



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2011-2012](#))

Members:

MS M PORTER (Chair)
MR S DOSZPOT (Deputy Chair)
MRS J JONES
MS Y BERRY

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2013

Secretary to the committee:
Mr A Snedden (Ph: 620 50199)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 2.04 pm.

Appearances:

Burch, Ms Joy, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
Service, Mr James, Chairman
Guy, Mr Gary, Chief Executive Officer

Education and Training Directorate

Joseph, Ms Diane, Director-General
Gniel, Mr Stephen, Executive Director, Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement
Hine, Mr Martin, Acting Director, Learning and Teaching Branch
Ellis, Ms Anne, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Teacher Quality Institute
Bray, Mr Rodney, Director, Schools Capital Works
Whybrow, Mr Mark, Executive Director, Corporate Services
Sharma, Ms Sushila, Director, Finance and Corporate Support
Huxley, Mr Mark, Chief Information Officer, Information and Knowledge Services
Goleby, Ms Ann, Director, Training and Tertiary Education
McAlister, Ms Coralie, Director, Human Resources
Stewart, Ms Tracy, Director, Planning and Performance

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to this public hearing of the education, training and youth affairs committee, minister, and your officials. Thank you very much for joining us. The Legislative Assembly has referred to the committee for examination and report a number of annual reports for 2011-12 and one calendar year report for 2011, and the committee is due to report to the Assembly on 16 May 2013. The committee has resolved that all questions on notice from members are to be lodged with the committee office within four business days of receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript of this hearing, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. I will read the rest of that, in relation to questions on notice, afterwards.

Today we will be dealing first with the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority and then we will examine the 2011-12 annual report of the education directorate. I should note that the committee had scheduled its hearing on the CIT 2011 annual report for today but has deferred that hearing until a date to be fixed, due to the fact that the CIT CEO is unavailable for today's hearing. I apologise, minister, for any miscommunication about that in relation to your availability and your wishes.

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair. I have just had a brief word with the secretary. My office was quite prepared to move forward with the committee hearings. I thought the team from CIT would have responded to all of your questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We will need to—

Ms Burch: We will try and find another day somewhere.

THE CHAIR: We will try and find another date. You are all familiar with the blue privilege card that is in front of you. I ask that you affirm that you understand that this is being recorded, and all the privilege implications.

Ms Burch: Yes, chair.

Mr Service: Yes, I so affirm, chair.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. Before we go to questions, minister, do you have any statement that you would like to make?

Ms Burch: Not on this. I might come back when we start on ETD proper, but as far as the skills committee goes, it is fine.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We have a visitor with us today, another member. I remind members that visiting members can certainly ask questions with the leave of the other committee members.

MS BERRY: How many workers did the authority assist through the existing worker and professional development training program in 2011?

Mr Service: In 2011 we provided funding for 12,072 workers.

MS BERRY: Was this an increase with respect to the application of people going through the—

Mr Service: It is a slight increase on the previous year.

MRS JONES: What was the average spend per trainee?

Mr Guy: Probably about \$175.

THE CHAIR: I want to ask about your support for employers who employ Indigenous employees.

Mr Service: As to what we do?

THE CHAIR: Indigenous, yes.

Ms Burch: As in what we do to support the ones undertaking the training or by the employer as well?

THE CHAIR: Yes, both.

Mr Service: I will get the chief executive to speak to that, but before he does that, we fund training for disadvantaged and Indigenous persons through the access and equity program. Since its inception—and I have said this to the committee, I think, on every occasion I have appeared—it still remains the most difficult program for us to grow numbers. We have had some success in past years. The support is provided largely through a couple of areas: firstly, through the registered training organisations and the group training companies; secondly, we

fund a number of field officers who not only look at the training that is being done but actually look at the individuals; and, thirdly, it is about the quantum of funds you can provide and the reasons you can find through that funding to keep them in the training. Mr Guy can perhaps talk about more direct experience, given that his previous role was, in fact, as the director in charge of one of the group training companies.

Ms Burch: If I may, just before you start, one of the groups in there is women in construction. I take the opportunity to plug the fact that, through the Community Services Directorate, we are building two disability houses under a women in construction program. I have spoken to the authority and a number of other people in this industry, and they are really looking forward to how they can harness that piece of work to build the profile for women in construction. So it may have a ripple effect in the outer annual reports on this.

THE CHAIR: Mr Guy, did you want to add anything?

Mr Guy: For the Indigenous section, we provide \$4,000 for any employer who takes on a first-year apprentice in the Indigenous area. \$2,000 is paid after the first three months and \$2,000 is paid after the 12-month period. We do not fund a lot, probably five to 10 a year in that particular area. We get our statistics from the Department of Education and Training and then we go and visit the individual employers, work out their funding for them and give them their funding.

MRS JONES: So with regard to those Indigenous trainees, are they sourced by market demand or do you actually do any active sourcing?

Mr Guy: We do not force them. We do not go out and recruit them at all. It is the individual companies that recruit them. We have the subsidy available for the employers and we advise all employers that subsidies are available for them if they take on an individual like that, as we do if someone were to take on a woman in a non-traditional trade.

MRS JONES: Is there a subsidy for taking on women trainees simply on the basis that they are women, or do they need to be Indigenous or disadvantaged women?

Mr Guy: We provide three subsidies in that particular area. One is for Indigenous, one is for a woman who is working in a non-traditional trade—we provide the same subsidy of \$4,000—and we provide subsidies also for people with disabilities. That is done on a case-by-case basis, depending on what the subsidies are that are required and depending on what the disability is.

MRS JONES: What is the definition of a “non-traditional trade”?

Mr Guy: Virtually all the trades in the construction area. We only fund people within the construction side of things.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall, do you have a question along these lines?

MR WALL: Yes, Madam Chair. You mentioned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were a group where you were experiencing challenges in growing the number of trainees that were involved in the program. What are some of the factors that are restricting the growth or restricting more employers from taking on Indigenous trainees?

Mr Guy: I think the employers are there; the employers are quite keen, especially the group training companies. But it is finding the individuals, I think, that is the major problem. That happens in some of the other trade areas too. There is a bit of a difficulty finding people to take on a particular trade.

MR WALL: Is it because individuals within the community are not aware of the opportunities that exist within the construction industry or is it a reluctance to take up the training places?

Mr Guy: No, I think they are aware of what is available. It is possibly a reluctance in their wanting to come forward, but the opportunities are there at all particular points in time.

MR WALL: Are there any programs being focused on trying to improve the number of Indigenous cadets?

Mr Guy: Over the last couple of years we have not funded anything, but previously we have funded programs at Boobialla, where we have been to them and provided them with funding to provide counsellors and talking to people about the industry and promote them.

MRS JONES: How did that replicate into numbers?

THE CHAIR: Could you direct your questions through me, please.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Burch: Can I add to that. When we have the Education and Training Directorate here, they will be able to speak about transition and pathways from colleges and high schools into formal training. As a subset of that, there is the additional work that the authority funds and trains as well.

MRS JONES: Madam Chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes, but only one more supp on this, because Mr Doszpot has not asked a substantive question yet.

MRS JONES: When you went out to those areas and had some discussion about the programs available, did you find a direct correlation to the numbers that were enrolled? Was it successful?

Mr Guy: We just provide information, and it is up to the group training companies to go and market and promote that they have vacancies available. We advise the group training companies that the funding is there and available for them. The training fund itself does not go out and market to everybody.

MRS JONES: So when those training companies, as you mentioned before, went out and marketed, was there an increase in the number of Indigenous trainees?

Mr Guy: I honestly could not tell you at this point in time. I would have to look at the statistics.

MRS JONES: Is there a mechanism for us to get information after this?

THE CHAIR: You can put a question on notice.

MRS JONES: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Mr Service and Mr Guy; good to see you again. It seems like only yesterday. With regard to the role of the authority and the promotion of OHS within the building and construction industry, given the increase in serious workplace accidents, including deaths on ACT work sites, what do you feel you need to do better to deliver on your stated objectives?

Mr Service: Can I provide the first part of that answer, Chair? The authority can only provide funding when the industry asks for funding. I think there is an important delineation. I have said a couple of times when I have appeared here that we respond and react and fund those programs and those demands of the industry. Those demands are sourced through substantive consultation, which is highlighted in the annual report.

Between 2010-11 and 2011-12, we had a 20 per cent increase in funding in the existing worker program. I think that is partly reflective of the degree of interest in and recognition of safety in the industry, although I would say that on many occasions the growth in interest in safety is often driven by a particular incident. If you go back to when the hangar collapsed at the airport, there was a huge growth in demand for height safety training. When we have seen unfortunate accidents on building sites, we have had increases in training for, say, scaffolding. All those things are really demand driven, if I could put it that way.

The report that has been produced talks about training needs. As I have said here on a couple of occasions, those training needs are very much sourced from the industry. It is not our role to create programs. From our point of view, I think we do everything we need to do. Our job is to provide financial readiness for those people to do training. We can react. We have a substantial capacity to react; we always have. I think one of the hallmarks of the authority is the way it manages its income and its ability to react immediately to needs in the industry.

MR DOSZPOT: My question was not a criticism of the role.

Mr Service: No, I did not take it that way at all.

MR DOSZPOT: The report you talk about—was that along the lines of gap analysis as to other things that can be done? I am trying to find out whether there is any, or should there be any, proactive act on your part to try and seek the information on behalf of the industry.

Mr Service: I think we do that proactively, whether the report was in existence or not. We do that every year and we do it almost on a weekly basis. Again, our job is to react to the demands of the industry. We undertake—and you will see it in the report—consultation with almost every interested group and association. On an annualised basis we also undertake with the training counsellor a training planning day where all of the individuals and businesses come along and talk about their training needs. I cannot recall one particular instance where

safety was not always virtually at the top of what we do. Certainly, our funding reflects that. I do, though, think it is a matter for the industry to determine where it can seek more funding. Our approach has been to meet those needs on an annualised basis.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Ms Burch: I think for this report there was close on 7½ thousand.

Mr Service: In OHS training, 7½ thousand people last year.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Did you have a substantive question, Mrs Jones?

MRS JONES: No.

THE CHAIR: I might just ask a quick question; I do not know whether it is appropriate or not—I am not quite sure whether this is under your bailiwick—but you talk about risks on pages 18 and 20. To what extent do you manage risk? Are you talking of internal risks within the organisation or are you talking about looking at risks to the actual industry itself—for example, should there be a change of government next time round and the things that are associated perhaps with that? Do you anticipate that, minister, and how is that managed?

Ms Burch: I think that the authority is underwritten in many ways by the contribution of the industry, so if there is a fluctuation within the industry then that will impact. I will let Mr Service go to the good contingency and the way they have internally positioned themselves to manage that risk. I would be worried if there was a downturn of employment in the construction industry with less demand for construction, whether it be commercial construction or residential construction. With any loss of jobs of 20,000 or 12,000 I think there is a serious risk of an impact across a whole range of areas, let alone the impact on the authority. It is something that I think we all should be mindful of.

Mr Service: The risk in this report, the written risk, if you like, is really about operations, fraud and other things. Our risk management is about having sufficient capacity in our funding to meet the needs of the industry. We do that in two ways. We say in this report that at various points in some of the cycles we have had less revenue. Since its inception, the authority has had a policy of maintaining what we call a substantial reserve account. In the event the industry were to go through a substantial downturn, firstly, we are able to fund our forward commitments for training and, secondly, what tends to happen when the industry is in a more difficult situation is the demand for training, in fact, rises. We have had a policy of making sure we have sufficient funds not only to run the business but to meet some of those demands. Our reserve at the moment would give us, on our forward commitments, the capacity to pay all of our bills were we not to get a dollar for nine months. So in that sense we are well resourced to manage the risk of a downturn.

THE CHAIR: Excuse my not understanding the equation, but why does the demand rise?

Mr Service: Because people who are out of work naturally look for opportunities to upskill and to train in new areas of the construction industry. The industry generally recovers at some point and they want to make themselves more attractive to new employment opportunities. So

we make a point of being able to fund those things as and when the demand falls to us.

MR DOSZPOT: I have got a couple of supplementary questions from my first one and your response regarding when need arose for, say, scaffolders. Were there sufficient training programs available? Were you able to meet all the additional training demands?

Mr Service: The answer to those questions is yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Similarly, with concreting, for instance, when issues have occurred there, have you always had sufficient training modules and staff available to do this?

Mr Service: Yes. Our staffing levels are quite modest. We only have three staff because ours is an administrative role in some senses and an inspectorial role. There has never been an instance when we have not had sufficient funds to fund programs. In fact, we quite often pre-fund. We might fund 700 places. For the white cards, blue cards or green cards that are used, we pre-fund; we pre-approve X number of applicants. The same thing happens with occupational health and safety and height safety. An organisation will say, “Will you commit to 20 places?” We will say, “Sure, we’ll commit to 20 places. If you put through 20, we’ll pay for 20. If you put through 14, we’ll pay for 14.” Our objective is to meet those demands and have funding available. So if they can get 20 then we put 20 through.

Ms Burch: It is important to note that this is in addition to other training that is already in place through CIT, RTOs and industry trainers. There are a whole range of other opportunities as well.

Mr Service: Absolutely.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for that. I have no more questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Service and Mr Guy. Thank you, minister, for making your officials available to us. The *Hansard* will be sent out to the minister and questions on notice. I will go through that for you at the end.

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: We will now examine the 2011-12 annual report of the education directorate. Minister Burch, would you like to make any opening remarks?

Ms Burch: If I may, just briefly.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps I should remind people about the blue card, because some of you were not here when I made that remark. Can I just have an affirmation that you understand the contents? Thank you very much.

Ms Burch: Thank you, Madam Chair, and the committee for the opportunity of being before the committee today for the 2011-12 annual reports for the Education and Training Directorate. At the outset, because it gets a bit quiet at the end, can I thank the director-general, the executive team and all the staff of Education and Training for the great work they have done in delivering this annual report and also the work that they do each and every year. Having a quality education is the bedrock on which a happy and successful life is built. Being

able to work with quality and educated people that make up the education sector in the ACT is a great opportunity that I relish as a fairly new Minister for Education and Training.

This annual report details the significant work undertaken by the directorate. The directorate has delivered on ambitious local and national reforms by placing students at the centre of all new and ongoing initiatives. The results speak for themselves, I believe, with ACT students being high performers in national and international assessments. In NAPLAN 2011 the ACT performed equal or better than all other jurisdictions in 18 of the 20 measures and we were the highest performing jurisdiction in reading for all levels, and have since the assessment began in 2008. A high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT have achieved above the national minimum standards in all test and year levels when compared with the national results.

In the territory vocational education and training play a very important role in our society, and the government is strongly committed to support ACT residents to gain qualifications and the skills they need to succeed. Once again, our results speak for themselves in this area. We remain the envy of the country, with high rates of employability from graduates as well as low withdrawal rates from apprenticeships.

The report also highlights continued effort to support both local and national reforms, including our commitment to the national partnership on skills reform. We have seen further apprentices and trainees coming into training in 2011 with an increase in numbers by 20 per cent. The vocational education and training sector has received a significant boost with funding provided for training 526 job seekers and over 1,400 existing workers through the productivity places.

I am proud of the achievements and excited about the program. Once again, I thank the committee. Going back to an earlier question, Mr Wall, I would like to explore further the work we have done with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Mr Wall and other members, including myself, will be very interested to do that. I might just ask a question first and foremost before we get started on the more specific things about the implementation of the Australian curriculum. I believe that we are one of the first cabs off the rank to implement that in the country. Reference is made to this on pages 9 and 13 and throughout the report. I was just wondering how we are progressing, what lessons we have learned and what benefits you see to that.

Ms Burch: The national curriculum is part of the federal Labor government's change and reform of our education sector. I am always pleased to be part of an ACT government that puts its hand up to be at the forefront of some of these reforms. I might ask Ms Joseph to go to some of that detail. It is an exciting time as we offer children, regardless of which school they go to and which state they live in, fair and equitable access to teaching and learning. The national curriculum, across its range of subjects as they are being introduced, is certainly a way of doing that.

Ms Joseph: The ACT certainly has led the way in implementing the curriculum. The way we have done it in the ACT, I think, also leads the country in that we have had a truly cross-sectoral approach. So the public schoolteachers, the Catholic schoolteachers and the independent schoolteachers have all been working together towards the same outcomes. We have been doing that since 2010, and we continue to make excellent progress.

All of our ACT K-10 schools are expected to be teaching, assessing and reporting phase 1 subjects by the end of 2013. Our phase 1 subjects are English, mathematics, science and history. At the same time they are preparing for the phase 2 subjects, which include the arts—that is, music, media, visual arts, drama and dance—languages—initially we will be working on Chinese and Italian—and geography. These are expected to be released fairly soon. So the ACT schools will begin engaging with phase 2 after the successes they have already had in phase 1.

We have a strong commitment, and that is supported by teachers working together, with resources to get teachers to come together to share their practice, share their experiences. That is also supported at the national level by the development of a number of curriculum items that are all online. So the Australian curriculum is online and really accessible to teachers. Teachers, for the first time nationally, as well as locally, are putting examples of best practice online so that teachers do not reinvent the wheel all the time. So we have those sorts of activities happening.

A number of our ACT teachers have been asked and supported by ACARA—the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority—for their practice, because it is perceived to be leading practice in the nation, particularly where the ACT is.

A lot of this work comes from the identification of lead schools in implementing the Australian curriculum. We have schools in the ACT who have put their hands up to say, “We want to lead in this. We want our teachers to be the first in developing, implementing, assessing the curriculum.” There has been quite a lot of work in that area.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Chair, I have a supplementary on the Australian curriculum.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Joseph, can you tell me where we stand as a jurisdiction with regard to the Australian curriculum? How many states have now fully adopted the Australian curriculum?

Ms Joseph: It is a progressive implementation. We were initially leading and first. All states have come on board in some way, shape or form. Some states are not assessing against achievement standards at this point in time. We are implementing the achievement standards—again, leading in different areas there. So there has been progress across the country. All jurisdictions have signed up to the Australian curriculum and there is a significant amount of progress nationally.

MR DOSZPOT: I understood there was some reluctance by a couple of the major states to fully subscribe to the Australian curriculum. Is that not the case?

Ms Joseph: All education ministers signed up to the Australian curriculum, I think it was well over 12 months ago, at a standing council meeting that we had here in Canberra. That is when the commitment was made fully to the Australian curriculum. However, the implementation time lines, I believe, for different jurisdictions are different.

MRS JONES: Can I ask a supplementary?

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I noted that, with the languages, Chinese and Italian have been chosen. Is that a national requirement or is that something that has been chosen here, and what was the rationale?

Ms Joseph: I will pass that on to my colleague Stephen Gniel.

Mr Gniel: What were the languages, Mrs Jones, that you spoke of?

MRS JONES: The languages that were mentioned in Diane's answer were Chinese and Italian.

Mr Gniel: Yes.

MRS JONES: Is that something that is required across all schools? What was the rationale for those languages? Is that a national decision or is it something we have taken locally?

Mr Gniel: The languages part of the Australian curriculum is part of the next phase of the curriculum. At the moment we have the main areas of the curriculum, which are maths, science, English and history, as you know. The development of those languages for the national curriculum in languages is being developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. The curriculum areas you have mentioned are the national curriculum areas that they will be developing curriculum for, which is different from our current languages, which people can choose at a school site to implement. As those come out—they are not out yet—and as those documents are completed from the Australian curriculum aspect, that is where we will need to also look at how we implement those across our schools.

MRS JONES: So Chinese and Italian?

Mr Gniel: Chinese and Italian are specific languages. There was a lot of press around that recently, as you know. That was more to do with the Asian white paper in particular. So those areas are part of the Australian curriculum and what is being developed. There are also options for our schools right now.

MRS JONES: Will they be dictated or is that just a part of the—

Mr Gniel: Not dictated as such. There will be curriculum in each of those specific languages, which is different, I guess, if I can relate it to maths, where there is a maths curriculum. With languages, of course, it depends which language you are talking about. You cannot just have an overarching languages document, so they are choosing which languages to provide that full curriculum for, if that answers that question.

MRS JONES: I am wondering about options.

Ms Burch: Mrs Jones, your question is: because there is a curriculum developed, does that mean every school across a state has to have Italian or Chinese? No, it is just that they are developing the curriculum around it. At the most recent education ministers council, language

was raised again. People understand and know that certain communities have a prevalence of language within that community cohort. Ministers rightly wanted to be very clear that they could respond to their community need. But the curriculum development does not preclude or exclude having relevant language for a high level of Asian community.

Ms Joseph: When we are talking about the Australian curriculum, it is basically a guiding framework for schools. So whilst it will articulate outcomes, it will not articulate the exact lesson plans, I suppose, for individual subjects. As with English and maths, languages will be the same—what is actually taught in the classroom is basically up to the school based on the policies within the jurisdiction.

MRS JONES: But there is some dictation for a certain number of hours, isn't there, in certain subjects?

Ms Joseph: There are guidelines for that, but it is not mandated. There is nothing mandated in that regard. We have our own local policies in those areas.

Mr Hine: I am currently the acting director of the learning and teaching branch of the ETD. In the ACT we cover four European and four Asian languages, and I assume that is probably pretty common nationally. That is to recognise the two major areas of importance to Australia, obviously. My understanding is that with respect to the choice of one Asian and one European language, it is a huge job, and they are very aware of that. They are aware also that each of the languages, particularly the Chinese, is written at three levels: for beginners—those who have not learnt any Chinese before—an intermediate level for those where it is spoken at home but it is not their first language, and also first language speakers. ACARA are very conscious of the scope of the work and they are phasing it in on a needs basis.

MS BERRY: I actually have a question which connects to the curriculum and giving teachers and educators the opportunity to develop and have their professional development looked after. The Teacher Quality Institute has been up and running for a while now. How many educators have been registered through the TQI and what is it doing to promote ongoing professional development?

Ms Burch: The TQI has been up for a couple of years now, and I think it really has established itself as a critical institution for supporting teachers. One of the hallmarks and planks of a good education system is support of ongoing development of our teachers to have quality learning and quality teaching, and the institute is a key instrument in that.

Ms Ellis: We currently have 7,931 teachers registered with the institute. At this very moment we have 7,798 renewing their registration. The key role of the institute, as well as the professional regulatory framework, is professional standards and teacher quality. A good deal of our work has been to work with the profession around how we recognise the importance of ongoing professional development and learning. A really important thing for the ACT is that we have actually led a number of national pilots around the importance of professional standards and how that can actually assist schools and teachers to increase teacher quality and the recognition of the profession. This work is going to be noted at a ministerial-principal conversation national group in the next couple of weeks around how we integrate the importance of professional development for teachers.

At the moment we are working right across the career span of beginning teachers, teachers at

university before they come into schools and experienced teachers around promoting the profession. Professional learning, professional development, is key and it needs to reflect the needs of employers and the schools. What we need to do, I suppose, with the teachers is get it so that they recognise it as part of their being a professional. In fact, today we have got a group of teachers from across all sectors working at TQI around the importance of professional learning and how that can assist beginning teachers who are coming in and how it also can assist the experienced teachers who work with them.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I just ask a supplementary on that? By way of clarification, the number of teachers who are registered?

Ms Ellis: 7,931.

MR DOSZPOT: Are they all active teachers?

Ms Ellis: Because we deal with the professional regulatory framework, it is about people having approval to be working as teachers. We are not the employer, obviously. Some teachers will not be currently working, but they must have that standard approval before they do.

MR DOSZPOT: So teachers in retirement can be on this list?

Ms Ellis: Absolutely. Teachers can continue the registration that they have had while they are in work. If they choose to go away and do not want to maintain the registration, they can then come back and apply when they have had a period of time away. It includes people currently in the workforce and also people who hope to be in the workforce.

MR DOSZPOT: Of the teachers currently in the workforce, have we got all of them registered now?

Ms Ellis: Absolutely.

Ms Burch: It is a requirement. To be in front of the class, they have to be registered.

Ms Ellis: Yes. We have progressively brought in registration in terms of working with the people in 2011 who were currently working. Now we are in a position where anyone who wishes to work in the ACT must have approval through professional registration before they can do so.

MR DOSZPOT: Just one more supplementary on this: you mentioned a number. In terms of the number of teachers that are in there as qualified under the act, currently I think for the first two years their membership is paid by the government?

Ms Ellis: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: And from the third year they pay for it themselves.

Ms Burch: That is this year, isn't it?

Ms Ellis: That is this year. That is the renewal process.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any discussion with the Education Union about extending that free period?

Ms Ellis: The Education Union has been part of all of the development of TQI. Both in the interim board and the board they were aware that the government's arrangements were that the fee would be covered by a government allocation for the first two years. They are fully supportive of the fact that teachers are now paying. I met with both unions last week as we pressed "send" on the email to all the teachers. They are well aware that the fee for teachers in terms of the \$100 is in full parity with New South Wales. It is tax deductible. In terms of other professions, it is actually quite a low professional registration fee.

Ms Burch: As a nurse, I remember being registered for a number of years out of the workforce. A lot of professions do it as part of their standards.

MR DOSZPOT: On page 54, under "ACT Safe schools Taskforce", it says that a key achievement of the task force includes strengthening links with ACT Policing, advising of the nature of school safety—

THE CHAIR: It is page 55, actually.

MR DOSZPOT: I apologise; it is page 55, the third paragraph:

Key achievements of the Taskforce included strengthening links with ACT Policing, advising on the nature of school safety audits and reviewing policies that provide guidance and direction to schools in promoting safe school environments.

We have had a number of issues brought to our attention by Florey Primary School. Concern has been raised by parents and teachers regarding the children's crossing on Ratcliffe Crescent, Florey. The issue is one of speeding traffic. Notwithstanding police patrols and 40-kilometre-zone signage, the school community has asked for speed humps and/or pedestrian-activated traffic lights. There has been a lot of discussion and a lot of meetings. Parents, carers, teachers and the Florey community have had the safety issues raised with a number of people within DET, as I understand it. While this is an issue, what is the department's stance on that particular problem at the moment?

Ms Burch: I think there is a broad question about what we do around school safety with traffic control. There are probably different solutions and different elements of concern to different members of the community. I am not quite sure whether it is Rodney Bray or Diane Joseph who can speak on Florey school.

Mr Bray: I am not particularly familiar with the details of the Florey school, but, in principle, our formal responsibility ends at the boundary of our land in terms of our traffic management. But when issues occur on the adjoining streets or relate to access into the school, we usually represent the school in discussions with Territory and Municipal Services on trying to work through issues and solutions to do with that. I cannot comment specifically about Florey but I can take the specific question on notice and get back to you about the school and what is going on.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. My concern comes up in similar cross-jurisdictional issues. This has

occurred quite a number of times over the last few years in disability and education, and in this instance it involves education and TAMS. I will quote a paragraph from what the parents are saying:

A number of complaints have been made to the police about incidents but it has got to a point where there is no more that police can do. We have also had TAMS officials visit and be stationed on the street monitoring the traffic and, where applicable, advising motorists to move on from illegal parking and stopping. In the past six months there would be no less than 10 incidents, near misses, at the children's crossing. We are deeply concerned that it is only a matter of time before accidents occur.

This letter is dated 7 November.

Ms Burch: Mr Doszpot, I have just checked with my office, and we are not aware that it has come to my office. I will check again. From what I have heard from Mr Bray, it has not come directly to us or is on the radar for education. We will take it on notice and we will go back and check. I am not taking away any of the concerns there, but it is about making sure that we work with TAMS, with police and with the school community about identifying what the concerns are and what the solutions are. It could be speed humps, it could be a change of structure of the roads. But it could, perhaps in some way, also sit within the school leadership around behaviour and how they manage and educate the families about the importance of school safety.

I am certainly not sheeting the blame home to the school community but I think it is a whole-system approach. What can we do within the school community and how do we work with TAMS or with police? Diane Joseph probably has more experience than my three months as minister to respond to this.

Ms Joseph: The safe schools task force is a very good example of how we try to bring all the players together. Student safety is paramount for all schools and all communities. The safe schools task force is about working out how we can do things better—whether that is about an incident in a school, an incident in the community, an incident out the front of the school with traffic, people and so forth.

Again, the safe schools task force involves public school principals, Catholic Education Office personnel, independent school representatives, the police, the Youth Coalition, P&C and AEU. So there are a number of people around the table, together with our experts in security and incident management. So we try to bring it all together in that way.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Joseph, I do understand that. To give credit where credit is due, I think the safe schools task force is excellent and great. But I think we have to get beyond the rhetoric and look at what is happening. This is a situation that is current, active. I am surprised the minister is not aware of it. This was made available to all of the members for Ginninderra back in November last year. This is not—

Ms Burch: Well, if—

MR DOSZPOT: If I can just finish, this is not an issue that has just cropped up. This has been on the radar—excuse the pun—and a problem there for the last six months prior to 7 November. The community have talked to the police, they have talked with TAMS. I am surprised that DET is not aware of it. They are the things that I would like to make a point on.

If you cannot give me answers at the moment, I understand that. But I would like you to take it on board and give us a report on this.

Ms Burch: Mr Doszpot, again, my office is not aware of it, as I have said, but we will go to the November mail. ETD has indicated that—you have found something there?

Mr Bray: I have a record here to say that we have completed some minor works at Florey Primary School, but usually those works are around line marking, minor changes, and not big changes. But something has been done at Florey school over the last six months.

Ms Burch: I am quite happy to go away with Ms Joseph and have a look at it. On principle, everything that Ms Joseph has said happens within the task force. Also, to me, it is about when these things do come to our direct attention we do not wait for a task force; we get on and have a conversation with the relevant agencies and work with the school community about what the solution is. The solution could take internal modifications, it could mean that external—by “external” I mean outside the school gate—modifications are required. So I am quite happy to take it, and I will certainly go back and check whether we have seen that, because it does not come to mind, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: I will finish on this point: this was brought to our attention in October. There were 10 incidents and near misses. I just raise the urgency of the issue and leave it at that.

Ms Burch: Again, Mr Doszpot, I am not aware of it; this is the first time it has been brought to my attention in my memory.

THE CHAIR: I am aware of the particular school that Mr Doszpot has mentioned. I wrote to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, as I presumed that it was a matter for that minister. I did not write to you, Minister Burch.

Ms Burch: Okay.

MRS JONES: Going to the financial statements in the report, on page 266 I note that the actual financial leases for non-current assets for 2010-11 came to \$103,000, and the actual for 2011-12 was \$27,000. What was the reason for this large decrease?

Mr Whybrow: I will pass that on to Ms Sushila Sharma, who is the CFO. My initial look at this is that there has been a move in relation to IT upgrades in schools. We are moving to schools not buying their own upgrades of individual pieces of equipment and moving to the one supplier, being InTACT. That is my initial understanding but I should pass over to the expert, who can provide you with the detail.

Ms Sharma: I would like to go back to the question. What page is it on?

MRS JONES: Page 266, under “Non-current liabilities, finance leases”, half-way down.

Ms Sharma: So the finance lease—

MRS JONES: So the non-current—

Ms Sharma: Your question is around why it has gone down or why it is—

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Sharma: The reason for the decline in finance leases is that every year there is a finance lease there is a commitment. So there have been repayments made every year. For that reason the liability component is declining.

Mr Whybrow: Ms Sharma, can I just confirm my answer, that the majority of those would relate to IT equipment in schools and schools' finance leases that are being leased, being replaced through operating leases, through our InTACT provider?

Ms Sharma: It is mainly IT leases in schools.

MRS JONES: Which is less expensive?

Mr Whybrow: Then you get the whole-of-government purchasing power versus individual schools making purchases outside that.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I ask a supplementary on that? In terms of the number of PCs or items that were delivered under that, can you give us an indication of the number that were budgeted for and the number that were purchased?

Mr Whybrow: Mr Mark Huxley from ICT may be able to help you with that.

Mr Huxley: Mr Doszpot, I was in transit for the majority of the question and I did not make it out.

MR DOSZPOT: It is a supplementary on the decrease in the number of leases. Can you give us an indication of the number of actual items of equipment that were budgeted for in that lease and the actual number that were purchased in that period?

Mr Huxley: Our ICT purchasing happens from a range of different funding sources, both commonwealth and local government, and some school funding as well. I do not have the exact numbers in relation to those exact figures in regard to leasing. But some of the general figures that we have at the moment are that we have an estimated 16,847 devices currently across the fleet in ACT schools.

MR DOSZPOT: If you have a number of leases, surely those leases have a dollar value attached to them.

Mr Huxley: I do not have the breakdown of those figures with me currently, but I am happy to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Okay, take that one on notice.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary to that question. Is this a budgeted figure for this line item or is this an unexpected decrease?

Ms Sharma: With respect to the line item in relation to finance leases, these are minor ICT

equipment purchases for the schools. So it can be a photocopier or any other minor thing. However, the teacher PCs are purchased through InTACT, which is through the service level agreement, and that amount is budgeted in the operating statement of the directorate's financial statements.

MRS JONES: So in the budget for 2012-13 is that expected to go down again?

Ms Sharma: In the budget for 2012-13, it depends upon the schools. It is in a similar range—around \$50,000 to \$100,000. So it may go down or it may go up. But it will be immaterial. Any changes will be immaterial.

Mr Whybrow: Can I help to clarify this in the context of the ICT component? I refer you to page 296, which gives the detailed explanation of that note. We are talking about, as Ms Sharma said, small components of finance leases. Those finance leases are undertaken within school environments. There has been a change over recent years in moving away from, as I was saying, locally entering into finance leases to moving into an operating lease through the whole-of-government provider, which is InTACT.

If you are looking at numbers of \$100,000 in total—and Mr Huxley talked about the number of PCs being in the order of 18,000—the real issue here is around IT provided in schools being actually through that operating requirement. So the individual component of the finance lease has no real material impact on the actual provision of service. It is a choice of mode between operating leases and finance leases. From the directorate's point of view, we have operating leases. InTACT themselves may have different arrangements that we are not aware of. They might have finance leases or operating leases with their provider, but we work through that Shared Services provider through an operating lease. I hope that clarifies it because I suspect the question we have taken on notice will not answer the intent of your question.

MRS JONES: If Mr Doszpot is interested in that number, I would be happy for that to be provided.

Mr Whybrow: Okay.

THE CHAIR: While we are on the subject of the way the budget is managed, it is my understanding, therefore, that there are some shared items, such as ICT, for instance. Are cleaning contracts another shared area? I imagine there are other shared areas across the whole of the system, but there is also self-management. The report talks about strengthening school capacity, which has been happening for quite some time within the system, and in 2011, I believe, the empowering of ACT schools being initiated. This is to empower local schools around the management of their budgets et cetera, I would imagine. How is that going across the system? Could I have a general kind of estimation about that.

Ms Burch: It was introduced, and it dovetails very nicely into school improvement where we are looking at a quality workplace and autonomy across the school system. I had a visit out your way, chair, to Hawker Primary School, just recently. I was talking to the principal there, who reflected on the benefits of having that autonomy around creating the environment that she thought was best for her community and her students, and also giving her the flexibility to move quite quickly in some circumstances. For that principal, the hiring of the teachers and utilising your resources to meet the needs locally were certainly what she considered to

be great assets and benefits. Diane Joseph might want to talk in broad terms on policy.

Ms Joseph: The underlying principle to empowerment is greater principal or school-based decision making and responsibility backed by system support. Where it makes sense for the system to take on responsibilities, we do that. I think the three examples we have talked about so far today are centralisation of ICT system support—so having one schools net, one IT environment for our schools; one network for our schools rather than 86 individual networks. That is one thing that we have done. Cleaning contracts is another example. Rather than each individual school managing their own cleaning contracts and doing all the procurement, we do it on their behalf. That is one of the concepts. Also in our repairs and maintenance area, for instance, it makes sense in some instances for schools to manage directly the resources and, therefore, the contracts regarding those resources. Particularly where we have buying power and efficiencies, it makes sense for some repairs and maintenance to be managed centrally. So there are those areas.

The other part that Minister Burch just started talking about is the resources that we give to schools. Empowerment primarily is not about the resources going in. It is about, given the resources that schools have, what are the best ways of using those resources to get the best outcomes? Given the resources that schools have got, what are the decisions a principal can make and how does the system best support those decisions?

We acknowledge that primarily about 90 per cent of resources that are going into schools, if not more, are around teacher resources—dollars for teachers, basically. Again, the most effective use of those resources is to get the quality teachers into those positions. The whole empowerment focus really is strongly on how we get the right people in the right places doing the right work with the right support. The HR reforms that we have undertaken so that schools can advertise positions and run selection panels at the school level to make sure they are getting the best teachers possible in those positions are the focus of our empowerment.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the decisions that the principal makes about those resources—who does that principal consult within the school community to come to those decisions? Is it the senior executive teachers within his or her school? Is it the school board? Is it both of those and then it goes back to the directorate itself—to you, Ms Joseph?

Ms Burch: It would be all of the above, Ms Porter. It is about a strong executive, having a clear vision and strategy about how that school's and that school community's resources should be deployed, because each school is unique, not only in terms of numbers of students but community cohort in each school as well. It is certainly a conversation within the executive and their vision. That is facilitated and enhanced through a conversation with the community itself—the mums and dads that get up every morning and put the shorts on their sons and the uniform on their daughters and send them off to school. It is not a decision that happens in isolation from the school community. I think each school has a very clear plan about expectation. If you go to the ETD website, you can go to individual schools and you can find the narrative: what are the aspirations, views and desires of that school community? The internal autonomy about the use of their internal resources is certainly part of that larger narrative, in partnership, clearly, with some nuts and bolts that need to come back for the directorate as well.

MRS JONES: On the balance sheet, going to page 266 again, I note that the non-current liability for a make good provision of \$57,000 was not budgeted for. What is that provision

for specifically?

Ms Sharma: If I refer to page—

MRS JONES: I am sorry; I am struggling to hear. I am a bit deaf, I think. It is my children; they are very loud.

Ms Burch: They do that to you, Mrs Jones.

Ms Sharma: I refer to note 31, which is on page 297. It explains in a bit more detail the make good provision. This mainly relates to the lease improvements at 220 Northbourne Avenue. The tenancy requirement is that if we have to vacate that premises we have to make it into the condition as it was before. The cost is around the liabilities, around \$57,000, at the end of the reporting period.

MRS JONES: I note that the same figure appeared in the 2011-12 financial statements, which was also not budgeted for. Why was it not budgeted for into this next year, given that it was a recurring—

Ms Sharma: At the time of the preparation of the budget and the time the audited outcome was finalised—the budget was prepared before the audited outcome was known, so that was how it impacted in the budget process.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

Ms Sharma: It will be updated for the 2013 budget process.

MRS JONES: Okay.

MS BERRY: Given the focus on ensuring that there are qualified staff working in preschools and early childhood centres, what is the directorate doing to tackle making sure that there are enough qualified staff to deliver programs in preschools and early childhood centres?

Ms Burch: Thank you, Ms Berry, for that question. Early education services before preschool has recently moved from the Community Services Directorate to Education and Training. I will let Stephen Gniel talk about preschool, but certainly we have done a lot of work in the early education environment in supporting the workforce. It is one thing to continue to invest, and it is a good outcome to have more places in early education and care—we have effectively doubled it over the last decade—but we need to have that workforce in there as well. As part of that, last year we started a scholarship program to allow and support, I think, 80-plus workers to come through and be supported to attain a certificate III. That is about encouraging people who are existing in the workforce that may not have cert III level training, formal training, to be supported. It is also to encourage people from disadvantaged backgrounds to come in. Those scholarships have been a significant success and have made a real difference to that.

Last year, through the children's services network, we released a recruitment campaign. There have been a number of ads run on TV. That was part and parcel of working with the sector. What we did as a government was to put some seed funding into a pool—into a bucket, so to speak—for the promotion of that recruitment campaign. It was so well regarded and it

was such a clear partnership that a number of the other providers put in. At the end of the day, we were able to buy quite a significant bit of recruitment and advertising. Attached to that, particularly to ETD now, is the ongoing professional development for this workforce.

If I can I will talk about preschools. Was it last year or the year before that we put about 100-plus preschool teachers through certificate III? Perhaps Mr Gniel can talk on that.

Mr Gniel: As the minister was saying, it is also in the preschool sector where we are looking at this improvement from a national perspective through the national quality framework and national quality standards. One aspect of that that you have raised, Ms Berry, is around the qualifications required for people in those centres. This is more broadly about the improvement within early childhood education that we are looking for across the country. The ACT has made a strong commitment to making sure that we are part of the improved qualifications element, as well as other elements of the national quality framework. This has been a partnership, really, with the Community Services Directorate on how we do that, because we have had the services in different areas. As Minister Burch mentioned, we have now moved some of that work into Education and Training so we can build on that already strong partnership with them.

Our preschools come under the national quality framework because of the age of the children; they are the year before school. Therefore, they need the qualifications that are part of that requirement in terms of the standards. We have known about this for quite a while. Also within the quality framework and the standard regulation there is recognition that we would need to transition to having all of those people skilled and qualified in delivering that service.

I just want to emphasise that this is about improving the quality of service; it is not just about people getting a ticket. The work that we have been doing is to make sure that it is a priority for us in terms of expenditure on professional learning for people in that environment so that we are ensuring that people who are working with those really young kids—which we know makes the biggest difference for their lives—are appropriately qualified.

There have been a number of scholarships awarded for teachers in that area and also our support assistants that work in there. In our preschools, as you would all be aware, there is a qualified teacher, plus a support assistant, in there. Under the new standards, we are moving towards both having those early childhood qualifications. That has been the connection between Community Services and us. The qualifications we are after are the same as we want in childcare situations as well.

Ms Burch: I think Ann Goleby can talk to some of the investment. A respected and regarded workforce needs to be continually invested in. That is what we understand as well.

Ms Goleby: There are a number of platforms that people can access to take on the certificate III and the higher level qualifications in children's services. At the certificate III level we have a significant number of school-based apprentices beginning that pathway whilst at school and then moving on to a traineeship post school. That is funded under the user choice system in the apprenticeship system. There is an additional pathway. We had a significant number of people take a certificate III, both existing workers and job seekers, in the productivity places program. That program ran from 2009 until 2012, but we still have some people training in that program. Certainly the certificate III was an area of choice there. The other program is the TAFE fee waiver initiative under which the students studying at CIT in

the diploma and advanced diploma in the various qualifications in the children's services area have their fees waived.

Ms Burch: There is significant investment in supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to come into this area as well, just going back to your earlier question, Mr Wall.

Ms Goleby: Certainly, minister. I did not mention priority support, but I think where the minister is heading there is in respect of our priority support program—that is, the program that is designed for people who have actually had barriers to their success in the past, so they tend to have a very low level of previous education and many of them have poor experiences that give them a lack of confidence. So our priority support program is that first rung. Whilst Stephen outlined that we need people at not only certificate III but the advanced diploma level, we also need programs to get people onto the first rung. That is something that should be really focused on as an achievement rather than saying, “Well, they have to have the full certificate III for it to be an achievement.”

In that program there is the development of skills in literacy, numeracy, language, confidence building et cetera. A number of very successful programs, in particular for Indigenous people, have included competencies from community services training package areas—working with other people, working with clients, working with small groups, working in the community. There is success there, linked with the development of their core skills in language, literacy and numeracy and getting back into study and growing their confidence. They have actually already got a competency which is then transferable across as they start to take on a certificate III in children's services later on.

Mr Gniel: We are talking about, as I said, two types of educators there. Ms Goleby has talked about one stream of that as well. With the teachers, in particular, you would be aware that there is \$1.25 million that goes into teacher professional learning on a yearly basis as part of their agreement. There have been targeted scholarships in terms of early childhood educators—already teachers—and looking at additional qualifications, such as early childhood, masters programs, that are selected by those professionals about how to improve their ability to deliver that quality service.

MS BERRY: I know that having a quality workforce is really important for parents and for children. What is also important is the number of childcare places that are available for parents. What is the government doing to ensure that there are enough childcare places?

Ms Burch: This is where I could almost wax lyrical on the significant investment that we have put in to ensure there are increasing numbers of childcare places. I think it is evident from all the work that you see and just by the sheer numbers. Currently, there are over 8,800 centre-based places. That is a significant increase. In the last two months 200 places have come online. One of those would be Franklin Early Childhood School, and then other centres around the inner city area have come on.

Over the last couple of years we have committed to bricks and mortar, to building services, to building centres, and also working with the private sector, so to speak, and having some targeted land sales. A number of those have been sold. A handful of blocks of land have been sold for the purpose of preschool and long day care. We have spent significant money—I think it is \$9 million-plus—on doing some refurbishment of existing services that has led to

an increase. For example, Baringa had some pressure points in the under twos, so we invested there and they were able to grow their places. My memory could be wrong but it is in the mid 20s—certainly an increase.

With the \$9 million investment in refurbishment of centres, certainly the focus was on targeting those under two, because families have come to me and said that is probably the pressure point—the under twos. We believe there has been significant financial investment. Franklin Early Childhood School—collectively, going up to year 2—is a \$42 million budget line. I am proud to say that we came in under budget on that and on time, so that is quite exciting.

With childcare costs and childcare places, we know that we work in partnership with providers. About 70 per cent of our providers are community-based providers, so we work in partnership with those. Also quite clearly we work with the non-community sector to make sure that the scholarships and the other investments that we put in place are open to their workforce.

THE CHAIR: You had a supplementary, Mrs Jones?

MRS JONES: Yes. Given the success of programs in early intervention with autism, does the directorate have any plans to establish training for early childhood in the area of autism or particular services in that area?

Ms Burch: To provide training to the workforce—

MRS JONES: For early intervention.

Ms Burch: There is early intervention within a therapy-based program, which would sit with the Community Services Directorate. There is early intervention within certain learning support units within our school system, and there are certainly a number of autism units. I know that my local school at Gowrie has a number of units, and they do a fantastic job with kids with learning needs. I am quite happy to go to—

MRS JONES: In that early intervention, the very early years.

Ms Burch: With early intervention units.

Mr Gniel: We have a number of services which children with autism can attend in the early childhood areas. As you would be aware, there are different needs for those children. I think I spoke last year about this as well. The autism diagnosis does not necessarily mean that they all need the same things. So our response, as you would be aware, Mrs Jones, depends on what the needs are, the adjustments required. So we do have a number of different programs depending on the needs of those kids. That also flows through into our school environment, where we have an integration support program for children where their parents have decided that they would like them in mainstream settings but with support to make those adjustments for those children.

We have units based in those schools—learning support units. We also have learning support units that are specifically dedicated to students with autism. As well as that, we have our special schools, of course. So there are a number of options for those parents, depending on

the needs of their children.

In terms of the training that you were talking about, that is an ongoing process for the teachers that are in those particular units or in those schools, a number of whom are very well qualified, if I can put it that way, to work with those children every day and do a fantastic job in our schools. With others it is around Ms Goleby's comments around the training available for assistants that work in that space as well. So there is a lot of opportunity for people to do specific training around those areas, and that is something that we support through building the capacity of all of our staff through school-based decisions that we have talked about and also at the directorate level.

MRS JONES: What about specific numbers of places? Can you give any specifics?

Mr Gniel: Sorry, the exact training details or the number of—

MRS JONES: Places that you have referred to for children.

Mr Gniel: So the numbers of kids that are in each of the different ones? It is a long list. I can get that list for you, if you would like, around the census of where those kids are attending.

MRS JONES: That would be great.

Mr Gniel: That is probably easier than reading it out.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, do you have a supplementary on this?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes. In terms of early childhood teachers, are they required to be available to teach kindergarten and possibly year 1?

Mr Gniel: Are the people that have early childhood qualifications required—

MR DOSZPOT: With them being integrated with primary schools, is there an onus on them to actually be placed into teaching kindergarten?

Mr Gniel: That would be a decision that they would make at the school site with the principal. As you said, the preschools are amalgamated with primary schools, so part of the local decision is about the best use of all of those resources and the skills of teachers. Often in schools, if I give an example, Mr Doszpot, you might have an extremely well-qualified early childhood teacher who has taught one year in the preschool. You may want to use them in a kindergarten group with some new teachers to support those people in the early childhood area and work in a team situation. So it really depends on the decision-making at the principal level, notwithstanding that the preschool part of this is where there is the national framework and law around the qualifications that are required. That is not the case for kindergarten, 1 and 2, as you have mentioned.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand. My question is that there appears to be some concern by teachers who are primarily early childhood teachers and do not wish to move out of their comfort zone. The decision that is taken is made by the principal, regardless of how the teacher feels about it?

Mr Gniel: No.

Ms Joseph: Principals, in making decisions on staff allocations, would do that in consultation with their staff and with individuals. Also, in the actual development of the program and what the program looks like, that often would be done in consultation with the school board and the community as well.

Ms Burch: I might go to Coralie.

Ms McAlister: The actual tool that I think you may be referring to is the annual professional discussion that individual teachers have with their principal on a yearly basis. This annual professional discussion discusses four elements of that teacher's time in that school, of which one is career planning. That teacher is a very active participant in the conversation about what grade they will take not only this year but over the entire time that they are in the school. The principal looks at their entire workforce and has the conversation with the individual. The individual shares their career aspirations. The principal will look for opportunities within the school to meet those individual teachers' aspirations. Sometimes there may be a decision around transferring to another site to continue that professional journey. That tool, the annual professional discussion, is a new part of the implementation of our teaching staff enterprise agreement. It is a very respectful process to make those decisions about what grade they will be teaching each year.

Mr Gniel: Can I add to that, Mr Doszpot, if you do not mind?

MR DOSZPOT: Sure.

Mr Gniel: It is also important to understand that the early childhood qualification, as such, is generally from preschool to year 2. There is not generally a preschool qualification, if I can put it that way. When those discussions are occurring, generally the training is about that band of preschool to year 2. As you have alluded to as well, the amalgamation of those preschools into the whole school means that the principals have an opportunity to work with a broader range of people about their career development. I think Ms McAlister would agree with me that when we see people moving from different year groups then that makes them better teachers overall.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Gniel. I am fully aware of the requirements. My question was more or less a rhetorical question. I wanted to make sure that I was on the right track. I am getting a number of fairly serious complaints from people who are in the early childhood arena who do not wish to extend their skills beyond that. They are being told that this is not a discussion, as you say; it is basically a direction that they are being given. I am just trying to get some clarification of that. This is a new amalgamation, so it is not as if—

Ms Burch: Are you referring to a particular school?

MR DOSZPOT: I am referring to about four schools, yes.

Ms Burch: You get correspondence that does not come to my office.

MR DOSZPOT: I talk to a lot of people, Ms Burch, yes.

Ms Burch: I do too, Mr Doszpot, and this has not come to my attention. In the early childhood space—and the amalgamation of preschools into schools is a fair couple of years—it was a deliberate and very smart choice about those early years, recognising the importance of those early years. That underpins the national quality framework. Even in a long-day care centre where preschool classes are run and even from the first day a young tot comes into a long-day centre, it is about a learning opportunity or learning environment, recognising the importance that it has on children. I am comfortable that we recognise and value early childhood education. From what Ms McAlister has said, it is a respectful discussion with teachers on ongoing professional development, allowing these teachers to clearly have their say about their career opportunities.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not quite sure if I understand where you are leading to there. The question was: will you force these teachers to get into this new mode or will they be allowed to carry on within their own chosen career path, which was in the early childhood area? What I am trying to understand, on behalf of those teachers, is this: what should their expectation be? Is this an anomaly at the schools that they are at or is it something that is a direction from Education?

Ms McAlister: This pertains to the recent enterprise agreement that was ratified by teachers in April 2012. If my memory serves me correctly, 1,475 teachers voted, and 1,445 teachers voted yes to the procedures that were embedded in that enterprise agreement, with respect to a regular conversation—not a one-off; it should be seen as an ongoing conversation with your workforce within individual school sites—that should be occurring to actually plan that period of placement within that school so that the teachers can build their skills and have a number of different experiences and then transfer through schools more empowered and seeking greater opportunities. Those procedures are embedded in our enterprise agreement.

I will say, if I may, that it was the first time that schools applied the annual professional discussion last year. They did a very good job with it, but we do provide ongoing training to principals around how to apply that conversation more and more considered each year.

MRS JONES: Ms McAlister, or minister, what are the options for a teacher to object to teaching a given year level?

Ms Burch: I might go to Ms Joseph.

Ms Joseph: As to the annual professional discussion that Ms McAlister was just talking about, there is a clearly defined appeals process. There is a clearly defined time line and a clearly defined way of how principals notify their staff. Where teachers disagree with the decision of the principal, there is an appeal process. That appeal process includes representation from the AEU and a defined process to work through and basically hear from the teacher and make a decision.

MRS JONES: Is that process openly available to the public or only within the schools context or—

Ms Burch: What do you mean by “openly available”?

Ms Joseph: The appeals process?

MRS JONES: Is that in a document that we can have access to?

Ms Joseph: It is enshrined in the enterprise agreement. It is detailed in the enterprise agreement supporting documents within the directorate and within schools.

MRS JONES: Are we able to have a copy of that?

Ms McAlister: I can certainly provide to you the agreed documents that support the annual professional discussion. They are agreed between the directorate and the Australian Education Union. It will have the appeals process in that.

MRS JONES: That is great.

THE CHAIR: We will now take a short break and resume with disability and then Indigenous.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for coming back, minister. I might go to Mr Wall. I know he has a question around Indigenous education.

MR WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair—several, in fact. Minister, on page 28 it notes that 2011 was the first full year that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education matters strategic plan was operational. How is the program progressing in achieving its outcomes or goals?

Ms Burch: I think it has been very successful, and I will go to those that make it a reality. It does cover a number of areas and it really does focus on the individual child, regardless of whether they are in early education or up to year 12. Given that 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieved a year 12 certificate in 2011, I think it is a hallmark of a good, cooperative, whole-response system. There are key areas about a quality learning environment, school transparency, participation, transition through school from individual learning. Who has the most enthusiasm? Mr Gniel.

Mr Gniel: Thank you, minister. Thanks for the question.

THE CHAIR: I am sure they are all very enthusiastic, minister.

Mr Gniel: I would add to Minister Burch's comments that that is probably because a lot of this goes across our entire directorate in terms of the need for developing programs that support these kids.

MR WALL: I understand it is a fairly broad approach.

Mr Gniel: That is right. So there are some things that I will talk about, and we can have others add any specifics that you might be interested in. In terms of the strategic plan, the importance of that is about making sure we have a clear strategy about what we are doing for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and children as well. But that has a whole heap of different elements that include what is the cultural competency of all of our staff, so that we are setting up the environment for those young people to walk in the door

and feel confident and comfortable, as well as for their families to interact, because we know the importance of families, not only with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but with all other students. So there is that component of it, right the way through to any of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids who are falling behind or struggling.

One of the things I would start off by talking about is what we also do with kids that are performing really well. We have our aspirations program, which you may have heard of, which is specifically targeting those kids in years 5 to 12 who are performing well and who we can continue to help with their pathways and their transitions through to whatever achievements they want out of their schooling. For a number of them that can be tertiary education. It could also be vocational education and training work based on whatever their wills are.

The other parts are around what we are doing for all students—and that also includes those kids. All of the programs that are in schools are to help all children. Of course, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids are part of that. However, we do know that they are a group that is particularly at risk, which is recognised across the country. Therefore there are some specific programs that we do for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and children. They include having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers and workers in particular schools which have higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to work directly with those young people and their families and with teachers around making sure that they meet the needs of those young people.

MR WALL: If I may interrupt for a moment, that point is mentioned on page 28 of the report. It refers to the allocation of resources for literacy and numeracy to primary schools with a significant enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools. What generally constitutes a “significant” enrolment in those schools?

Mr Gniel: In the ACT, as you know, we have a dispersed population of those young people, and there are small numbers. So it can be that some of those schools have quite low numbers on the surface of things that do have those extra allocation of resources to them, which is why we have that broader approach that I was talking about regarding all schools. There are some schools that have higher enrolments of those students. Obviously there would be higher elements of resources that are attributed to those schools out of that, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education resources.

MR WALL: With the resources, from what I gather, you generally try to allocate them on a per head basis, with extra funding, obviously, being available or extra resources being available in those schools that do have a higher than average or higher than normal enrolment?

Mr Gniel: That is correct.

Ms Burch: For example, in our local area, Gilmore and Richardson would be considered to have a higher number of Aboriginal students compared to other schools in the area. So there are additional resources and activity to support the teachers and the families within those schools.

Mr Gniel: That is right. Those schools in particular, Mr Wall, have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker who is in the school with those young people and their families,

whereas other schools that may not have the same density of population that you expect may not have that individual.

Ms Stewart: Madam Chair, I might add to the answer, if that is okay. I understand Mr Wall asked earlier about outcomes for our older students as they transition through schooling and into vocational education and training. I might talk about those pathways as they move through school. We are seeing increased rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in vocational education and training. For example, in 2011 we had 729 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in vocational education and training. In the previous year we had 705 students enrolled. In 2009 we had 534 students, and in 2008 we had 439 students.

So our students in vocational education and training increased by 66 per cent over that four-year period. Because those numbers are going up, the participation rate is also increasing. So the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are engaged in vocational education and training has also been going up. In 2008 the participation rate was 9.8 per cent of the population. By 2011 that had increased to 15.1 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were enrolled in vocational education and training courses. Likewise we have seen the number of completions of training also increase over the period.

MR WALL: Minister, the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers was mentioned previously. How many full-time equivalent staff are there in that role at present?

Mr Gniel: The information I have particularly about last year was that there were four of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers in primary schools.

Ms McAlister: I would like to address your question by talking about our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy that we are undertaking as part of a whole-of-government approach. Each directorate is developing a strategy, and we have almost published ours. Our strategy looks at 35 actions across four areas—the area of attraction, retention, capacity building and also about environments that are culturally competent.

The employment strategy has gone to our education consultative committee for feedback, and it is now at the point where it is being provided to the elected body. So it is really around empowerment for our non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees around being culturally aware, as Mr Gniel alluded to earlier on, and the importance of our schools being culturally competent. It is about empowerment for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees around building the networks and the consultative mechanisms that exist for them within the directorate and then, finally, it is around empowering future employees by looking at building pathways for potential employment.

I am getting to your answer about numbers but I am just painting a broader picture. It is a really interesting area because—

MR WALL: I am crossing off a number of my supplementaries as you go.

Ms McAlister: Across whole of government I will say that all directorates are challenged to meet the target of two per cent of employees being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. For the ACT to meet that target, it would need to go from the 40 employees

numbered in the annual report to 115 by 2015. However, the number that appears in the annual report does not actually reflect the number of employees that we have in schools, because that number is taken from a full-time equivalent at a particular pay period. It does not take into account part time and so on. Our current number of employees is sitting more around 78 in our schools, which gives us hope that we are heading in the right direction around our employment strategies.

Ms Burch: Can I ask Mr Gniel to add a little bit about the other supports that go to these students, too.

Mr Gniel: Mr Wall, this is around your question around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers. We also have literacy and numeracy coordinators in every one of our schools, in our primary schools in that area. They work with any student that needs support in literacy and numeracy. We also have a field officer program, which is in specific schools that have performed at the lower end in literacy and numeracy, where they need additional support. All resources for schools are for all kids, and that includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, but, of course, we also recognise that there is an obligation for us to work with at-risk groups.

MR WALL: I would like to move on to the outcomes based side of things, Madam Chair, unless you want to allocate a question to somebody else.

THE CHAIR: Yes, there may be other people that have supplementaries in this area.

MR DOSZPOT: I do not have a supplementary, but I was hoping to carry on with some of the earlier education questions. I did not realise we were going to change direction to—

THE CHAIR: Well, I did say we would go to this—

MR DOSZPOT: Did you?

THE CHAIR: Yes, I did. I said that before we went to have a cup of tea.

MR DOSZPOT: Perhaps I can come back to it when this is finished.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Are you still on Indigenous—

MR WALL: I have a couple of questions relating to the outcomes of Indigenous students in the NAPLAN testing compared to non-Indigenous students.

THE CHAIR: Go quickly to those, and then I will go to some questions around disability.

MR WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms Burch: Tracy Stewart will be able to give you some information, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Lovely. Minister, priority 3 in the annual report outlines—

Ms Burch: What page is that?

MR WALL: I have not noted the page; my apologies. Priority 3 did focus on closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. I guess the question revolves primarily around why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to trail behind the mainstream population in these outcomes.

Ms Burch: Tracy can go to some level of detail about the numbers and how we are moving through. It is right that we need to focus our attention on supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Whilst 95 per cent enrolled in public schools get a year 12 certificate, there is still more work to do so. There is certainly a focused effort, but we can see some improvements. Ms Stewart?

Ms Stewart: I will talk a little bit first about the data and then Stephen might like to fill in with some of the programs. You will know that—and we talk about it in the annual report—the performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT is higher than that of their peer group elsewhere in Australia. In fact, they are really equivalent with the top performing students in New South Wales and Victoria. Our students are performing quite highly in that respect.

However, there still is a gap between the performance of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students here in the ACT and our other students here in the ACT. To a certain extent, that gap is not closing. Part of the reason for that is we continue to see improvements across the board, so we need to recognise that we are seeing improvements in the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students here in the ACT in NAPLAN testing. However, we are also seeing improvements in the performance of our other students. That improvement has been consistent across all of the groups of students in the ACT. It is a great outcome that our students are improving. However, it means that it is making it harder to close that gap between the groups of students.

Mr Gniel: Also we are seeing an increase in the number of students. The figure from last year around the census was 1,396, which was another increase on the previous year. We have seen a trend of that across the last few years. As well as what we have talked about previously, which is about the whole package of all of those programs to support all children—and I think that is why Ms Stewart is talking about the improvements across the board—we have also talked about that improvement agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The number is 1,396. It is not thousands and thousands of these children. It means that we can take a more individual approach with those kids, which is what we need to do.

Every year we meet with each of those individual students in years 9, 10, 11 and 12 about their future destinations, so what they are doing next year. We can do that, because of those numbers, from a central perspective as well. Our support teams within the central office do those interviews and, as well, there are the processes that happen in their regular school. There are a number of things that are happening in that area to support those young people.

MR WALL: In 2011 the NAPLAN results for both numeracy and literacy showed an improvement in Indigenous students for years 3, 5 and 9. However, in both areas year 7 students slipped. What has been done to rectify that situation?

Mr Gniel: The schools themselves are aware of that. There is the support that we provide through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers through those literacy and

numeracy coordinators. The schools have that information about how to target those resources. We also have targeted tutorial assistance, for example. Again, that comes back to not just dealing with the mean, which is what we are talking about there. It is about which of those kids are falling behind and helping those kids to catch up. It is also about which of those kids are extending and need to be extended and keeping that going. As you will appreciate, Mr Wall, with a mean of the number of students that we have there, there are 13 years of formal education from kindergarten to year 12. You take the numbers there; it is about 100 per year group. You can see that once you get into that with a mean, either end can really affect what you are doing. You need to treat those 100 students as individual cases and work with them on their specific times and not just try to pick up the kids that are struggling, although that is, of course, incredibly important. It is also about kids at the top end and those kids in the middle and what we are doing with those students.

Ms Burch: I think year 9 is quite a critical year because it is when they start to think about transitioning into workplace and vocational training. Perhaps Ann Goleby can talk about some of those transition points and the effort of individuals and supporting teachers as well.

MR WALL: This topic is of interest me. I was going to suggest, minister, that in the interests of not taking up too much of committee members' time in asking questions perhaps we could organise a briefing further.

Ms Burch: I am happy to do that. You can respond quickly, I am sure?

Ms Goleby: I would be very enthusiastic to, minister. I think that Mr Wall would be interested in numbers in the school-based apprenticeship program. Last year we had 46 Indigenous students in that program. There is a lot of support for those students as they transition from school into a full apprenticeship. As I referred to before, when an Indigenous student goes into an apprenticeship there is an increase of funding by 10 per cent to the registered training organisation to provide wraparound services. Those wraparound services can be at the discretion of the registered training organisation to meet the particular need.

I referred quickly before—if I can touch on it again—to our priority support program where we have a target particularly for Indigenous participants and for participants with disability. Again, there is additional support funding available in that space. I have actually got some numbers. For 2011 we had 74 Indigenous participants and in 2012 we had 119.

There is something in the annual report on the CHANCES program that I would refer you back to. The success in that space is related to the wraparound services—not to devalue the success of those students getting competencies in language, literacy, numeracy and, as I referred to earlier, community services. That is an interesting one too, to get sidetracked, in that students are being attracted to having different aspirations—I think that is building onto the work that Mr Gniel was talking about before—away from the traditional trades and to business, community services and the like. The wraparound services, in our view, are the ones that are making the difference. Yes, they are getting the competencies, but they are getting the wraparound services to support them in doing that. I would be delighted to provide Mr Wall with the detail on the CHANCES program.

MR WALL: I look forward to it.

Ms Stewart: Madam Chair, may I provide some clarification to Mr Wall's earlier comment?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Stewart: In relation to the charts I think you were referring to on pages 27 and 28 and the performance of year 7 students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the charts do not actually depict that the performance for year 7 students slipped. The charts depict that there is an increasing gap between the performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students. Often that will reflect that the improvement for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was greater than the improvement for—

Ms Burch: There is still an indication that there is work to do, yes.

THE CHAIR: As I think I have alluded to before, minister, I just want to ask a couple of questions—other members might have some too—about students with disabilities. I am aware of the Woden School and the Black Mountain School and the fantastic work that these schools do. I am aware that there are other children who are in mainstream schools. Could you briefly—with an emphasis on “briefly”—talk about the programs that we have. I guess it is like for Indigenous students. How do we help these young people reach their full potential and go on to other education later in their life? How are we achieving this and how are we helping our students get into mainstream education when it is appropriate?

Ms Burch: I will go to Mr Gniel, but the Education and Training Directorate does a lot of work within its special schools and its mainstream schools. Some of the decisions about where the students go are ones that the family make. There are a number of mums and dads that really aspire and choose to have their son or daughter have an education through mainstream schools. There is significant effort and wraparound support that we do through transport and teaching assistants. There is a whole range of activities that we do there. Every child, whether they are in a special school or a mainstream school, is given every opportunity to participate and be one of the class and to have a learning outcome as much as they are able.

Just very briefly on special schools, teaching is a very important thing. I might take this opportunity to say that before I came here we were at the Malkara special school, the Malkara primary school, where they officially opened their new hydrotherapy pool, which was absolutely stunning. Thirty-odd years ago they built their original hydrotherapy pool, ahead of the game, recognising the benefits of hydrotherapy. That had got well past its use-by date. We provided them with a tad over \$3 million to build a new pool, which is just state of the art. It has a ramp, it has stairs and it has a hoist. A group of students there were gaining a wonderful benefit. There are learning opportunities, but there are other supports through physical activity, hydrotherapy and so on that are so important to these children.

THE CHAIR: Congratulations.

Ms Burch: It was wonderful.

Mr Gniel: This is another area which we are extremely enthusiastic to talk about. Again, this is something that is across the directorate—things that the minister has mentioned around the infrastructure that we use to support these students through to the resources that we have through our schools to make the adjustments that are required to make sure these students can access the curriculum as well as anyone in our schools.

In terms of placements for those students, the minister has talked about the options that parents work with schools on. They work with counsellors at times as well and with their support groups that may come from the community sector. Again, there is a huge spectrum of different needs when it comes to kids with a disability. That is what we then reflect in the different options that we have for those parents in our public schools.

To reiterate, those are around the special schools that you mentioned, which are purpose built with specific infrastructure for those children and young people. They are also around, as the minister mentioned, the mainstream opportunities that those students have and the additional resources to make sure that those schools, in consultation and working with the families, can make those adjustments as required. The spectrum of need is there and the spectrum of support that we provide in different options for parents is also there.

I might just pick up on Mrs Jones's earlier question. I do have some of those figures you were talking about to illustrate, I guess, the answer to this one. In 2012—this is particularly for students with autism—there were 637 students; 310 of them were in mainstream classes. That is that inclusion support that I talked about. There were 207 of those students in learning support centres or units within mainstream settings and 120 of those students were in special schools. Again, that is only a subsection of students with a disability in terms of autism. That shows you the different options that parents take with the different needs for their children.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, do you have a supplementary?

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on the question you asked, Madam Chair, in relation to the disability-related schools—Woden et cetera. Minister, could I ask you to elaborate on the school youth nurse program?

Ms Burch: The school youth nurse program? Is that under the direct—

MR DOSZPOT: Could you outline what these nurses do in the schools?

Ms Burch: I know that there was a project and there was certainly considerable work last year, working through a number of schools, to look at how we respond to the health needs of children within special schools in particular. There was a pilot, as I understand it, that ran. Certainly there was a bit of an impetus through Woden School on that. We are looking at that. There is a registered nurse in all those schools, including Woden School, at the moment.

Mr Gniel: There is a registered nurse.

Ms Burch: We will evaluate that. Perhaps Mr Gniel can talk to that.

Mr Gniel: Mr Doszpot, there are two different programs where nurses are in schools. Just to clarify, one is around nurses in high schools, in mainstream settings—four of those nurses. They work with our student support teams around health issues for young people in high school, providing expert health advice that is part of a cross-purpose team that offer those support services. That might include counselling and information around their educational attainment. When it comes to health, we want a health professional there to provide that advice. I think that is the school health nurse program you are talking about. Then there are

nurses within special school settings, which is what the minister was referring to. Within the recognised or identified specialist school settings at the moment, each has at least one registered nurse.

MR DOSZPOT: With respect to the schools that have a registered nurse in the disability arena, can you just enumerate that for me?

Mr Gniel: Can I get what for you, sorry?

Ms Burch: What schools have a nurse?

Mr Gniel: The four specialist schools have at least one nurse.

THE CHAIR: I did not mention Cranleigh and Malkara in my introduction, but they are terrific schools, and so those two are included.

Ms Burch: Yes, Woden, Cranleigh, Malkara.

Mr Gniel: Black Mountain School, Woden School, Malkara and Cranleigh School.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand the Woden School nurse is still a temporary nurse; is that correct?

Mr Gniel: Before I respond to that, this is what the minister was talking about before around some piloting of that. In the schools where the nurses have been based for quite a long period of time, the assessment had been made that there was an ongoing need for nurses in those environments. Mr Doszpot, you are fully aware—I know you have visited the schools—of the needs of those young people. There are certain things that nurses need to provide in those settings which teachers and school assistants cannot provide. That is why there are nurses in those settings.

The decision at the moment around the Woden School is that there is a need at that school, and that is why there is a nurse. You could talk to Health around this as well, because they are our partners in this space. Really, it is about meeting the needs of the kids that are at the school rather than what the school is. If there is a need for a nurse to support a young person at a school then that is what we respond to, and we have at the Woden School.

Ms Burch: I think there has been significant work last year about how Education and Health work together and say: we have had some historical allocations of a registered nurse, but what is the model of care that different individuals will need at different times? Building on what Mr Gniel has said, we have revisited that. I would not use your word “temporary”. We have allocated a nurse there. We will look again at how this model works, because different schools will have different needs at different times. It depends on the students and the complexities of the care that they would need.

MR DOSZPOT: I commend the fact that all of these schools have a nurse. I fully support that. My question is: what happens in the schools where these nurses are such an important part of the everyday activity of most of the students? What happens if one of those nurses is ill?

Mr Gniel: Again, that is probably something to talk to Health about, the details of it, Mr Doszpot. Obviously, for us, in terms of Education, we need to work with Health to make sure that the children are able to participate in education. I think the minister mentioned that the key word here is that these are really complex situations. I think Mrs Jones was recognising that as well. With these young people, again, there is a huge spectrum of what a health need might be. For some of these children it can be that they need feeding, and how we keep that part of their life going so that we can add the education component, which is where we have the areas of expertise. So the nurse is why we need to work across government, as we have done with this one, and as you are aware, Mr Doszpot, and work with our partners in Health to make sure we provide that.

Ms Burch: Being an ex-registered nurse myself, it is understanding the role that requires the level of complexity to be delivered through a registered nurse and then there are other supports and functions that can be delivered through other mechanisms as well.

Mr Gniel: That is the basis of the work we are doing with Health: how do we work together about any student that comes into any school that has a complex health need and how do we work with Health around the assessment about what need is in terms of the provision of service? Obviously our principals and our teachers are not health professionals in the main. Some of them are.

MR DOSZPOT: I think we are in furious agreement. I do understand the reasons. I fully support the reasons for the nurses being there. What I am asking is: if there is a problem with one of those nurses not being able to attend at a particular school, you are telling me that is something I should take up with Health. I do not want to take it up with Health. I would like to take it up with you.

Ms Burch: I would imagine there would be forward notice. If there is a responsibility for us to understand about the care and needs of that child, we would have an ongoing communication to Health that that position is replaced or we would need to look at alternative arrangements to make sure that student is cared for appropriately.

MR DOSZPOT: I am very glad to hear you say that, minister. One of the things I want to draw to your attention is that at the Woden School, one of my constituents wrote to me that they were notified yesterday afternoon at 4.50 that the nurse who was looking after their son would not be available to make it in today and, therefore, there would be no nurse at the school. This is the Woden School I am talking about. Because of this they had to keep the child at home. He has missed out on an excursion and other educational benefits, and the parents are obviously concerned. So that is the concern I am raising. I fully applaud you putting nurses in there—

Ms Burch: I will take it on notice to see what the systems are, but if there is no skilled, trained, appropriate nurse available for that, it could be a very unfortunate circumstance. I am not saying it is ideal, but I am certainly quite happy to talk with the executive about how we manage those things. The same would apply to any setting. If we are moving to a model of responding to need, regardless of the setting, that would be something that we would need to work through.

THE CHAIR: Minister, in relation to this, as a former registered nurse—

Ms Burch: Great job, too.

MRS JONES: Once a nurse, always a nurse.

THE CHAIR: That is right.

Ms Burch: Every time my kids fall over, they remind me of that.

MRS JONES: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I think that the school would have a duty of care to make sure that that student was notified that there was not that professional available. If that professional could not be supplied because late notice was given, obviously after school hours, when the person could not be replaced, there is a duty of care to actually tell the parents—that is my understanding—that there is not that person there. With all the will in the world, you have not been able to replace that person. Is that what you are saying?

Ms Burch: In short, yes.

Ms Joseph: In those sorts of cases where there is specific risk management, if you like, that we need around a particular student, if we are not able to mitigate that risk, or we can foresee that possibly a teacher or a health professional may not be available, it goes back to the conversations with the family when and if that happens and how we minimise the implications for the family, for the student, for the school, and to make sure learning is not compromised and safety is not compromised.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Joseph, can I bring you back to my original question, and the minister's very appropriate answer to that, which was that she would imagine that certain things would be in place. Could I ask that it be taken on notice with respect to all of these schools where nurses are present. And I do understand that there are not too many nurses about, but there must be some sort of a risk assessment as to what happens if those nurses cannot make it. In this instance, obviously the child was kept at home, but what would happen in a case where the parents are not aware that the nurse was not going to be in? There could be all sorts of health implications. I am simply asking that that be taken on board as one of the things that ought to be looked at.

Ms Burch: Yes, happy to.

THE CHAIR: Any more questions on disability?

MRS JONES: No, but I do want to ask one other question, if I may.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and I know Ms Berry has one more question.

MS BERRY: Yes.

THE CHAIR: What is your question about?

MRS JONES: It is around carbon neutrality.

THE CHAIR: Right, and yours is around finance.

Ms Burch: I draw your attention to the time. I have other commitments, chair.

MRS JONES: A quick question.

THE CHAIR: We could put these questions on notice.

MRS JONES: We can.

THE CHAIR: Are you happy to do that, Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Are you happy to do that, Mrs Jones?

MRS JONES: Yes, I will.

THE CHAIR: That is fantastic. Thank you very much. Those questions will be put on notice. With regard to questions on notice, minister, the committee has resolved that all questions from members are to be lodged with the committee office within four business days of receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript from this hearing, with one day being the first business day after the transcript being received. Answers to questions will be lodged with the committee office within 10 business days of receiving questions, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. Answers to questions taken on notice are to be provided five business days after the hearing at which they were taken, with day one being the first business day after the question was taken. I can give you that in writing, if you would like.

Ms Burch: No, I am sure the officials will work through that. Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Of course, the *Hansard* will be provided to you. Thank you very much, minister, and all your officials for appearing before us today. I declare this hearing adjourned.

Ms Burch: And a big thanks to the officials.

The committee adjourned at 4.18 pm.