhere like South Australia, which does have a registration process for teachers. They do criminal record checks and look at qualification checks.

For us in the ACT as a department we have always done that for the government sector. We have always done the criminal record checks. We always do the qualification checks before we employ people in the government sector. Our Catholic Education Office colleagues have done a similar process. Again, they are probably the two common elements that we do. But that is not the case in all jurisdictions.

THE CHAIR: What about independent schools?

Dr Bruniges: Independent schools are not subject to the same conditions, and that is a challenge for us about what we do in the ACT community to ensure that all our teachers have qualifications and, indeed, criminal record checks. That is an important point and that is part of the discussion and debate about whether or not we should have the same scheme for all sectors.

THE CHAIR: Everybody?

Dr Bruniges: Everybody. Indeed, at the national level, should we have the same processes nationally? That is part of the recent federal government's initiatives to look

at what is nationally consistent. We have Teaching Australia, the national body, which has been looking at what exists in each of the jurisdictions. The ministers for education and training have a task force looking at that, but to date no decisions have been made on bringing together a national framework for registration or accreditation of teachers.

MR GENTLEMAN: Have you had comment yet from the AEU on the registration project?

Dr Bruniges: We have indeed. The AEU have been closely involved in the consultation and very helpful in talking to members, as were the Independent Education Union. They have a view that it should be a separate registration body here in the ACT with particular functions, and we have included that in the consultation phase.

There are other things that cross all sectors. Teacher registration is one of those things, curriculum is another and ACT credentials for year 10 and year 12 is another. We are asking: should we invite discussion and debate across the community about all of those issues and seek feedback and consultation from the community?

THE CHAIR: When you say separate, do you mean separate in the ACT, as opposed to? Is that what you mean?

Dr Bruniges: Yes. At the moment, one of the recommendations that have come forward from the O'Connor part of the consultation was that we should establish a separate teacher registration body with particular functions. That, I guess, has led us to include that in the standards paper in general, to say, "Here is one element and view," and to seek broader consultation in the community about that.

THE CHAIR: What happens to teachers in New South Wales when they wish to come to the ACT? Is there an additional process that they need to go through?

Dr Bruniges: If they are coming to employment within the government sector, yes, we would undertake criminal record checks and qualification checks from the department's perspective. We would do that. What happens cross-border, we see developing at the moment mutual recognition, agreements about mutual recognition. If you are registered in one jurisdiction, then you have a memorandum of understanding or mutual recognition so that we would accept you into the ACT.

Because we currently do not accredit all registered teachers, teachers travelling from the ACT to other jurisdictions would be registered within that. There has been some debate about that. Queensland, for example, went through a process in the late nineties where they had two-year trained teachers teaching and had registered two-year trained teachers and other jurisdictions were not prepared to accept that. They wanted to upgrade to at least three years of training. The mutual recognition did not work as well.

Looking at today's operating context, our teachers are three and four-year trained—moving to four-year training, if anything—and there is more of a level playing field in how many years and what qualifications you need to be teachers, which has changed

in probably the last 15 years.

MR GENTLEMAN: I guess you have had comment, too, in regard to registration from the non-government school sector. What is their feeling?

Dr Bruniges: There is a great deal of support for further consultation around that notion. They are in agreement that there should be a process in place, and I guess the question is one of governance—whether you look at school standards all in one set or, indeed, you have several bodies that look after different components of registration, curriculum and data and information. That is the subject of our consultation phase that we have been going through.

THE CHAIR: Going back to the issue about the length of training, what about a person who has been, say, two-year trained or three-year trained in another jurisdiction? Is there any opportunity for those people to have recognition for prior learning in order to bring their qualifications up to a standard that might be required, say, of a four-year person?

Dr Bruniges: There has been over the last decade, and I am fairly certain that all our teachers hold three-year and four-year qualifications here in the ACT. That has been a requirement that we have had here in the government sector. But there have been numerous upgrade programs for teachers who want to seek further qualifications, and that is a matter for different universities and educational institutions. A lot of teachers who are three and four-year trained often go on to do a master's or a further degree or a different component as well. That is important for our profession, that teachers keep learning and upgrading, and there is all the professional learning that we do within the system as well.

THE CHAIR: I am thinking about the fact that we have an ageing population. I guess you are now saying that they are mostly three-year and four-year trained in any case. Would that include most of our older teachers as well or just the young ones?

Dr Bruniges: Most of our older teachers. You will find, particularly in the college sector, that there has always been a need to have a degree with a subject speciality—a science degree—and then they have done a diploma of teaching on top of that to get teaching qualifications. For primary teachers there was a general primary degree, which was normally three years in the days of colleges of advanced education. At that point many two-year trained teachers upgraded to three. I think there would be very few teachers who would be left across the country with just two years of qualification.

MR GENTLEMAN: I am interested in the first national test. Your earlier comment was: what do we do with the data? Have you started to think about that yet?

Dr Bruniges: We have. We have our own data storage here in the ACT. In the government sector we have worked with our colleagues in the independent and non-government sector to sign memos of understanding so that we can be efficient in the way we administer and look after that data, and have protocols around access to and use of the data. Our ACTAP testing in the ACT has always been done by all sectors. Indeed, that has been looked after by the department and then given to the other sectors.

With the first national test coming up in a couple of weeks time, we have been able to secure those memorandums of understanding with all independent schools and the Catholic sector, so that we act as a whole ACT sector in looking at the distribution of all the test materials and the collation of them back at the centre. We will establish marking centres so that teachers from all sectors participate in the marking, and in the writing component. So there is an enormous amount of goodwill and synergy between the sectors in doing that work.

The national test is quite an extensive undertaking. It is the first time that all years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will sit a common test in literacy and numeracy. In the past, each jurisdiction had individual tests and then they did an exercise where they calculated the national benchmark. So one of the determining factors is that we will have a national average for the first time. We will have directly comparable data, with respect to how we inform teaching and learning.

MR GENTLEMAN: I look forward to it.

THE CHAIR: So this national testing, right around Australia, will include all schools? It will include the independent schools, the Catholic schools and all the public schools. Is that right?

Dr Bruniges: That is correct. It has come from the states grants legislation of the previous federal government. It had as a requirement for the flow of recurrent funding participation in local testing and then the move to the national tests. So this will be the first national test and it does bring with it some challenges as well as some benefits in terms of being able to provide parents with transparent information on where their children sit in respect of not only the ACT cohort but the national cohort.

THE CHAIR: What do you see as the challenges?

Dr Bruniges: The challenges for us as a jurisdiction involve how we use that data, how we interrogate it to look at whether our intervention strategies on literacy and numeracy are working, making sure that we provide teachers with sufficient support to use that data, so that they understand that it is one form of evidence at one point in time on aspects of literacy and numeracy, but that it is also a very important litmus look at how the students are doing. Comparing that to other schools, the ACT and nationally is important.

The strength of it comes in making sure that it is linked to our new curriculum framework for all of our ACT schools. So you get the information, the children sit the test, and the big question for us is: what do you do next? You look at the strengths that are demonstrated by students: are there any areas that require further development or improvement to ensure that we keep our place on the national and international scene? That is a very important thing for us as an ACT education community. I think the challenges involve how we help teachers to use the data in a way that informs their teaching and learning practice in classrooms, how they can have conversations with students, parents and other teachers, and how they use that to think about the really good activities that will support student learning.

MR GENTLEMAN: What about resourcing for the national test?

Dr Bruniges: To this point we have always had the ACTAP testing, so it is just replaced by the national test. That is it, in a nutshell, even though the first one at a national level creates more logistical challenges in terms of the print runs and the logistics side of getting it distributed in jurisdictions in the next week. That is a particular national issue. From a local perspective, with the resourcing here, the current ACT government does resource both the government and non-government sector to sit the test. That is not the same in all jurisdictions, but here we will just replace our ACTAP with the national version.

THE CHAIR: In some of the more remote areas—not here—it will be difficult to get it all out. Does it have to be done on the same day?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, from 13 to 15 May. That will be the test period. That is for literacy and numeracy for all year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students. So there is a test schedule that we have devised nationally that students will sit. In the past there have been instances of fire or flood in different areas, and there have to be some local adjustments. Logistically, in some of the remote areas in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales, ensuring that it is in place is a significant issue.

THE CHAIR: Will you also get information about the breakdown of different types of populations within that testing that is done? I am thinking, for instance, of our Indigenous young people, and the schools that have numbers of Indigenous young people. Will you get that information as well?

Dr Bruniges: Every individual child will sit the test. In the ACT we have individual learning plans for each of our Indigenous students. So that data is incredibly important for us to identify particular strengths of groups of students and, indeed, to look at it to see if there is any pattern of areas that require further development. With respect to some of the issues, being able to look at a critical mass here in the ACT is important and forms part of that discussion paper that we have put out. This will ensure that we are able to look at the data.

The Minister for Education and Training needs to be able to receive advice on the government and non-government sector about the performance of groups of students such as Indigenous students. It might be a gender-based issue: you might want to look at the performance of girls on particular aspects of mathematics. We are able to interrogate that data in a way that helps to inform our programming and planning, not only at the classroom level but also as a system.

It is incredibly important to look at the intervention strategies that we have in place: how do we know they work? Are we seeing a difference in student outcomes? One of the particular strengths that we have looked at in terms of national assessment is making sure that years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are on a common scale. That means being able to look at a student in year 3, see where they are on the scale, and then in year 5 look at where they are and see how far they have moved. At the moment, we do not have that capacity. We can just look at year 3, year 3 and year 3 and compare the results of year 3 students coming in.

The national test does afford us a more valuable source of information so that we can track individual students, how much they are growing and whether or not we have plateaus or spikes. It gives us a window to look at our intervention strategies to see how we are making a difference. While that will be two years down the track, and you will not be able to do it in year 1 because that will give us new baseline data, it certainly gives us the capacity to monitor student progress over time on a common scale.

THE CHAIR: I am aware that some schools have different systems for when you start school and how they name it—what a year actually means in terms of a child’s chronological age. Is that going to make a difference to the data?

Dr Bruniges: It is always important for us to look at that. Each jurisdiction does have different rules around starting. There has been a long discussion and debate about a common school starting age and what we call it. Some call it reception and some call it kindergarten—and, indeed, with preschool and some of the early care coming into play, what that means. In terms of what students can do, I think in any year group there is always a range of student ages. Just because you are in year 3 it does not mean you are exactly eight. Students will be seven; students will be eight-point-whatever. So teachers need to take that into consideration. They look at the student’s chronological age and at their development and what they can achieve, and make sure they move every child forward, irrespective of how old they are.

Certainly, at the national level, some jurisdictions report year 3 eight-year-olds, nine-year-olds and seven-year-olds in their data, just to give them a window to see whether age makes a bigger difference or whether the classroom environment is different. That is something we could look at doing in the future in the ACT system.

THE CHAIR: What other areas would you like to explore with us about the standards and also about anything involving the challenges for us here in engaging in this process and in the national process that is happening at the same time?

Dr Bruniges: We are at a point in the ACT where we have the first curriculum framework that is across all sectors. We have a debate about teacher registration, and that is about all sectors. We have assessment, which is about all sectors. So having community consultation around how those bodies of standards—the teaching standards, the curriculum standards and the achievement standards—should be housed is a really important discussion and consultation to have with the ACT community. We have not been there to this point. We have not had a national assessment before. We have not had a curriculum framework before. Numerous things have been done about the quality of teaching. We know that the quality of teaching makes a difference to student learning. So do you put that into a notion of standards and deal with it under one body or do you distribute that a little bit and have it in a number of bodies or a number of locations?

With respect to trying to work through some of those issues, the registration of non-government schooling at the moment is carried out by the department, via a unit in the department. In other jurisdictions it is done independent of the government department. Again, that discussion about where that should be located is part of that paper. So it is really about the location of those functions. Why now? Simply because

we have not been in a position nationally or in the jurisdiction where all of those things have aligned in such a way. I think they are worthy of consultation with the community.

Some of the matters are very complex. We see the national curriculum coming, from a national point as well, and there is the matter of what that will mean for us. There is national assessment and national accreditation for teachers. Thinking through how we position our jurisdiction so that we lead and remain in our sought-after position across other jurisdictions is an incredibly important conversation both within the education sector and with the broader community.

I could talk about what is happening in a number of jurisdictions in each of those areas—they are all slightly different. With respect to what we have done, along with Cheryl O'Connor, in talking just about registration, we have a number of issue papers. I am happy to leave those with you.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that would be helpful.

Dr Bruniges: They canvass a lot of the interstate and interjurisdictional issues that have been discussed. As I said, we will work through the feedback that we received from the initial discussion paper in order to brief the minister and for him to make a decision about where he would like to go with that—whether there is broader consultation and community consultation. We hope to have that prepared in the next couple of weeks for his consideration. At the moment we are analysing those submissions that have come in and we are working through having a look at the implications.

THE CHAIR: Did you get a good response?

Dr Bruniges: We did. We heard from 20 different organisations, and many of those contained a number of representatives, from individual teachers as well as the AEU. The Catholic Education Commission had done their internal bit. There was only a small window for the initial discussion paper, to see whether or not people would be interested in extending that to broader consultation.

From my reading of each of those submissions, there was certainly interest in having a further conversation with the community about each of those aspects and about where we would want to be. I think that is a healthy conversation to have, so that people understand, get the information, have the discussion and debate each of those things. They are very important in the education sector. In some ways they cover both teaching and learning—the curriculum and the teaching profession, which is really the heart and soul of education. That is the way I describe it. It is important to think about the impacts of each of those. With our teachers, there is the new curriculum and the professional learning they have to go through on our new curriculum framework, making sure that we meet the quality standards. Teacher professional standards is a big issue.

Turning to the aspect of teacher professional standards in New South Wales, if you think about the continuum of jurisdictions, New South Wales probably has a fairly Rolls-Royce model, with their Institute of Teachers. They have developed over a

period of four years professional standards and levels of competence for teachers. It is quite an interesting model in that Institute of Teachers—registration and applying those models of competence. Teachers can apply to be rated under that model of competence. That is the professional side; it also has industrial implications. So the nexus between the professional voice, professional standards and industrial issues is quite complex. At the moment they are navigating that.

THE CHAIR: Are salaries tied to that?

Dr Bruniges: No, they are not at this point. But you can see that the professional voice of teachers is more highly qualified, and there is the issue of where that debate may go in the future.

MR GENTLEMAN: Do you see some opportunities for work value cases?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, where teachers have done extra work and gained extra qualifications. Many of our teachers have first aid certificates; they have a whole range of extra things that they do. So the New South Wales professional standards look at trying to get a hierarchy as to where you go. A beginning teacher may not have all of those things; they may focus just on classroom practice. Once they have that under their belt, they may choose to diversify in their practice and seek further qualifications in their science, their pedagogy and their practice. They may specialise in early childhood; they may change. They may go general, such as a primary teacher.

So it is a very diverse profession in some senses, when you think about preschool right through to year 12. There are decisions made by individual teachers at different times during their career to pursue different pathways and seek accreditation. It gives them flexibility and different career paths as well.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned several times the ACT's standing nationally and internationally. Is there disquiet at all amongst the profession, now we are becoming part of this national push, that there is some threat to our sort of position, I guess, in Australia as a leader? Do they feel some threat from that or that there may be some watering down of standards and things that would affect our standing eventually?

Dr Bruniges: Teachers in the ACT like to think that their core business is teaching and learning, and indeed they lead learning, and that means they achieve good results. In terms of our flexibility to act, we have many factors here that operate in our favour in the education sector—we are a small jurisdiction, we have a highly engaged community and a very articulate community—and all of those add to us being a lead jurisdiction in what we can do and how quickly we can do it; some of those advantages. I think teachers capitalise on that. They work very closely with their local community and their parent body.

We have our school boards as a particular structure in this jurisdiction. Having worked in others, I can say that having a school board is a huge advantage here for community engagement. Our Education Act is quite different from other education acts when you look across those. These give us some very strategic positioning with regard to the engagement of both our community and our teachers. Our teachers are very dedicated and do an enormous amount.

No matter what school community I travel into, there are volunteer parents and a huge amount of volunteers who support our school structures, and the extra things that teachers do every day to work with students. There is passion in our community for education and recognition of the high importance of education—and training; I should not limit it to school education, but the diversity of things we do across the broader education and training sector do indeed add to the advantages and things that we can capitalise on to ensure that we continue to lead both within Australia and internationally on those aspects.

THE CHAIR: So is there or will there be any kind of standard to oversee the involvement of volunteers in schools?

Dr Bruniges: That is an interesting question. Our volunteers here are wonderful, and the amount of volunteers that we have had. We have an officer at the moment in the department looking at volunteering and trying to quantify the amount of volunteering that goes on; it is enormous in each school. There are people who do reading, people who come and do the gardening, people who give support to school boards—an enormous amount of volunteering. So I am not sure whether an overarching standard would be very generic. I think each school kind of carves out its patch in community engagement but it is something we could have that discussion about because it is an important feature of our education sector here in the ACT. I have not worked anywhere else where it is as high, the support that we get from the community.

THE CHAIR: It would be interesting to look at other jurisdictions to see whether they have some particular standards, training programs or other management strategies in place to support and encourage the development of volunteers in schools, because they also may have an opportunity for some professional development to help maintain.

I recall some disquiet in some of the schools about the fact that two parents now may work and there could be a threat to the number of volunteers available, particularly in some of those critical areas that you have just suggested, supporting the board. Even though that is evening work mostly, if two parents are working they can be tired and not want to give up their evenings to go and sit on a board. Then, of course, you have reading programs, which are often critical for some of our young people. Would parents be available to come and work during the day with young people in schools?

I was wondering whether that might be an area of concern—that later down the track those really good numbers that you have now may drop off, and whether people other than parents, such as grandparents and the school community generally, can be encouraged or are being encouraged to be involved in their local school or the school of their grandchildren.

Dr Bruniges: That is a very good point and I will certainly pursue that and look at ways in which we can develop that very rich resource within our community. As you say, it is not just the parents; having grandparents come in and volunteer on a number of issues too is incredibly important.

THE CHAIR: Good morning, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Good morning, chair; my apologies for being late.

THE CHAIR: That is fine. I did explain already to Dr Bruniges. We have been talking about teacher registration, the standards and the discussion paper and where it has been going. Dr Bruniges has been outlining some of the positives for the whole of the teaching profession in the ACT and our education system here, as well as some of the challenges going forward with this particular discussion, and also the national discussion that is going on at the moment around curriculum, teacher registration and standards et cetera.

Is there anything else you would like to add at this stage?

Dr Bruniges: I think the only aspect is when we look at our curriculum and curriculum standards. The word “standards” rolls off the tongue very quickly, but what do we mean when we say that? We have, in our curriculum framework, linked our standards to what we expect students to know and be able to do at certain bands of schooling. We work cross-sectorally to achieve that, over a four-year period.

We have a representative on the new national curriculum board who will carry our ACT voice forward about the experiences that we have learned with our community, across all of our sectors, in developing a curriculum framework that is well received and teachers have an ownership in because they have had a voice in the development of that framework. We have used their knowledge base to inform that, and we will take that forward into the national work around the development of a national curriculum.

I think each jurisdiction will have a similar voice with their experiences in developing frameworks and syllabuses. That does vary across the country with the level of detail and syllabuses. Again, our colleagues in New South Wales have syllabus structures which are more specific in terms of their directions to teachers. Ours is a framework which allows teacher judgement to be exercised and the assessment of student need within the framework. So that will be a challenge for beyond 2010, once we have a national curriculum structure in place.

But I think we are well positioned; we are the first jurisdiction to integrate the national statements of learning that were produced two years ago nationally, and we are the first jurisdiction to implement those within our framework, so we are in good shape, ready to inform and indeed adjust our framework, if need be, beyond 2010, once those national decisions are made. So the national operating context in each of those areas we need to keep our eye on, to make sure that we position the ACT education sector across the areas I have spoken about—the teacher registration, the curriculum, the assessment, the registration of schools; all of those aspects—so that we remain at the forefront.

THE CHAIR: Going back to national testing: I did not ask you when the data will be available.

Dr Bruniges: The national data is due for report at the end of August, early September.

THE CHAIR: You might have mentioned that and I just—

Dr Bruniges: No, I had not. That was my oversight. The national test in each jurisdiction will be between the 13th and the 15th. There are the logistics of bringing that in. We will have our own ACT operations, as I have described before, with teachers from all sectors participating in the marking of the writing component. Once all the test papers are marked, we will then feed data nationally. The national scale will be developed and national averages calculated and then we will be able to report to parents. There will be individual reports for every parent of every child in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in every jurisdiction, in every aspect of literacy and numeracy that will be tested.

MR GENTLEMAN: Will the students be bringing that home or will you post it out?

Dr Bruniges: It varies in jurisdictions. In our jurisdictions we have normally sent it home. Some schools will have parent-teacher interviews and will share that information that way. If you look across the development of assessment, you will see that there have been different practices in different jurisdictions at different times. I know that New South Wales, when they first introduced it, used to post those to parents, but, as it has become more of the teaching and learning practice, it is treated as one piece of evidence, and a conversation point, for parents that sits alongside other evidence. In ours, we will do the same as we have always done, and that is provide it to the schools and the schools will set up interviews, and it normally goes home with the students, with a newsletter, letting parents know.

THE CHAIR: I am reflecting as a grandparent now. Recently one of my grandchildren had to take his report home. In Queensland, of course, they go into high school at year 8, and he has recently gone into a French immersion school, which is all a bit stressful, because it is not only high school but also a different way of learning. When he took his first report home, he was able to read it before he got home, which was highly stressful for him, because he had already made judgements about himself before he got home. I am reflecting on that, about the suitability; whether it is advisable that young people are able to read that material before they get home, especially if it is a long trip home on a bus.

Dr Bruniges: There is the sensitive nature of giving students feedback. We know that feedback direct to students about their performance is probably a really powerful way to do it and it has to be done sensitively. Teachers need to cope with that every day. In every group or every activity there is usually someone who does it very well and someone who does not do it very well, and how you manage the dynamics of individuals in classrooms to positively reinforce and keep it very positive all the time is a really important component.

One of the advantages of what will happen nationally is that every child will have a position on that scale and will be able to look at where they have moved to, irrespective of where they started. At the moment it is just year 3 to year 3, and we talk about up and down and what has happened to this year 3 compared to last year's, and trend data that is just cohort based. Once we start to track individual performance, you are able to say where a child is on the scale, what that means they

can typically do and then at another point in time—whether it be two years or a year later or whatever—where they have moved to and now what they can do. So you are starting to look at growth in student learning and that is something that we have not been able to do. It has always just been compared to others in the group.

THE CHAIR: Rather than their own.

Dr Bruniges: Yes. So I think we have a great opportunity now to do both. Parents need to know: how do they compare, where should they be and how far has my student grown? That is very important in looking at different rates of growth and indeed, at a systemic level, whether or not the intervention strategies that we have put in place to address literacy or numeracy strengths or weaknesses are having an impact. Where are they having an impact? If they are not, what can we do to address that in a different way? We have not had good measures in that sense, because nothing has been on a common scale prior to that.

THE CHAIR: Did you have any questions, Mr Pratt?

MR PRATT: No, not at this point.

THE CHAIR: When we get the *Hansard*, you might have some.

MR PRATT: It is a bit unfair because I had not heard the previous line of questioning and you have probably answered many of the questions that I would have asked, so I am prepared to—

THE CHAIR: Dr Bruniges, would you be willing to take some questions on notice from Mr Pratt once he has had a look at the *Hansard*?

MR PRATT: I won't burden you, I promise.

Dr Bruniges: I am happy to do that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. That is really generous of you. As there are no further questions, thank you very much.

Dr Bruniges: I am happy to leave some of that material that I brought today, if that is helpful to the standing committee.

THE CHAIR: That would be really helpful. Thank you, and good luck with it all. We will get the *Hansard* to you as soon as possible so that you can check through it, and we will get those questions to you as soon as we can.

The committee adjourned at 10.48 am.