



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2013-2014](#))

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2014

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.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.04 am.

Appearances:

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

Education and Training Directorate

Joseph, Ms Diane, Director-General

Gniel, Mr Stephen, Deputy Director-General, Education Strategy

Wright, Ms Leanne, Director, Learning and Teaching, Education Strategy

Mitchell, Ms Beth, Director, Student Engagement, Education Strategy

Stewart, Ms Tracy, Director, Planning and Performance, Organisational Integrity

McAlister, Ms Coralie, Director, People and Performance, Organisational Integrity

Garrisson, Ms Joanne, Director, Governance and Assurance

Sullivan, Ms Susan, Manager, Children's Policy and Regulation, Governance and Assurance

Hamilton, Ms Judith, School Network Leader—North Gungahlin, Office for Schools

Gwilliam, Mr Stephen, School Network Leader—Tuggeranong, Office for Schools

Stenhouse, Mr John, Executive Officer, Office of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies

Ellis, Ms Anne, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Teacher Quality Institute

Miller, Mr David, Senior Manager, Training and Tertiary Education

Canberra Institute of Technology

Kay, Mr Shane, Chief Operating Officer, Corporate Services

Grayson, Ms Carolyn, Deputy Chief Executive, Brand and Business Development

Stenlake, Dr Nicole, Executive Director, People and Organisational Governance

Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority

Mr Glenn Carter, Chief Executive Officer

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Dawes, Mr David, Director-General, Economic Development

Rake, Mr Gary, Deputy Director-General, Arts, Business, Events, Sport and Tourism Division, Economic Development

Whitney, Mr David, Director, artsACT

Cultural Facilities Corporation

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer

Tidy, Mr Ian, Chief Finance Officer

THE CHAIR: Welcome, minister and officials. The committee is inquiring into annual reports for 2013-14 and one calendar year report, for 2013. The committee is

due to report to the Assembly no later than 16 May 2015. I will talk about the questions on notice at the end of the hearing.

This morning we are dealing with annual reports by the Canberra Institute of Technology, the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority and the Education and Training Directorate.

Minister, are you familiar with the privileges statement, the pink card in front of you? And officials, could you signify that you understand the implications?

Ms Burch: We are all familiar and comfortable with such pink statements in front of us.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We are going firstly to the Canberra Institute of Technology and then to the building and construction training fund. Minister, did you have an announcement to make about someone not being able to come to the hearing this morning?

Ms Burch: Adrian Marron is not available; Shane Kay is acting CIT CEO.

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Kay. Do you want to make an opening statement?

Ms Burch: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss and respond to questions that you have on the Canberra Institute of Technology 2013 annual report.

CIT, as you know, is the ACT public provider of vocational education and training, the largest RTO, taking out the ACT training awards for large registered training organisations for the seventh consecutive year. CIT offers over 400 courses ranging from certificates, traineeships and apprenticeships through to diplomas and degrees. Last year CIT met its training targets. This included training and education of over 25,000 students, with 14,990 students in the commercial programs and close to 2,000 international students.

With a rapidly changing environment, CIT developed systems to adjust to the national vocational education and training reform agenda, particularly in preparation for the introduction of VET fee help, the government-subsidised programs for diploma and above and the introduction of the unique student identifier.

During last year, CIT implemented a major internal restructure. This involved consolidating 16 teaching centres into four teaching colleges around a matrix model of management designed to provide leadership and support to the colleges. The CIT Council commissioned an external report on the future governance of CIT. This was provided to me early this year, and the process to change the advisory council into the governing board has commenced. And as you know, the CIT amendment bill is currently before the Assembly.

The employment outcomes for students remain high, with CIT exceeding the national benchmark. Learner satisfaction is high, at 92.3 per cent, while employer satisfaction sits high, at 89.2 per cent—way above our targets.

Year on year, CIT has seen improvement in preparing employees well for work, integrating training effectively into employer organisations and acting on feedback from employers. The government remains committed to the public provision of VET and provides CIT with close to \$70 million annually for agreed outputs. The provision of VET through CIT is an important element of the government's commitment to ensure that the people of the CIT are part of a well-trained, highly skilled workforce. That supports our growing economy.

CIT continues to make a strong contribution to the economic and social development of the region, and I expect it will do so for many years. CIT is well placed for the future and is armed with a vision of 2020 blueprint, which includes, among other things, the strategic plan, a campus modernisation strategy, changes in the governance and organisational structure, business and operational plans and effective information systems.

Before we go to questions, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the staff and the team from CIT, from its executive right through to back of house and front of house teachers; they have had a very successful year and they serve our community well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. My first question is on the strategic plan. It is mentioned on page 41. It talks about there being three drivers—learners, people and partners. I was wondering if you could expand on these three drivers. This is a new plan, so how is it bedding down in the first instance?

Ms Burch: It is 14, so it has effectively picked up this year and will go through to 2016.

THE CHAIR: So it is very early days.

Ms Burch: It is, but it builds on the restructure that we have done and the success that CIT has had over many years, with 25,000 students and, for the seventh year in a row, the largest RTO in the city. It recognises that the learners are the core of our business, but we cannot do that without good, smart people and supporting those good, smart people in practice. And at the end of the day, being an industry and skills-based environment, having industry partners responding to employer and industry needs is absolutely critical. I might go to Nicole.

Dr Stenlake: I will start the answer, and then fellow executives can add anything if they like.

The strategic plan was developed through quite an extensive consultation process last year, with a lot of engagement from both my staff and our stakeholders. In particular, the CIT Advisory Council ran a breakfast, I think in around October last year. We invited about 60 people, including some of our industry partners, people from the Education and Training Directorate and a number of students. We ran a very engaged session, and a lot of feedback was received on the draft plan. It was really from that particular breakfast that we came up with the drivers “learners, people, partners”, because people were looking for something that was very easy to connect with and

very easy to remember. Following on from that breakfast in October, the plan was put in place around November last year.

The three drivers really cover our three main areas of focus. Obviously, our learners are paramount, and the drivers associated with that one are really what we can do to provide contemporary vocational and education provision between now and 2016. People are really important to us.

The importance of people—how skilled our people are, how we treat our people—is also of paramount importance. In incorporating the ACT government code of conduct, it is not just about what we do but how we do it. I, in particular, as the executive director of people, was really pleased to see that one up there. Having people as a driver also aligns with some changes that came out of the restructure process. That was the creation of the People and Organisational Governance division, and also a people committee at CIT. So the prominence of people within our strategy has really increased over the last couple of years.

Partners have always been important to us. One of our strengths as a provider is our engagement with industry. In recent times it has been increasingly important because of our ability to secure funding that is often linked to our industry connections, either through funds that are available, such as the workforce development fund, or just through CIT driving its commercial business through partnerships with business and industry.

That is really how the plan came about and why those three drivers are important.

How is that flowing through to CIT's business operations? Every year we go through a business planning process. Within the People and Organisational Governance division, we produce a template that is based around those three drivers. We as the executive incorporate some key outcomes that we want people to achieve. Every college and every division works to that same template so that we are all pulling in the same direction.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have anything to add?

Ms Grayson: I think Nicole has covered off that aspect, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Dr Stenlake. I just have one question about the consultation. How were the learners involved in that consultation?

Dr Stenlake: They attended. There were several representatives at the breakfast that we spoke about.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: The question I would like to start with refers to your course information booklet on what courses are on offer. I understand that CIT has decided not to run certificate II in Auslan in 2015; is that correct?

Ms Grayson: At the end of last year, or the year before actually, we put in place a

plan to ensure that there was an offering of the Auslan program. There is a certificate II as well as a certificate III. So the plan for 2014 was to have the certificate II running and in 2015 there will be the certificate III. To ensure, hopefully, that we have viable numbers for the certificate III in 2015, we will be looking to the cohort who completed in 2013 in the certificate II, as well as those who complete this year in the 2014 certificate II, to give viable numbers to our certificate III for next year.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to put on record that I have received a number of letters from people concerned about that action. I think they have raised some fairly interesting points, so I would like to put it on the record for your information, and I would be interested in your comment on it. I will not name the individual. They state:

I am deaf and rely on Auslan, Australian Sign Language Interpreting Services, to be a participating member of the Canberra community. I use Auslan interpreters for medical appointments and other areas of daily life and I know that the deaf community is experiencing a shortage of interpreters, with many bookings that are made to the interpreter booking agencies unable to be filled.

With the implementation of the NDIS many eligible deaf people will be including Auslan interpreter access in the funding packages. This can only increase the demand on a resource that is already scarce.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability to which Australia is a signatory clearly outlines my right to access the wider community via Auslan and Auslan interpreters. How can my rights in this area be upheld if there is no training pathway available for interpreters to be trained?

That is quite a strong concern from the community. How do you react to the question asked by the individual?

Ms Burch: I am also a recipient of that letter and I have put it through to CIT for a response. I will let Ms Grayson go to the answer. The correspondent is right to say that there probably needs to be a conversation with NDIS, and, indeed, the deaf resource centre, about how we can accommodate growth, if there is growth, through the NDIS.

We have a cert II, leading to a cert III, but I think there is also an issue about promoting this through the NDIS and the deaf resource centre, with respect to attracting students. If there are not enough students that come in then any training provider has that question about viability. So it is not simply about CIT's offerings; it is also about how we work with other partners to make sure that we promote it, that we attract the students and then that we are able to facilitate that offering.

Ms Grayson: Yes, CIT did put in place a strategy to ensure, hopefully, that we had viable numbers for our certificate III for 2015.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you elaborate on what Auslan courses will be available?

Ms Burch: For next year?

MR DOSZPOT: Next year, yes.

Ms Grayson: For next year, the certificate III in Auslan.

MR DOSZPOT: What is regarded as a viable number of students for these courses?

Ms Grayson: The viable number would be to ensure that we actually can meet the costs of delivery of the program.

Ms Burch: Can you quantify the numbers?

Ms Grayson: We aim to have enrolments at 20 to enrol because, of course, as time goes on, people do drop out. At the moment I have been told that we have 13 who are currently engaged in the certificate II; that is what we are working with for 2014. We would be looking for enrolments of 20 for 2015 for the certificate III.

MR DOSZPOT: I thank the minister for her comments on this. Can you do anything more to promote this situation? With respect to what the individual has described—and obviously you are aware of it—is there anything more that can be done to escalate this situation?

Ms Grayson: We were really pleased at the end of last year that the staff in our marketing team and others were able to get the information out and to attract students to the certificate II program. The outcome of that was 20 enrolments. That was a much larger number of enrolments compared to the previous year. So it is a case of ensuring that we have a targeted strategy to encourage people, should they be interested, to apply and enrol.

Ms Burch: Given that this letter is reasonably current, it has also made me think about how we will go again, given our vision is around those learners, people and partners, and how we identify those partners to help us in this promotion as well. That is what I am going to put my mind to as a consequence of that letter.

MR DOSZPOT: I thank you on behalf of my constituent on that.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones has a supplementary.

MRS JONES: I know this is a broader question, but with regard to the rollout of the NDIS and the training that we hold, I know it is the first site and as a result we are learning, but do we have a process for identifying expected need, future need, and is there an ongoing conversation about other training areas as well? Obviously we do not quite know what people will take up, but there may be some study going on.

Ms Burch: First and foremost, it is around training disability support workers because we know there will be a growth in demand for that. Ms Grayson or Dr Stenlake can talk to that.

MRS JONES: There are obviously phases of the rollout.

Ms Burch: Yes.

Ms Grayson: Yes, that is correct. Our college directors, particularly in the health community and science area, are making contact and have communication with relevant organisations and the departments. There are plenty of conversations and discussions moving forward, and plans are in place for delivering—

MRS JONES: I wonder whether, even on notice, you could let us know what the consultation looks like at the moment, just to get those lines going. There must be a document or something.

Ms Burch: There are pieces of paper flying all over the place. CIT has a responsibility for training, and that is driven in many ways through the skills list or the industry-identified list. But you are right in the sense that as we move through the transition, the NDIA and CSD have a very close relationship about how we respond to needs. Whilst it is not in the domain of CIT, the fact that the NDIA for the first time block purchased a series of early intervention programs shows that the conversation is alive and active and certainly they are very quick to respond. But we can get back to you with what we can.

MRS JONES: Even just a table of what meetings are going on, for example.

Ms Burch: Yes. It may be higher than CIT, but it gives you a sense of the connectedness.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot still has some questions in this area and then we will go to Ms Berry.

MR DOSZPOT: Just to finish off on this line of questioning, what are the threshold numbers generally? With the 20 that you mentioned, is that an average across all courses? Is that the minimum number?

Mr Kay: There is an average that you can put across the whole of our population, which is about 15 or 16, on average. It varies very much between different programs, for a variety of reasons. We might be running large lectures in things like accounting, management or business. You could have 50 or 60 people in a lecture and then have tutorials. At the other end of the spectrum we could have a welding class. For OHS or WHS reasons you would have a very small class size, because you want the teacher to be supervising those students very closely. So it really depends on the program.

From a financial viability point of view we have to target certain numbers so that we are not going backwards financially in certain areas. It is quite a challenge for our teaching managers and they do a fantastic job in probably the vast majority of circumstances in enrolling the right amount, estimating dropouts and people who change their mind, to get viable numbers. They are quite good financial managers.

MR DOSZPOT: I am very much aware of the financial obligations that you have to meet, but the other side of that, as you say, is that there are bigger numbers in other classes that hopefully can compensate for some of the smaller ones that may not be as popular in terms of the numbers but may be in a very important and needy area. I presume that is what the minister was talking about. I will leave that topic for the moment.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: I have some questions about the structural changes that have happened recently with the CIT and the amendment bill. Could you outline what these changes are going to mean and how it is going to position the CIT?

Ms Burch: With respect to the government's changes that are before the Assembly, the VET environment nationally is a moving feast. What that looks like has picked up a bit of speed over the last 12 months. It has been my view, and certainly the view of the advisory council and others, that CIT, as the largest public provider, has a place, but it also needs to operate very clearly in a competitive space. A way of doing that is to create some independence. At the moment it is an independent statutory body but it is also bound very tightly to government regarding expectations of what we pay and the subsidised courses that we offer.

It is my view, and it was supported in many ways by the independent review commissioned by the advisory council, that we need to review its governance. So that is what we have started to do. It will allow CIT to be more responsive in a competitive market. The significant change is to create an independent board, which will have an absolute, direct responsibility for the appointment of the CEO and for its targets and its outcomes. Mr Kay has been quite closely involved with the amendment drafting and those changes, so he might want to talk more on that.

Mr Kay: It is part of a much larger reform of the vocational education and training sector that has been taking place across the country for a number of years. If we look at what has happened in a lot of other states there has been some really radical, fast change that has meant a lot of TAFE providers around the country have had significant challenges, if you like.

The ACT government has taken a lot more measured approach to how CIT—the only TAFE in Canberra—positions itself for success into the future. There have not been the knee-jerk reactions that we have seen in other states, where there has been a massive opening up of markets and letting all the TAFE institutions either sink or swim, if you like. We have seen that especially in Victoria and to a certain extent in Queensland and in South Australia as well. So it is very challenging for them. The ACT government has put in this measured approach to CIT so that we can gear up, in a really thoughtful and considered way, to be able to operate more in that competitive contestable space.

The structural changes are all around supporting that. We think that having an independent board in place, with a chair and a deputy chair from industry and business in the ACT, will drive the agenda very much around ensuring that we meet the needs of industry and business in the ACT. We are really looking forward to it. We think it is really exciting. I have been there for 18 years and this is the biggest change we have had in 25 years. It is very exciting.

Ms Burch: The current arrangements have served our community well, but we are moving into, quite literally, the first year of the second century of Canberra. As a public provider and as a provider broadly, as I have said, it is not just about VET,

cert IIs, IIIs and IVs; there are diplomas and degrees coming out of CIT now. It certainly holds its own in that tertiary environment. These changes will give that strength and responsiveness.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: This is a supplementary to Ms Berry's question. Can you elaborate a little more on the structure of the current board and the new board that is going to come in, the members of those boards, how they are appointed, and will they carry on from the current board into the new board or is—

Ms Burch: The fundamental structural difference is at the moment it is an advisory council that has no governance responsibility. It is very supportive but its role is in providing advice and a level of guidance to the chief executive. The new board will be a governance board. It will be appointed. It will be ministerial appointments. We will seek, search, recruit and appoint a board with an independent chair. At a structural level and at a governance level that will be the absolute core difference.

At the moment the advisory council has a mix of industry, business, staff representatives, student representatives. We want this governance board to be absolutely high powered with financial experts, planning experts, in the sense of strategic planning and governance, and industry and education experts.

The existing advisory board—and certainly the conversations I have had when I have met them—understand that in many ways they have been fantastic community development officers in that they are creating an entity and losing their own jobs, so to speak. The advisory board will be spilled, and I will make no comment about whether any of those will move into the new arrangements. I have not explored that. That is why I am not making any comment on them.

But I want to thank the advisory board for the service that they have provided to CIT and also for, in many ways, their foresight and courage to take this next step and be such a proactive part of it.

MR DOSZPOT: So that applies to both the CIT and CIT Solutions?

Ms Burch: No.

Mr Kay: No, CIT Solutions is not changed at all through this.

MR DOSZPOT: That retains its separate board members. Can you elaborate on how many members there are on that one?

Mr Kay: On the CIT Solutions board?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Mr Kay: I think there are about seven—six or seven.

THE CHAIR: Can you take that on notice and get back to us?

Ms Burch: It is on public record but we will provide it again to the committee, yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, have you finished your questions in this area?

MS BERRY: I did have a supplementary. I want to check how these major structural changes will fit in with the new structures that have come into the CIT through the gearing up for business and all the work you did there.

Mr Kay: The gearing up for business projects were quite interesting actually. The new structure was very much a vision of Adrian's going back a couple of years. It has completely changed the hierarchical-type governance structure we had before and made it into a matrix organisation.

We have really promoted our teaching colleges as the centre of the business because they are the ones that deal with industry and business on a daily basis, they are the ones that teach all the students. That is the engine room, if you like, and the focus of our business. And by creating this matrix organisation, they are at the forefront. All of the support divisions support them as best we can and across the organisation to make the institute as successful as it can be.

Ms Burch: And what are the colleges? What is the focus of the different schools or colleges?

Mr Kay: There are four colleges very much based around industry areas. Health, community and science is one. Trade skills and vocational learning is another. We have just changed the names recently. Technology and design is another. Technology and design is quite an interesting one because, when we talked about which of the teaching departments we would put together, we could see synergies in putting hairdressing together with horticulture. That might sound a little weird, but if you think of a wedding, for example, a wedding has got flowers, it has got makeup, it has got beauty, it has got hair, it has got all that—a lot of synergies around those sorts of things, which we thought were quite interesting. They are working out pretty well, I think.

MS BERRY: And you are doing a review on that this year, or has it started?

Ms Burch: It was only bedded in really last year, but there was a lot of planning and a lot of carrying through with the staff. There was lots of checking. I think I saw almost fortnightly internal newsletters about how—

Dr Stenlake: Weekly.

Ms Burch: You crafted them, did you?

Dr Stenlake: No, it was Ms Dodd.

THE CHAIR: We might move now to Mrs Jones, otherwise she will not get a chance to ask a question.

MRS JONES: In an annual reports meeting earlier in the week the Chief Minister said that bullying rates amongst the 20,000 ACT public bureaucrats had reduced because of the work of senior executives. She added that lower level staff continue to face unacceptable harm in the workplace and went on to say that more work needs to be done to improve that, as we all agree. Minister, do you believe the workplace culture in the areas of CIT and ETD still needs further improvement?

Ms Burch: For CIT—and we can come back to ETD later—I think CIT has done significant and impressive work, and that has been acknowledged by the public service commissioner over recent times, around change of culture. It is not to say that there will not be people who feel anxious or feel aggrieved. In any workplace—we are talking in the hundreds or thousands of workers—there will always be the need to be diligent on this.

Again, on record, I want to recognise the work CIT has done over recent years to change that culture and support workers and management in these very fraught conversations. I am not quite sure which of the executive want to go to that. Dr Stenlake?

Dr Stenlake: We have done a very significant amount of work in this space, as I think you are all aware, and that work is continuing. It is ongoing. We are seeing changes in the culture all the time. We are seeing an increase in confidence in our managers. We are seeing an increase in skill in our managers. We are seeing an increase in early intervention strategies. People are getting the support that they need before issues become a concern to their health and wellbeing.

In my role as executive director of people and organisational governance I am confident that we have the systems, processes and culture in place to make sure that, whilst things may still occur, we will be handling them appropriately.

Ms Burch: And I think it is worth noting that in the state of service report, which I think you are referring to, Mrs Jones, CIT were underrepresented in complaints and had no active complaints by CIT staff. I think that reflects the effort that they have put in over very recent times.

MRS JONES: I do not want to put words in your mouth, but would you then agree that there is a lower level issue or do you think that CIT is past that?

Ms Burch: I think CIT is reaping the benefit of very diligent, very active attention to this. That is reflected, I think, in the state of service report and the events of not so long ago when CIT brought this very much to everyone's attention. The journey CIT went through, I think, now reflects that people are aware of it.

MRS JONES: Clearly some people have been moved and so on. Dr Stenlake, if I may, in relation to the training that you talked about that managers have done, are you able to outline what that is and how many people have been trained?

Dr Stenlake: We have had three versions of training in prevention of bullying, and that is for all staff. It is actually mandatory for all staff at CIT to undertake that training and—

MRS JONES: How many hours is it? Is it one day or half a day?

Dr Stenlake: We are doing it online and we change it every year. It is not going over the same ground. It remains fresh. There is always, with what we offer, an additional component for people who are managers or supervisors. If people are promoted and have a supervisory role they are then required to undertake that training.

MRS JONES: One of the things that we have had raised with us before was the online training modules that are offered often as part of training. The ability to really know whether the message is sinking in, I suppose, is less able to be tested because you are not doing the one on ones or you are not doing the detailed conversations. People can tick a box. That is obviously better than nothing, but I am just wondering: are you also then analysing the attitudes post training or doing any of that sort of thing?

Dr Stenlake: That is just one thing that we are doing to support that change in culture. There has been a lot of key messaging around expectations. There is certainly now a culture at CIT where inappropriate behaviour is called. It is made quite clear what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. We are able to do that in such a way that people take that feedback on board, they make the necessary changes and it then does not go to a complaints process. It is the ongoing cultural change to which the training is just one element. To just do training and nothing else is not going to be the solution.

MRS JONES: But are you assessing the change that has occurred, or is it just by the number of complaints?

Ms Burch: It could be your RED officers and that conversation, your staff satisfaction surveys. There will be a number of elements within routine processes that you would go to.

Dr Stenlake: That is right. I think I alluded to this in the estimates hearings: within the policies that we have in place, any issues that are raised in relation to bullying and harassment are flagged at my level so that I am able to be aware of any situations that are occurring across CIT.

MRS JONES: And the no wrong door policy.

Dr Stenlake: That is why I say that there has been very significant improvement in that we are not seeing those issues come forward and people are raising concerns at an earlier level. Then they are fairly readily resolved before they actually become a major issue.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a very quick supplementary because we need to go on to the next section. Could you ask that question?

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, a supplementary further to Mrs Jones's initial question on CIT and the Chief Minister's statement. Apparently it has drawn a fair bit of attention. There were two letters in the *Canberra Times*. I am not sure if you have seen them. One of them was from Mike Fitzgerald, who had a fairly close association with CIT.

Mr Fitzgerald refers to attempts he made to alert CIT and the wider ACT government to an agency that could assist in addressing the CIT bullying issues. Given Mr Fitzgerald's close involvement with many of those who were victims of bullying at CIT, what comments do you have on the proposals that he was trying, I think, to get both the ACT public service commissioner and CIT to take on?

Ms Burch: Before I go to Dr Stenlake, let me just remind the committee that the investigation that was rigorous, independent, lengthy and thorough by the commissioner and independent reviewers found no systematic case. Yes, there were events that could have been handled better. I have had many conversations with you about this, Mr Doszpot, and I know you have had briefings with the commissioner. It is unfortunate, I believe, that you continue to use language to indicate that there was evidence of systematic bullying found, and there simply was not. There are people who feel aggrieved, and I understand and I respect that, but the other matters have been resolved. I will go to Dr Stenlake.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, you are misrepresenting what I asked. What I said was that there is a gentleman who was involved closely within the CIT, within the union movement, I guess, in trying to address the issues. He was suggesting some solutions. I am asking what attempts were made, what is your opinion on some of the solutions offered and why were they not taken up.

Ms Burch: Mr Doszpot, you also used language about victims of bullying, which makes an inference that they were substantiated. I just wanted to clarify that.

MR DOSZPOT: I just repeated what my question was.

THE CHAIR: I think you need to go away and find out whether or not there has been any response to these particular suggestions. Perhaps I could suggest—

Ms Burch: No. Mr Doszpot has just said there was a letter to the *Canberra Times*. I have no doubt that this gentleman has put regular correspondence into CIT and that the agency has responded. Perhaps Dr Stenlake—

Dr Stenlake: Perhaps I could—

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister; that is exactly what I was saying. I did not want you to answer the question now. Dr Stenlake, we have not got the time. That is why I was saying that you might like to go away, minister, and look to see what responses have been given.

Ms Burch: Ample response that has been provided.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I am sure, and what can actually be shared with the committee, because I am aware that some of this may be confidential information. I know that dealing with individuals is not necessarily something that we need to do as a committee. It is better for us to look at the systems rather than the individuals. Thank you for that.

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: I think you did take some questions on notice?

Ms Burch: We are coming back with a couple of things.

THE CHAIR: You will come back with a few, including the one you have just taken now. If we can have them within five business days? Thank you very much. Members have four days after the *Hansard* is given to them to put more questions. Certainly when you get the *Hansard*, let us know if there are any corrections. Thank you very much, Mr Kay, and all the other officials who are appearing before us this morning. We will put any other questions on notice that may have come up that members may have.

We will now go on to the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority. Mr Carter, good morning, and welcome.

Mr Carter: Good morning, everybody. May I offer our chairman's apologies? Mr Service was unable to change an appointment and he will not be here this morning.

MR DOSZPOT: I saw him last night and he offered his apology then.

THE CHAIR: You are here for the annual reports hearing of 2013-14 into the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, as part of the Education and Training annual reports hearings. You are familiar with the pink sheet in front of you, the privileges card?

Mr Carter: Yes, I am.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Did you want to make any opening statement at all?

Mr Carter: No.

THE CHAIR: We will go straight to questions then. In your annual report it talks about achievements in entry level training and funding provided by the authority to group training organisations, and the investment in entry level training. That is important for the current and future workforces. That is on page 11 of your report. Would you like to talk to that amount of investment and how you decide where you are going to invest it?

Mr Carter: The entry level program investment is for registered group training organisations within the ACT, those that meet the requirements of the ACT Education and Training Directorate. We provide an annual subsidy per employed apprentice to those group training organisations that employ apprentices, of which we have, I think, currently eight. It is different to the skill shortage program that we also provide as an incentive for all employers to employ apprentices. Those payments are made quarterly in arrears. The current arrangement is in the order of \$1,500 per apprentice and that increases by five per cent on an annual basis, and it is done on a calendar year basis.

It is demand driven in that those group training organisations decide how many they will employ. It is paid to employed apprentices with group training organisations that

are not in a stand-down mode if they are without employment, because many organisations will stand them down if they do not have a host to place them with. We have seen a shift this year to last year in that group training numbers may be down slightly, but down no job is also down considerably compared to what it was last year. Many of them get trapped in that cycle of having to employ them over a three to four-year period. Many organisations and GTOs advised us around September last year of the enormous difficulty with placing apprentices because they were carrying numbers that were strong from the economy back in 2011 and 2012. We are seeing an adjustment with that, but that is essentially where that \$1 million is allocated to.

We also provide those organisations with an annual payment for a workplace health and safety field officer to go around and check on and work with apprentices in mentoring roles. We also provide them with an incentive payment, depending on how many they have, and that is calculated by the board and agreed by the board for the care and ongoing welfare of apprentices that they employ.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary to your question. Mr Carter, with regard to the question Ms Porter asked first off, how much involvement have you had with asbestos training?

Mr Carter: This year we have provided funding to eligible participants in the order of 12,000, almost \$1 million, for the asbestos awareness program, which was regulated as of 1 July. It is not a new thing for the authority because we have had that program for over 10 years. I know that the 2009 date was used in the guidance note by WorkSafe ACT to determine what training would be recognised. Currently we have records that indicate we have provided funding to eligible workers—over 17,000 since 2009, which is about \$1.4 million. That is just in asbestos awareness.

MR DOSZPOT: Obviously it is a very serious issue in the community at the moment. I am interested to hear how it affects your activities. I think you mentioned 12,000. That was in the last financial year?

Mr Carter: Yes, the calendar year. Since the financial year it is probably in the order of 8,000.

Ms Burch: Clearly there is a need. I think you have led the nation in developing the training and having that opportunity, but I think the agency would see a growth in that demand.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes. I guess I am trying to assess and also understand whether you see this as becoming an increased need in the short term as well.

Mr Carter: The 2014 training plan and the advice we received from industry was that asbestos awareness training was going to be required. The board agreed to provide a subsidy payment of \$80 per person to eligible participants. Many had also undertaken the training and were not eligible for our subsidy. The numbers may be more than that, but that is what we have paid for to assist industry. The 2015 training plan has indicated that there will be additional training in the area of people working with

asbestos and that has been reflected in our training plan for 2015.

MR DOSZPOT: I am conscious of moving on. My substantive question, quickly: there was a decline of some 77 per cent in funding for access and equity programs due to the number of stakeholders not proceeding with projects approved by the authority. Why were funded programs not perceived as worthy?

Mr Carter: A range of reasons. I have been in consultation with them. Many of those projects we have given consideration to giving them extensions of time. Some of the kids at risk programs that that RTOs have come up with are very worth while and are some of the most difficult to progress. Given that we fund on a completion basis, it takes a lot more work to ensure that people are captured within the process in order that they can complete. We have offered extensions of time in many of those instances.

The funding line that is drawn at 30 June is what has been completed at that time. There are some \$70,000 to \$80,000 worth of funded programs approved already by the fund that will fall into this financial year, if that makes sense, given that when the budget was drawn they were drawn to include the previous financial year.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a number of other questions, but I will put them on notice in the interests of time.

MS BERRY: I just had a question on page 72 of the report. It talks about the investigations that you carried out, the audits of training programs. You had targeted for 18, but you in fact did 28. How did that come about?

Ms Burch: Because they are very efficient and thorough.

Mr Carter: Based on the increased numbers of training. Last year we provided subsidies to 12,800 individuals, which was an increase on previous years. We do random checks. We can check every program we want, if we can, but it is just simply not possible with the number of staff we have. That said, we have an annual program of audit.

There were a number of new RTOs who were also in the market last year. Part of our policy is that we want to look at an initial audit of any new RTO within their first 12 months of training offered. As the minister previously explained, it is a national market now and we do have other providers that are eligible and able to provide the training in the ACT. Where they meet the quality standards and they are offering national courses with national outcomes, the fund is more than happy to support eligible workers in choosing those RTOs. So, simply, the number of training places provided necessitated an increase.

I might add too, which reflects back to the asbestos awareness, that this year in addition to the normal RTO audit training process we have indicated that we will be looking at over 2,000 individual applications for audit in the asbestos awareness as a separate audit process, given the large numbers. Again, from there we are trying to find that eligible people have received the rebate.

MRS JONES: Just briefly on the board sittings, how many times a year does the

board meet? The figure on page 67 of the report for the cost of it is \$24,205. Do board members receive sitting fees or honorariums and, if so, how much?

Mr Carter: In accordance with the independent tribunal costings, the board has the capacity to sit monthly. Where that is not deemed necessary, given that there will be approvals by the board, it will divert to two-monthly. We have a minimum requirement of eight meetings per year. The independent chair receives a stand-alone amount for being the chairman and the other members receive an amount per meeting they attend.

MRS JONES: Perhaps you can come back to us on notice with the figures.

Ms Burch: We can provide that. It has been through the tribunal.

MRS JONES: The number of members on the board and the number of meetings in the reporting period; thank you.

Mr Carter: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: We pass on our regards to the chairman as well, given he is unable to be with us. We do need to finish, and I apologise for starting a little bit later. On page 17 the increase in expenditure on research and development is pleasing to see. It is still below the 2012 figure that is quoted, which is quite a high figure. It was going up and up and then it seems to have had a little bit of a downturn and it is coming back up again. Perhaps you could, on notice, explain to us what is happening with that fund, the research and development, because I am pretty sure that it is an important thing for you?

Mr Carter: It is. We encourage applications from industry across all of our programs. This is not an amount of money that we, as the authority, set aside for that purpose. It is an amount of money dependent on the applications we receive from industry.

THE CHAIR: That is why it goes up and down.

Ms Burch: Yes, there are peaks and troughs.

THE CHAIR: So you have given me the answer.

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I do not think you have taken any questions on notice.

Ms Burch: Other than the board members—the board.

THE CHAIR: Yes, the board. I beg your pardon, you do.

MR DOSZPOT: And we will be giving you some questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: If we can have those within five business days? Members have got

four days after they receive the *Hansard* to submit other questions that they might have. You will receive a copy of the *Hansard*. Let us know if there are any issues with that. Thank you very much for appearing before us today.

Mr Carter: Thank you. If I could ask: the questions on notice from Mr Doszpot—will they come through the directorate?

Ms Burch: They will come through the directorate to you.

Mr Carter: To me; thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will make sure that you receive those, Mr Carter.

Mr Carter: Thank you.

Ms Burch: I thank Glenn and the board for the work they do. They serve our industry well with that additional support and training.

THE CHAIR: Hear, hear! Thanks very much, Mr Carter. It was a brief but hopefully pleasant time.

Mr Carter: Always pleasant.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: We will recommence. Minister and Ms Joseph, welcome to the annual reports hearing for Education and Training for 2013-14. Are you familiar with the pink sheet that is before you, the privilege statement? Are you comfortable with that, Ms Joseph?

Ms Joseph: Yes, I am.

THE CHAIR: I will go through the instructions about questions taken on notice at the end of the hearing. Minister, do you want to make an opening statement?

Ms Burch: If I could, chair; thank you for the opportunity. First and foremost, students are at the centre of everything that we do in our education system. As stated in the directorate strategic plan, every child deserves the opportunity provided through education, irrespective of where they live, their circumstances or the school they attend.

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of significant achievements in education in the ACT, and I would like to highlight some of these. I am pleased that all public preschools have offered 15 hours of education to their students and that the ACT met all targets for preschool provision under the early childhood education national partnership. We continue to implement the Australian curriculum, providing national consistency in learning, assessing and reporting the performance of our students.

ACT students continue to lead the nation in NAPLAN and in international

assessments such as PISA. In addition to reading, numeracy and science there are also programs in place to support student learning in social sciences, language, arts, music and PE. Students with initial needs are supported through a range of initiatives, including the student aspiration program for high achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and transition action plans for support transitions for students with a disability.

Earlier this year I launched a new policy to enhance educational options for gifted and talented students. ACT public schools continue to be strongly supported by the community, with growth in enrolments in public schools in 2014 outstripping population growth. The enrolment processes for public schools have been streamlined and a parental engagement program has been initiated by the ACT government. This aims to strengthen parental engagement with their child's education and school across all education sectors in the ACT.

Earlier this year I launched the preschool matters initiative, which is designed to increase parent engagement and involvement in those early years. Teacher recruitment and development remain a focus for our public schools, with more than 470 new teachers being inducted into public schools at the beginning of this year. Five additional graduates were recruited under a teach for Australia program and 46 teachers were promoted to executive teacher professional practice positions. I have also announced that in 2015 all teachers seeking recruitment into our public education system must undergo a test to demonstrate that they are in the top 30 per cent of the country in their personal levels of literacy and numeracy.

The committee should recognise that quality teaching is also part and parcel of the work that is done through the Teacher Quality Institute. As you know, the government instituted the TQI to build the professional capabilities and standing of all ACT teachers—those in Catholic, independent and public schools. I have just had the pleasure of going to a TQI function, and there were teachers and educational leaders from all sectors there, learning about how they can enhance their profession.

All parents and carers hold high expectations about the quality of education that their children receive, no matter which school they attend, and there is no doubt about the key role that each teacher plays in achieving this.

Key achievements have been the introduction of the Australian professional standards for teachers and the common code of practice. Through its collaborative work across sectors TQI is promoting and recognising quality professional learning and ongoing development for all teachers. While TQI exercises major regulatory functions it is important to recognise that, as described in the annual report, a fundamental point is to raise the quality of the teaching profession.

The ACT government has continued its strong track record of investment in school infrastructure. A significant achievement was the reopening of Taylor Primary School, following remediation works at the beginning of this year, with increased and growing enrolments. The government has also announced plans to build and fund construction of a new primary school in the Molonglo suburb of Coombs, which will cater for more than 700 students and will be ready for the 2016 school year. The new Canberra College Cares facility that will provide options for educational needs of pregnant and

parenting students is on track for opening next year.

I am proud to present the great achievements that the Education and Training Directorate does. Before we go to questions I would like to take the opportunity to thank Diane Joseph, her executive team and each and every one of our teachers and support staff across our schools. They serve our community well and as a result our kids are learning in the best education system in the country.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I am sure the committee supports that statement about the fine education system that we have. Minister, I want to ask you about the contract with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth which is looking into parent engagement. Can you tell us a little more about this project and what it will deliver for ACT school communities?

Ms Burch: Certainly, parental engagement has been a key focus of mine since coming into the ministry, and recognising that everyone appreciates the importance of parental engagement. As I have moved around talking to families and teachers, I have realised that it means different things to different people. It is important to recognise the chair of APFACTS, which is the independent schools P&C, who was quite an inspirational advocate for parental engagement. She and I had a number of discussions which led in many ways to me having the directorate secure ARACY to do this project. But it is also important to do it in a cross-sectoral sense, given the make-up of our school community here in the ACT.

The work for this year has started and next year we will start to see some outcomes and some resources provided to schools. Leanne Wright, who is making her way to the table, can talk in detail about that. But I am very pleased with the program and I must admit I was very pleased also to see that at a federal level ARACY is being supported to provide some information and research into parental engagement.

Ms Wright: The ACT project with ARACY commenced in March this year. From the ground up the cross-sectoral approach is at the forefront of the initiative that has been established. It has a governance structure which provides for the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Office to partner with the directorate as a steering committee for the project. Underlying that is the cross-sectoral stakeholder focus group, which includes all of those sectors of education plus the parent peak bodies that support those organisations.

The minister has already mentioned APFACTS. There is also the ACT council of P&Cs from the government sector and the newly formed Catholic Schools Parents Association from the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Those groups have commenced meeting regularly with ARACY, who are driving the project for us. There is a significant investment by the ACT government in the project, which will be completed by December 2015. Approximately \$273,000 is the ACT government investment in this parental engagement initiative.

The project focused initially on holding some stakeholder groups and some research and evidence gathering right across a broad research base about what is a definition of parental engagement. Across the country nationally, there is no articulated definition of what parental engagement is. One of the clear factors and challenges about it is that

it is often used interchangeably with parental involvement.

ARACY are working on a definition based on our ACT context through feedback with stakeholders, parent forums, through engaging with each of the sectors of education to determine a shared understanding and definition of what parental engagement is in the ACT. That definition is due for delivery under the project at the end of November this year. Supporting that definition will be a guide for parents and a guide for teachers around that definition and how it should be used and how it impacts on our work.

The second and third phases of the project provide a range of resources that will be web based and also fact sheets for parents and teachers around evidence-based strategies that enhance parental engagement. The essence of this is that parents are the first and most important initial partners in the education of their children. They do their first learning through the family setting. So the role of parents in partnering with schools is to enhance the learning outcomes of students. It is not to devalue, criticise or in any way, shape or form lessen the impact of parental involvement activities around voluntary capacities that parents take on in the school to support fundraising and those types of activities, but it is really focused on the enhancement of learning outcomes.

With respect to the evidence base about strong parental engagement in learning outcomes, the research shows that that can add six months of progress to any child's learning outcomes when we get that right. So that is the focus of it. That second phase is there.

The other important aspect of the project is the development of a tool of measurement—the development of some kind of survey process. The work that ARACY is really focused on is how we can measure, track and monitor improvement in parental engagement across our schools. There is strong support from all sectors of schooling around the capacity to be able to say how well we are doing this, how engaged our parents are, and how they reflect upon the partnerships they have with schools. So there is a pilot to trial some initial survey tools that will be developed during the early part of 2015. The pilot will engage four schools—two from the government sector, one from the independent sector and one from the Catholic sector—and those schools will trial this tool and engage directly with ARACY in its development. At the end of the project—

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Wright, can I interrupt you briefly? You mentioned the parameters that you are going to be working within. Is there any measurement of where we are at the moment in parental engagement?

Ms Wright: At this stage, no, because there is not a tool that adequately—

MR DOSZPOT: It would be interesting to know where we are now and where we could head, but there is no way of measuring what sort of parental engagement we have had over the last few years?

Ms Wright: I think the benefit of the survey tool at the end of the project is that we will be able to gather that baseline data, look at our implementation of the strategies

developed throughout the project, and how they, once implemented in our schools, impact on those levels of parental engagement in feedback.

As I said, the four schools were engaged in piloting it. The tool will be refined, and by the end of next year all of these things will be in place to support our work in this important area.

THE CHAIR: Before I go to Mrs Jones with her supplementary, I just want to clarify something. We have these four schools which are across the sector then, the public and independent schools?

Ms Burch: And Catholic.

Ms Wright: And Catholic, yes.

THE CHAIR: Are they involved in the pilot?

Ms Wright: Yes.

THE CHAIR: And going forward with the project, will all schools be involved in that or will there be again some selected schools?

Ms Wright: The vision is that all schools will engage with the resources and the materials developed throughout the project, and there is a strong commitment from all sectors of education in the ACT to the project, to that cross-sectoral governance of the project and to the successful implementation. There is a very common, shared value of the project.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: On the definition that is being worked on, you are talking about monitoring the levels of engagement. Obviously you have not launched the definition yet, but are we generally talking about hours spent doing homework with children and that type of engagement with where they are at in their actual work? Are we talking about parents who volunteer at the school, this type of thing? Or is it both? My understanding of this type of concept, tell me if I am wrong, is about parents engaging their frontal lobe in exactly where their child is up to. I am wondering how that will be monitored, and whether it might be a bit intrusive. What are you saying on that?

Ms Wright: The definition is very much structured around what is parental engagement with your child's learning, what does it look like, what are the opportunities and what are the ways we can strengthen that. ARACY are looking at a range of factors, and I think that concept of homework or home learning or learning at home supports the learning at school. It is actually about developing those links and the valuing of the contributions that parents can make to the engagement with learning and progress in learning. The involvement side of things around volunteering in spaces that are not directly aligned with the learning aspects of education, while still very much valued, is not the focus of this.

MRS JONES: And briefly, is consideration being given to more access to parents to

the classroom, for example? I know in the very early years parents are encouraged to come into the classroom, but as kids go on parents sometimes can be more or less excluded from entry, for various reasons. I just wondered if that is being considered, to actually know where your child is at.

Ms Burch: I think that is part of it, and it is my experience that as children get older they want to distance the parents as well.

MRS JONES: Not always.

Ms Burch: No, not always, but I think one of the outcomes of this project is that parents that are active or want to be active will empower themselves. They will often find ways to get in. But this will also empower those parents that are hesitant or unaware about their place to be at the front and centre of their children's learning in partnership with the school as well.

Ms Wright: I think it is the identification of those strategies that research shows is effective and articulating so that there is a shared understanding between parents, teachers and the school around what are the things that are effective in engaging with parents to facilitate improvement in student outcomes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, you have a supplementary.

MS BERRY: I think this is a really exciting project, and it is a project that will help and assist parents who can engage. But there are a whole bunch of parents who, for lots of different reasons—whether it is English as a second language, working irregular or long hours, or who have had bad educational experiences themselves—do not engage. Will this pilot look at how those parents can be supported and how parents who might be vulnerable or have children who are in care can be supported through this?

Ms Wright: Thanks for the question. It has been a very clear focus of the project that the definition and strategies should be as inclusive as possible. It is not about presenting a position that parents could see themselves in. That is the language that has been used. We want every parent to be able to see themselves and the contribution that they can make irrespective of their circumstances. Then the work that we will do as teachers is about making sure that, where there are some barriers, we employ the strategies to overcome those barriers. It is very much at the forefront that it would be really important that every parent can see themselves in the definition and the strategies, and that it is very inclusive.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary too, which goes to a commentary on page 38 of the report. Again, I am wondering about the definition in this particular dot point under "Our Challenges", dot point 2, which says that clearer communication with families and an easing of red tape were identified as an area of action in order to enhance community engagement in schools. I am wondering whether that community engagement phrase there in fact means community involvement in the way that you were describing it, Ms Wright, because it seems to me that the red tape may be in relation to entering the school as a volunteer. Maybe I am wrong; maybe this is talking about something different. I want some clarity around what is the red tape, and

how is it preventing parents from becoming either engaged or involved?

Ms Joseph: Red tape is a fairly broad term, basically to say what our administrative processes are that we could streamline. Over the last 12 months we have streamlined our enrolment processes, for instance, for that sort of parent engagement and how we do things smarter. We have also done things like refining lease agreements with community groups to make sure there is a consistency of approach across our public schools in what the agreements look like and make sure we have got a professional approach but are not adding hurdles for community groups to access school facilities.

Ms Burch: Ms Garrison might be able to add to that.

Ms Garrison: In addition to the work that we are doing around online enrolment, we are really hopeful that through that process, as it grows and develops, medical forms and information forms need only be done once or at certain transitions rather than every year renewing those. But we are also looking at our policies and have begun work on looking at our policies and procedures to ensure that they are more accessible and that we do reduce as much as we can some red tape where it can be reduced.

We want to reduce that lens that this is just a bureaucratic process that we are asking parents to go through in order to take away the burden on parents all the time. They may see the notes that come home or they may not as the notes do not get out of the school bags. It can be done more online. Tell your story once, perhaps, is the way we are going. We are not there yet. This is a work in progress. Our online enrolment was our first step, but we are continuing to really have that lens over everything we do.

Ms Joseph: And together with that, so far as the whole community is concerned, we are really looking at our web page, at our web presence, and what is the information, and how does the broader community access information that might be contained within the Education and Training Directorate, particularly finding out what is on offer within our schools, how our public schools connect, information about priority enrolment areas, really making sure our web presence is informative. We have done some changes, particularly in recent months, to that web presence, and we have got a lot more work to do in that regard as well.

THE CHAIR: There is the web presence. Does that also inform parents about the way that they can become involved as a volunteer and the different things that they have to do in order that they fulfil the requirements of working with vulnerable people?

Ms Joseph: The start of the answer is no. Directly on our web page, no, is the answer at this point in time. That information usually is more down on the school website pages. However, the working with vulnerable people checks—

Ms Garrison: On the working with vulnerable people checks, there are some clear guidelines on that through our policies about who needs to get a working with vulnerable people check before they work in the schools. It is there. It is on the web page, but sometimes you have got to know what you are looking for, like all web pages, often to find that information. But we do want to make those sorts of things far more accessible and link with schools so that the information that schools provide is

exactly the same or linked directly back to the one source.

THE CHAIR: It is a work in progress as far as the website is concerned with making it totally user friendly. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I would like to take you to the school satisfaction surveys on page 46. The satisfaction survey extract on page 54 is tracking overall satisfaction of parents and carers with the education provided at public schools. It shows an overall rating consistency at or above 80 per cent, which is excellent. The same survey outlined in primary school annual reports has more detailed measures of satisfaction. One of the measures is around the safety at school. In any number of schools, the percentage of positive responses from parents to the statement “my child feels safe at school” is considerably higher than the students’ response to the statement “I feel safe at school”.

I have a couple of examples of this. We have got Charnwood-Dunlop, where the parents’ satisfaction is 77 per cent to “my child feels safe at school”, while the student satisfaction is 44 per cent, “I feel safe at school”. There is a whole list of schools with various examples. Some were equal. There is a consistent gap between parents and children which is, in part, understandable, but of more concern is that a serious majority of students in some schools do not feel safe at school. Equally concerning is the gap in those schools between parents’ belief and students’ belief.

At Charles Conder 85 per cent of parents feel that their children are safe at school, yet only 45 per cent of the students feel that they are safe at school. Minister, what comment do you have on these numbers?

Ms Burch: You have gone into quite a bit of detail. I might ask Beth Mitchell and Tracy Stewart to respond to that. We do those surveys so that we can always keep our mind on providing a good, safe environment. At a very high level, we have got an absolute commitment to safe schools. We may, at the end of the response to some of the detail, make comment too about a survey that was released today for parents and carers of students. One of the questions in that survey was: how do you feel about your school, and what makes you make your decisions about where you put your children?

Ms Mitchell: I am thinking about your question, which is huge, and I am not quite sure exactly where to start.

MR DOSZPOT: It is fairly simple. There seems to be quite a number of parents whose understanding of whether their children are safe at school is much higher than the children at that same school are responding.

Ms Mitchell: I can talk of the work from the perspective that my branch does in working with students to ensure they have the avenues to express their concerns, to get support and to make sure that their school climate is one that is safe and that they identify with. So one of the key things I will start with is the minister-student congress and the work that is done in that space around student voice and student activism. That has been going from the end of 2012 into 2013.

We had one the other day where a young man who, in year 5, at the student congress, talked to all our school leaders about his experiences of feeling worried and bullied at school, what he wanted to do, and what he hoped he could change. It was an amazing speech from a young man in year 5. He was a leader in his primary school. He did stuff across the system. Lots of other school leaders went back and took on some of his suggestions. They worked at it from the students' perspective.

He is now in year 7, and he was at the last congress. He is on the minister-student congress executive. He is a leader in year 7 at high school. He transitioned to high school beautifully. From year 5 to year 7 the change in the support, led by him and his peers and from the school side, to me, is an example of students deciding how they can change things with the support of the school.

Really we facilitated all of that. They know who they can call on for help, they know who they need to talk to, they know what they want to change, and they know how they can do that at their own school. They can say, "Let's start this club, let's do this thing, let's say what is not okay, let's have our bullying, no way campaign, let's do this, let's do that."

I think the discrepancy between the parents' higher think "my child is safe" and the lower student think is that they are not actually going home and talking to parents, and parents are not in the loop. We are really encouraging that as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, that is totally contradictory.

Ms Mitchell: Is it?

MR DOSZPOT: If the child is going home and saying that, then the parent would realise that the child does not feel safe.

Ms Mitchell: Correct. I said they are not going home and saying that when—

MR DOSZPOT: The child is not feeling safe at school.

Ms Burch: No. I think—

Ms Joseph: If I could just interject here—

Ms Burch: Yes.

Ms Joseph: The way we use our surveys is that we have a lot of data that our schools use, important data, particularly the survey instruments that we use. We survey our parents, our students, and our teachers, and we do that not just in public schools. There are national assessments that we do. There is a safe schools initiative across the country for all schools. We are really looking at the safety and wellbeing particularly from a student perspective but also a school perspective. When we get the data and when principals get the data, they do not just look at the parents and the students. They look at that. They then look also at the results of the students. They look at attendance. They look at transitions. They look at exit destinations. They look at the whole picture.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Joseph, if I can interrupt you, the survey is good. I think you are doing a good job in getting the information. What I am trying to understand is: what is the departmental view on what is happening? If 45 per cent of children in a particular school say to you at the school that they do not feel safe at school and they do not say the same thing to their parents, that is one issue, but I cannot quite understand why the difference is so great. Are you concerned and what methodology would you employ to address your concern?

Ms Joseph: Yes, Mr Doszpot; as I was saying, when we drill down to the data at the school level, that is exactly what it is for, because if you get that sort of data at an individual school, the responsibility and accountability of the principal in working with the directorate, in working with our support teams, means there are questions there.

We would not just wait for a survey instrument. We need to look at trends over time. We need to look at actual incidents within the school and the plan that the school has. The principal leads, in working with the school community, with the parents, with the students, in addressing any issues that are arising. So where there is a discrepancy, that is absolutely what we look at from the departmental perspective. We can look at averages, but we do drill down exactly as you have done with that data. That is where our network leaders and our people with expertise, our psychologists, our counsellors, our disability workers, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, put a cohesive plan into place. That could be at quite different levels depending on the circumstances of the school.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that, yes.

Ms Joseph: So that is where we use the data to say, “Okay, where do we need extra support to go to?” Similarly, we have student surveys and parent surveys that are very high. That is where we analyse and say, “Okay, do those two schools need the same sort of support?” So with respect to our school network leaders, expert principals, experts in experience, experts in locating who are the best people within the Education and Training Directorate or from across government, how do we move our resources to where they are required most? If there is a one-off incident in a school, we can draw our teams in to support the principal. With respect to any strategy or response to data, particularly where you see such a discrepancy, that is where we would go and support the principal, and we would do maybe short, medium or long-term plans, and we would use data to say, “Have we made a difference?”

For instance, with students, we do the kids matter survey. That can be something that a principal can employ at a particular time, benchmark the start, benchmark the end, add in some extra questions. With the kids matter survey you can talk about what is happening in the schoolyard and pinpoint what the issues are. The principal then has data to say, “How do we then build a plan to respond?” Importantly, as Ms Mitchell was saying, how do we make sure students’ voices are in that, and how do we make sure that parents’ voices are in that, collectively and individually, particularly when we get to issues—or is it a cultural issue? As I say, it is about immediate action—short-term, medium-term and long-term action—and sometimes it is about perceptions. We would help the principal to go in and talk about renewing the vision,

looking at behaviour management policies, looking at the expectations. Often where students sometimes do not feel safe, it might be a case of getting back to making sure we have an orderly environment, and making sure we have very clear expectations, and high expectations.

MR DOSZPOT: I do understand that it is a complex issue, and I do understand that it is a survey result that is quite comprehensive. You have answered my question, thank you. We would possibly want some other detailed background information which may not be relevant at the moment.

Ms Joseph: Certainly.

MR DOSZPOT: Whatever information you can provide to the committee on that would be useful. In particular, what information does a parent get? We have got this from the annual report. How many parents go through the annual report? Are parents made aware of the discrepancy between their own perception of the safety of their child and the children's perception of their safety? That is my concern. I do not expect an instant answer but I want to highlight these issues, and I wonder whether there is anything further that you want to add.

Ms Joseph: I will add something further. Schools produce their annual reports with the data in them, as you have said. Schools would employ different strategies in having conversations with their parent, student and teacher communities, and their broader communities, and that would vary from school to school. However, the requirement to table your annual report with the data is actually encouraging and supporting those conversations, so that we are transparent and accountable for what is happening, and so that we can strive for even better performance.

Together with that, each school develops an annual operating plan, and the community is involved in establishing those annual operating plans. Particularly if there is a blip in the data, we would expect in that annual operating plan immediate action at a whole-school level. Every four years the school does a full review and validation and looks really deeply into the data, and comes up with a school strategic plan, an external validation process, where we use as much data as we have for the last four years to see whether there is a downward trend or an upward trend, and to see how we can improve things even more.

But wherever there is an issue of a student feeling unsafe or a parent is concerned about the safety of their child, they should contact the school first; if not, contact our community liaison officer, contact the department directly, and/or go straight to Canberra Connect. I am really proud to be able to say how responsive our schools are to any concerns that are raised around any person's wellbeing within the education and training system, particularly within our public schools.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, I would like to ask some questions about child care. We know that access to affordable and quality child care still remains a concern amongst our community. Could you inform the committee of how the government has approached this policy problem to help resolve issues around access to child care?

Ms Burch: We have responded quite significantly regarding early education and care. Certainly, with respect to investment in infrastructure, in building childcare places, just this year the new centre at Holder became operational. The Franklin early ed school was an addition to the other early ed schools that we have across our system. We are supporting staff. So we are supporting it in bricks and mortar and in the development of staff. We have a land release program. We have seen a significant increase in numbers. It has effectively meant a doubling of the number of places in the last decade, and a serious increase over the last two years following that investment. Ms Garrison might like to talk about it some more.

Ms Garrison: Investment in these early years is really significant for our community. There has been the provision of 9,900 places for children of preschool age and under in centre-based education. That is current, as of October 2014. In addition we have approximately 3,300 places for children in government preschools. So there has been growth, as the minister said, in terms of that—double since 2001.

Also, additional places have been made available in Fyshwick, Macarthur and Crace in recent times. The regulation unit are continually being exposed to growth. There are more services daily, having regard to the range of services that we provide, that are opening. So it is a very healthy environment. The national quality framework that has been introduced and that we are assessing against is there to really ensure the quality of those education services in those very important early years from birth through to school age.

MS BERRY: I have some other questions on child care. With respect to the growth in the provision of new services in the ACT, there is a new centre that will be opening in Kippax in 2015, operated by the YMCA. Are there any plans for further early childhood centres to be built in west Belconnen in the next couple of years?

Ms Burch: Certainly, the private sector is responding to the demand by Canberra families. As the population grows—and we have predominantly a growing family demographic here in Canberra—the private market is responding. As a government, we have extended our existing bricks and mortar. Most of the long day care providers are in the community sector, which is quite different from other jurisdictions. Even so, they are in our facilities, and we are providing refurbishments and extensions to many of those facilities as well. Ms Sullivan, who is from the children's policy and regulation unit, is probably closer to the ground and has these conversations with the sector each and every week.

Ms Sullivan: As Joanne indicated, we often have phone calls and meetings with potential new providers in the ACT. We probably have about eight services that are going to open sometime early next year. These are all either private stand-alones or private providers that have services in other jurisdictions or services already here. Generally they are the larger, 90-place services. So the growth is continuing. Family day care is also continuing to grow in the ACT.

MS BERRY: Still on child care, the minister talked about some of the support that is being provided to early childhood educators in the ACT with regard to qualifications. Minister, is it really a case of quality versus affordability, as some have suggested?

Ms Burch: It is just too simplistic a way of putting it. You cannot afford not to focus on quality in these early years. There is not a research paper, an expert or an academic that does not recognise the value and importance of the early years education. The NQF, which has been in place for a number of years, clearly has not stalled the growth of the sector. It continues to grow.

There is often talk about the cost of child care. I think the unfortunate comment made in the Assembly was that, if you cannot afford it, it makes no difference how good it is. I do not think as a society we can afford not to have quality early ed, so it should not even be under consideration. The alternative is to give no attention to the quality of your workforce, to give no attention to the quality of the learning environment. That will have nothing but a negative effect, and I do not know of any family out there that will put their hand up and say, “I’ll drop my little one off every morning to an untrained, overcrowded, poor facility.” There is not a family in town that will do that.

Ms Garrison: Can I talk about ensuring that the providers and educators are qualified? There are two early childhood scholarship initiatives that we are currently supporting. One of those is the early childhood cert III scholarship, and the other is a newly launched one this year, the early childhood degree scholarship program. I am just looking at my numbers here. The early childhood scholarship was originally for 85 places. They have been done, and we have given out an additional 52. So it is very popular. The scholarship program funds 29 places, and that was fully filled this year. They are two scholarships that encourage educators to have qualifications. So that is around quality.

Ms Burch: I think we are the only jurisdiction that has this broad breadth of support in this area, which is in bricks and mortar, land release and supporting staff. If you look at staffing, my comment earlier was that long day care in the ACT is predominantly in the community sector. These are not for profit. They are not private entities; they are not there with the goal of making money out of Canberra families. The highest cost they have is the workforce, but it is also well recognised that the workforce in early ed have a serious case around fair pay for the job that they do, and to be recognised for their professional status as early educators.

I think the day is long gone when it was described as child care—and I must admit I am still guilty of using the words “child care”. We should recognise that the profession of early education starts from day one. We should be providing our young ones with a positive learning experience. The matters of affordability of child care are, and will be, always linked to what we expect from our workforce, what we expect the carers, the educators of our children, to be, how we pay them, and what professional standard they have. That debate is yet to be resolved.

MS BERRY: Minister, the Productivity Commission’s report into early childhood education and child care was provided to the federal minister. It will not be released publicly till next year, but from the draft it is looking like qualifications for carers who care for children between birth and three could be watered down and that educator to child ratios will be averaged out across the week. How do you think these sorts of changes that might come into effect from next year will change and affect the

quality that is provided by early childhood educators?

Ms Burch: If you link training to the quality of care and education provided then it could have a negative impact. At the moment there is an expectation that everyone working in early ed has a cert III in early education services, or is working towards it, and there is an expectation of the number of those that hold the diploma and then the early education teacher qualification.

There have been some slight changes to the NQF regulation, as I understand it, around qualifications and so on. Whilst I understand that individual centres, especially smaller centres, need some flexibility about how they cover their workforce, I could not support a generic statement that we do not think a quality trained workforce is important.

MS BERRY: Particularly when the science shows that the learning starts from birth to three years.

Ms Burch: That is right.

MS BERRY: Those are the most important years for a child's brain development. Just on the educator to child ratios, do you think there is a possibility then in the ACT that for babies, where the ratio is four to one, that could be increased on a day over a week to eight-plus babies per day per educator under this suggestion by the Productivity Commission?

Ms Burch: I have not read the detail, I must admit. I have read some of the draft report. I will be interested to see what the final report looks like—

MS BERRY: Won't we all.

Ms Burch: and indeed the federal responses to it. I would say that most Canberra families and educators would think that, for the under-twos, a one to eight ratio was not attractive on a number of levels.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones, you had a supplementary.

MRS JONES: Yes, thank you. Obviously this is a very important area. I just wanted to ask what study you do through the department here in the ACT about the cost of childcare and how it relates to wage growth, particularly wage growth for women—which we know in the ACT is probably, on average, better than in many other places, but there are still low income workers who want to access child care—and the average cost in Canberra; whether it is increasing, and by how much over the reporting period.

Ms Burch: NATSEM did a recent report on cost. I think the agency was NATSEM. Ms Sullivan has probably got some information there.

Ms Garrisson: It is not something that the directorate does specifically; it relies on the reports of other—

MRS JONES: This a national report, is it?

Ms Burch: That is my understanding, yes.

Ms Garrison: Yes.

MRS JONES: Does it drill down to the ACT particularly?

Ms Garrison: No.

Ms Burch: It compared out-of-pocket expenses in ACT and the region. I think it managed to get to some areas within the ACT and also within the region. The way I look at it is this: is the market growing? Yes, it is growing. What is the participation level of women within the ACT? We know that it is high.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Burch: We probably have the narrowest gender pay gap. So women in the ACT are paid better than women elsewhere. I also go to the point that the majority of our long day care centres are operated by the community sector, as I said before. These are not for profit.

MRS JONES: I understand.

Ms Burch: They run on the smell of an oily rag, as my mother would say. They keep costs to a minimum for Canberra families.

MRS JONES: Yes, and most of their costs then are driven by what they need to do as far as the quality framework is concerned.

Ms Burch: To actually do the job, yes.

MRS JONES: My question is: do we do ACT specific studies ourselves to keep an eye on the cost? I think you are saying you rely on a national data set and the ACT's specific data within that.

Ms Burch: We have no lever or direct control over cost. These are costs that are determined by the services themselves and what are the cost drivers within that.

MRS JONES: And the quality framework, which is national; that is what you are saying.

Ms Joseph: Through the Education Council that Minister Burch is chairing this year, we provide input into national responses. For instance, with the Productivity Commission we have the opportunity around the national table to consider that. We will be considering, I believe, hopefully next year, the commonwealth government's response to that as well. We contribute, along with our jurisdictional colleagues, through the early childhood policy group to the issues and responses around this.

MRS JONES: That was not really my question. My question was around our study of the cost, how it compares to wages and how it compares, basically, to people's ability

to pay. If we are talking about frameworks and our own ACT legislation and so on and are then going to talk about quality and cost then my question really is: are we looking at quality and cost or are we just looking at quality, which is great, but are we doing both? I think the answer is not really, no.

Ms Burch: Just to be clear, the NQF is a national law and has national regulation, so every provider across the country is bound by that.

MRS JONES: That is right.

Ms Burch: We rely on studies that are done by institutes here in the ACT, again nationally, and I think Ms Sullivan has got a PricewaterhouseCoopers one. We often look at not just what is the dollar cost per day but what are the out-of-pocket expenses.

MRS JONES: How do they differ? I am not 100 per cent—

Ms Burch: If you have a service that cost \$100 a day or \$150 a day—

MRS JONES: One which provides lunch and one which does not?

Ms Burch: There could be a whole range of things in there.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Burch: It is also what is the average—

MS BERRY: But it is not wages, that is for sure.

Ms Burch: income for the families that are accessing that service.

MRS JONES: I see.

Ms Burch: Therein lies the affordability question. It is deeper and more complex than just—

MRS JONES: Because we have more money we can afford a little more—that type of thing, on the whole.

Ms Burch: As to the way the government subsidise, as I have said, we provide a lot of bricks and mortar to our long day care centres. If they are in subsidised rental accommodation their outgoings are less, therefore—

MRS JONES: And their cost should be just a little bit less, yes.

Ms Burch: Yes. A couple of years ago we looked at all our services to try and get a price difference to see if it was significant. There was a difference of less than \$2 a day—

MRS JONES: Difference across the sector.

Ms Burch: between the community and the non-community sector. Mr Gniel might wish to add to that.

Mr Gniel: I was just going to add to the minister's statements about the work that we feed into on a national level, but it also goes to your question, Mrs Jones, which is about how we look at what is proposed at the national level. From an ACT perspective, we prioritise responding in this way: what will this mean in terms of costs, for example, to the community that is ACT specific? For example, at the moment they are looking at some changes to legislation, and we are part of developing that. But we are also part of responding to that about what that might mean for our community. The Productivity Commission is where a lot of that work is going to come together next year. Not only will the commonwealth government have their response to that but also at that time we will be able to look at how that will look for the ACT.

MRS JONES: I am absolutely certain that you input into the general process. Just another question then in that area: do we have any information about cost, as in this generalised cost concept rather than just the cost per day, for larger families? We know that there is a great drop-off rate from the workforce when women go to baby number three. When we are talking about cost and ability to pay, there are decisions families are forced to make as a result. Does that input into our data set as well?

Ms Joseph: That is the challenge for the Productivity Commission.

MRS JONES: It is a big challenge.

Ms Joseph: We will look at the report and recommendations and any proposed changes and solutions that may be presented.

Ms Burch: You have got the rebate, you have got the benefit, and also for vulnerable families and those that need additional assistance a simple way of saying it is that we purchase a number of places for those really vulnerable families that will need it at the time. Can we quantify that?

MRS JONES: Some people with large families are not necessarily classed as vulnerable.

Ms Burch: No.

MRS JONES: And so it should be.

Ms Burch: But there are some that just need that additional support.

MRS JONES: Yes, absolutely.

Ms Burch: And to make sure that cost is not a barrier to receiving that support. That is why we do it.

Ms Joseph: The CSD do that.

Ms Sullivan: The Community Service Directorate administers those emergency funds

now. When we sat in that directorate, we assisted with that administration, but that remained with CSD when we came over to ETD. I would not have any figures about how many places.

MRS JONES: With the family day care places that you mentioned before, my experience is that it is somewhat patchy across Canberra and that some areas have more carers available in terms of geographic area.

Ms Burch: Family day care?

MRS JONES: Family day care. Do we do any study or is there any encouragement for family day care to go into areas that are less well-represented at the moment?

Ms Garrisson: Our role as a regulation unit is actually not to go out and promote the services, so we do not gather that data. What we do is regulate those services that need to be regulated and apply it. Family day care is one of those services that we regulate. In terms of meeting demand, that is not part of our role and function.

MRS JONES: No, but the minister might have a view.

Ms Garrisson: It is actually about ensuring the quality of the services that are provided.

MRS JONES: Of course.

Ms Burch: The two largest providers are through the regional communities and the Y as well, and they operate differently. One actually has family day carers on salary or retainer or contract—some arrangement—and others are free, independent agents. It is something that those services look at regularly. They go out to the community. They would respond. I do know that if they see a call from a particular area or suburb that is unserved, they try and respond to that location-wise.

MRS JONES: You cannot drive from the south side to the north side and then back to the south side—

Ms Burch: I think people undervalue family day care; it is a fabulous service.

MRS JONES: It is great. I am a huge supporter, because it is a win-win for women as well who want to be at home and sometimes it is for a period. My question—

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry has one more supplementary and I have a supplementary.

MS BERRY: Minister, you mentioned women's participation in the workforce and the pay gap in the ACT. The pay gap between women in early childhood education and public sector employees or other employees in the ACT is quite significantly higher than the average. The workforce in early childhood education and childcare is 97 per cent women?

Ms Burch: Female, yes.

MS BERRY: And an increase in early childhood educators' wages would need to be funded by someone?

Ms Burch: The commonwealth would be a great "someone" for that.

MS BERRY: You pre-empted my question there. Back to the quality issue around qualified early childhood educators and that ratio issue, in your time as minister for this sector has there been any suggestion to you that parents would pay less for a poorer quality service?

Ms Burch: No. The short answer is that families are conscious of all costs that go into the family make-up and the family budget. But the notion that they would be satisfied with a poorer quality for their kids is just not part of the conversation in any way, shape or form. They want the best for their kids, first and foremost. Yes, they want it affordable, but the driver is the best for their kids, as it would be for any parent.

MRS JONES: If best efforts cost three times as much it may not be very popular?

Ms Burch: There is a level of market driver in this as well. It is a business as much as it is a service in some ways. So it has got to cover its own cost.

On the notion of the workforce and the pay, I was disappointed to see the pullout of a significant amount of money put in to support some pay differential in some services by the former government. That has been pulled out and concentrated on training support—that is my understanding—in the workplace. I have always been a supporter of the sector going to the Fair Work Australia arrangement and putting their case, like the community service sector did some years ago.

We do expect them to be professionals and provide a great service for our kids. I encourage the membership of that sector to continue that.

THE CHAIR: My supplementary was around the issue of the qualifications. We saw recently quite a lot of press around some RTOs providing training that was below standard, and some RTOs have actually been defunded or closed or something, and there has been an attempt, I think, to identify where there may be other problematic RTOs or problematic qualifications, if I can put it that way. Students obviously are feeling unsure that they have got proper qualifications. People in early childhood education are concerned about staff coming to them with these qualifications and whether they are satisfactory or not. I just want to know how you are dealing with that, minister.

Ms Burch: When you hear those reports, you are always concerned. But I have great confidence in the providers here in the ACT. We have high quality providers, both through our public provider, CIT, but also many of the great private providers. But David Miller, whose responsibility is RTO accreditation and expectation, can go to some of that detail.

Mr Miller: There are a couple of different ways to respond to that. I think more broadly there is a range of activity that we have been undertaking under the skills reform agenda to focus on the quality of RTOs. As the minister alluded to, we are

very fortunate, I think, to have a very strong provider market in the ACT. We are fortunate to have CIT, with the capabilities that they possess and the quality of service that they provide, as well as a strong private market as well.

I think there are always balances that need to be achieved when there are incentives for high skill needs areas like child care. There are some national reform initiatives that include weighting fees for childcare qualifications for people in training to make sure that we were producing the qualified people that we need to staff childcare centres.

In the ACT, again we were fortunate in that regard because that focused on training that was being delivered by CIT. I think there are other concerns that were raised that were more apparent in other jurisdictions around the level of people being put through in a hurry at relatively low cost to them, and that that always brings with it, I guess, concerns about the quality of the training.

I guess that brings me to the other part of the answer, which is about the focus that we have within training and tertiary education in monitoring the quality of service provision that actually occurs. Again, under the skills reform agenda, quality is one of the core planks or pivotal elements of that agenda, and there is a range of activity that we have been putting in place to continue to ensure quality provision of training, obviously not just in child care but across the whole gamut of training that actually occurs in the ACT.

Over the last 18 months we have developed, effectively, a new quality framework that better specifies the standards that we expect from providers in the ACT. It comes with commensurate compliance guides that provide the providers with a real level of information about what we expect to see. And it is also backed up, I guess at the other end, by a strong audit program to make sure we are able to go and assess providers and look at their compliance and make sure that they are delivering the training that actually occurs. Of course in conjunction with that, you have also got the national training regulator, ASQA, and their responsibility, I suppose, for registration of RTOs, which again is a significant quality check for RTOs, to make sure that they are providing a quality service.

In terms of our audit program, we have a risk process in place that helps determine which RTOs we would like to target. Certainly if there are complaints or any issues that are raised that come to us about particular providers, irrespective of the industry area, that is something that would most likely trigger an audit and a response from us to go and have a look at that RTO and look at their training practices and make sure that they are providing a quality service.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I want to go to page 21, the statistics around VET take-up in school. There has been a drop-off in the number of students that are taking VET programs. Obviously this committee has had quite a bit of info about VET in its other work as well. Enrolments are decreasing in the sector. We have seen this decrease from 30,068 to 28,473 of those undertaking VET programs.

It was recently suggested at a federal-state meeting of relevant ministers that Canberra has been somewhat slow in taking up school-based apprenticeships, and we have obviously been exploring some of the reasons why in the committee. How do you view, minister, the inhibitors to a greater take-up rate for students to get started on apprenticeships while at school?

Ms Burch: Whilst these numbers are showing a difference, there is certainly a great support for VET training across schools. I think the Tuggeranong trades training centre will make a significant difference in that region, as will the Belconnen trades training centre in the Belconnen region make a difference. I am sure that there are officials that live and breathe this stuff each and every day and they can make a difference, but VET in schools is an important aspect particularly of public education.

MRS JONES: Do we know why we have had the dip?

Mr Miller: Sorry, it depends which ones you are referring to. The figures that you referred to there regarding the number of government-funded students undertaking VET programs are not just about VET programs in schools; that is the whole collection of VET programs. That is talking about all the vocational education and training, including the VET programs that occur in schools and students undertaking programs.

MRS JONES: And how are our schools numbers going then?

Mr Miller: The school numbers, I think, are still relatively consistent. The Australian school-based apprenticeship numbers are actually quite strong. Leanne or Steve might have those on hand.

MRS JONES: How many we have got?

Mr Miller: The school-based apprentice numbers have dropped by about 20 per cent. I think that is broadly in line with the decrease that has occurred in apprenticeships across the board.

MRS JONES: Across the nation or just in Canberra?

Mr Miller: Across the nation it is even worse than it typically is in Canberra in terms of the apprenticeship take-ups. In the last 12 months or so, depending on the reporting period you are looking at, commencements for apprenticeships have actually decreased by about 20 per cent, and that is higher at the national level.

The ACT generally is a little softer in responding to some of those significant changes. That generally reflects a lack of confidence in the industry. Downturns in the economy, particularly in construction, tend to result in fewer apprentices being taken on and therefore commencing training.

MRS JONES: So it is more workplace driven than education?

Mr Miller: Yes, that is right. If there is reduced employer confidence, they are less likely to take on apprentices. I guess the other side to that, or the almost perverse

benefit of what happens when you have that kind of downturn, is that the completion numbers for apprentices actually starts to increase. Whilst nationally again that data remains fairly even, in the ACT the completion numbers for apprentices have actually started increasing. And that reflects the fact that in a tighter employment market—

MRS JONES: People do not leave?

Mr Miller: Yes, that is right, and people are more likely to try to complete their qualification because they think that will be advantageous to them. It also reflects the increased commencements that were happening a number of years ago when the economy was stronger. Those students are still in training and still completing it. So you see that following through into the completion rate.

MRS JONES: Is there anything else to add there?

Ms Burch: Can we talk about how this plays out too—and Mr Gwilliam is here—around the trades training sector and how that would almost promote VET training within the schools?

MRS JONES: So those are stand-alone campuses for VET?

Mr Gwilliam: We have two bodies called trade training centres. There is the trade training centre in Tuggeranong and the trade skills centre in the Belconnen area of the ACT. It is not a specific stand-alone centre.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Mr Gwilliam: While we have refurbishment work that allows for the provision of certification—certificate I and II—at our high schools, in areas of building construction and hospitality, we also have purpose-built facilities and Tuggeranong automotive training centre—

MRS JONES: Where is that?

Mr Gwilliam: At Lake Tuggeranong College.

MRS JONES: Right.

Mr Gwilliam: And at Erindale College there is a hospitality restaurant and cafe.

MRS JONES: On campus?

Mr Gwilliam: On campus.

Ms Burch: Erindale College.

Mr Gwilliam: That, at the moment, engages high schools, so the high schools and the trade training centre model—

MRS JONES: So kids can move into that particular school.

Mr Gwilliam: Correct. The pathway is the focus. It is about capturing and providing the opportunity for some pre-vocational exposure for students, and then ensuring that there is clarity in the pathway that they can take, to engage in senior secondary and potentially go through to formal apprenticeships if that is their wish.

The most important thing is an understanding that in relation to the needs of our school communities, it is important that we provide options for young people. The vocational space in particular is one of those alternate pathway options. A number of our students have engaged in a range of activities, some in this vocational space with the trade training centres, others with our flexible learning options, FLOs. Yesterday our minister identified 400 students that have participated in that particular program. So we do have some strong success in this space in engaging young people, particularly in our secondary schools, in relation to trades.

MRS JONES: Yes, no worries. I think we are all pretty supportive of that. The question was just about whether there has been a decrease. Obviously, if so, it is only very minor, but then my question is this: we have got these two centres that will draw students into those particular areas, but is there an overarching strategy to increase VET attendance or is it pretty much just left to who picks it up and who is interested? Obviously you go one way or the other.

Ms Burch: VET in schools at a federal level is certainly being considered. There are different markers on the wall in this locally here as well. Yesterday I was at a celebration for a group called FLO, flexible learning outcome.

MRS JONES: Yes. Is that online learning?

Ms Burch: No; that is where we work with schools with students that are at risk of disengaging from school.

MRS JONES: Right.

Ms Burch: They go in and do some vocational education and training—cert I, cert II. We had automotive, industry and construction. I was talking to one of the supervisors from Holden's mechanics workshop who was just blown away by the change in the kids that have gone through that.

MRS JONES: Sure.

Ms Burch: But also every college at the moment is an RTO. We are looking at whether that is a sensible way forward, given the changes in the vocational education and training sector and the requirements for ASQA. But also you look at the work the BSSS did around its review of the year 12 certificate. It made mention about looking at VET training and asked what are the connections—is it cert I, cert II, cert III? So there is a bit of looking at it.

MRS JONES: So you are studying the issue at the moment?

Ms Burch: Yes. And it is about providing opportunities for someone to do VET at

school that does not automatically lock them in or require them to pick up an apprenticeship at the end of it. It is about just a learning outcome for these students. Learning how to pull a coffee will give someone a job on the weekends.

MRS JONES: Yes, indeed.

Ms Burch: That is a great outcome.

MRS JONES: Indeed, yes.

Ms Joseph: And you may or may not be aware that over the course of the last 12 months the commonwealth government has initiated a review into VET in schools, which we have obviously contributed to.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Joseph: We are expecting the revised national VET in schools framework to be published following the Education Council meeting in early December.

MRS JONES: Great.

Ms Joseph: That is where the definition of VET in schools is discussed. Traditionally we have looked at the senior years. Can that come down to lower year levels? There are different sorts of trade courses that we can do that are not just VET in schools. There are lots of opportunities, I believe, through linking into our current VET in schools programs, our trade training centres, our skills centres, what CIT can offer and what other RTOs can offer.

MRS JONES: People here have probably heard me talking before about the Swiss system, which starts kids very young at trades.

Ms Joseph: Yes.

MRS JONES: At 15 and 14 they are deciding that they do not want to go into an academic stream. While that does not suit everybody, there would be some who could go into full-time training and education.

Ms Joseph: Yes. And there are many VET in schools subjects, if you like—courses—that are for high-achieving students as well.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Joseph: Because it can really add to—

MRS JONES: They might enjoy it.

Ms Joseph: That is right. For instance, VET in schools in electronics is probably more difficult than physics per se.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Joseph: So VET in schools is not necessarily just for kids who—

MRS JONES: I would be interested to know what is being done to address the attitude towards VET. I think historically in Australia, in the last few decades at least, since there was a big push to universities, the view of what a tradesperson can be has dropped.

Ms Joseph: That is right.

MRS JONES: And yet some of the most successful people in our society have worked up through the trades.

Ms Burch: You will not find anyone who will not be a greater supporter for trades training than me personally. It is an opportunity, as is a tertiary opportunity. I must admit it is disappointing when you hear, even at a federal level, that skills training does not give you a job. Then why bother training? You would not ask that—

MRS JONES: About academia.

Ms Burch: No, you would not. So it is disappointing that you have a federal minister articulating that.

MRS JONES: Skills are skills.

Ms Burch: I mentioned the BSSS and review of the year 12 certificate. Mr Stenhouse has gathered himself to talk to you; I might let him say a few words about it. I think it paints a different picture.

MRS JONES: Year 12 certificate review, yes.

Mr Stenhouse: Part of the review of senior secondary certifications involved an examination of vocational education, how it was recognised and its contribution towards the year 12 certificate. The review committee made a recommendation about vocational education; that was that a vocational education and training committee were to explore the consistency of recognition of BSSS-accredited courses and courses delivered by an external provider. Although we still talk about VET in schools, a term which is soon to change, I believe, if the work at a federal level goes through the Education Council, a lot of VET does not actually happen in schools, so it is more correct to talk about VET that is delivered to secondary school students.

MRS JONES: To students, yes.

Mr Stenhouse: In recognition of the increase in the external provision of VET, the VET committee of the BSSS had a look at that and decided that it would give external VET courses completed by secondary students a higher level of recognition, give them the same level of recognition as VET courses that they complete physically within the confines of the school—or in the confines of the trade training centre, for that matter. That will apply substantially to ASBAs, because the situation is that ASBAs, since their inception, have only been recognised as R units.

MRS JONES: What are ASBAs, just for the record?

Mr Stenhouse: Australian school-based apprenticeships. I will explain what R units are as well. R units are registered units, which are often of a recreational nature or a community service nature which schools undertake. ASBAs have been recognised along with those types of activities, but from the beginning of next year, the board has approved that ASBAs will be recognised as E courses—E for external—which are equivalent to the courses that are completed within the confines of the school. This means that these courses can provide a greater contribution to the completion of the year 12 certificate. The requirements for the year 12 certificate have increased from the completion of three courses to the completion of four courses; and from the beginning of next year, half of those courses—that is, two courses—can be external courses.

MRS JONES: And the other two have to be maths and English or something?

Mr Stenhouse: We are probably verging onto another topic then, but certainly there is now a requirement for a course in English to be completed for the award of the year 12 certificate. But students—

Ms Burch: That was part of it. That was a result of the review.

MRS JONES: All right.

Ms Burch: Yes. It is now.

Mr Stenhouse: Yes, but not related to the VET question.

MRS JONES: No.

Mr Stenhouse: I do not know if you want to move onto that.

MRS JONES: That is fine. It is just to understand.

Mr Stenhouse: Essentially, a student could do four courses, two of which would be in school and two of which would be external vocational education. So half of their requirement for a year 12 certificate could be done externally. I think that is quite significant.

MRS JONES: It does pertain, because we are thinking about which students will be able to get through and get that year 12 as well as the trade training.

Ms Burch: Yes.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I want to go to a totally different area now. I am sure it is all related.

Ms Burch: It is.

THE CHAIR: This one is around the work that we have been doing with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I notice on page 59 it talks about consultations that the directorate has been having with those communities. I also note on page 25 it talks about your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment action plan for 2014 to 2017. I wondered whether or not this action plan has come out of these consultations with the communities. I also wanted to know what the communities are contributing by way of assisting our education of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our schools.

Ms Burch: There are two elements of that. One is: how do we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and how can we increase our recruitment and support of those staff? Then there is: how do we support our students to have great attainment as well? What I may do to answer the first part of that is ask Coralie McAlister to talk from a HR point of view about how we support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Ms McAlister: There has been some significant targeted work in this area around the directorate's employment strategy and, as succinctly as possible, I will say that we have a vision, we have a plan and we are implementing that right now. Our vision is to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees from 57, the number quoted in the annual report, to 114 by 2015. Currently, at 30 September this year, our staff numbers are at 65. Those 65 staff include 25 administrative officers, one general service officer, four senior officers and 28 teachers. That is our vision.

Our plan was launched, our directorate employment strategy. It was developed with a great deal of consultation with community and was launched with supplementary material which talked about the narratives and the stories of our current employees.

We are now in the implementation phase. It is about raising our profile in the community. We have attended the NAIDOC on the peninsula 2014 event, and we had a number of inquiries about employment within our directorate coming from our attendance at that event. But our focus in implementation is really on building cultural integrity and competency within the workplace. It is about increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are registering for casual employment, and it is also about increasing the number of identified positions within the directorate. So we are very focused on this work and very on track.

Ms Burch: The other part of that was going to how we support our students.

Ms Mitchell: In supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, a large part of it, of course, is how we support all our students with the universal programs and strategies—if I can, just briefly, samples like pathways planning, literacy and numeracy officers in schools, pastoral care workers et cetera. Then we also have targeted, specific programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in addition to ways we support all students—things like Koori preschools, our aspirations program and tutorial support schemes, scholarship schemes, to name a few.

I can expand on any of those. I think I have talked about them previously. I guess the one I will talk to right now is the aspirations program, which is for Aboriginal

students from year 5 to year 12, and it has now grown to 187 students, which is fantastic.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, Ms Mitchell, I got distracted. Which area did you say you wanted to focus on?

Ms Mitchell: You can tell me if that is okay, but the one I was thinking of was the aspirations program. The aspirations program is a program for Aboriginal students from year 5 to year 12. As the name implies, it is about aspirations, future aspirations, how do you achieve them, how can we support the students to achieve these dreams and how we can work with families as well. But the consultative group too that we partner with is crucial in engaging with families in the community. Then we talk together about what things we can do to make our schools more engaging culturally, what things families need, what things students need to achieve these goals. A big part of the program is the mentoring and exposing students to different experiences, visits to universities, visits to different workplaces et cetera.

Another new thing is the AIME program, which is the Australian Indigenous mentoring experience, which we have just started and a partnership we do see as well in terms of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at risk. That is just a really quick snapshot.

Ms Burch: In regard to the outcomes of that, we produce a regular report about attainments by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as well. More so than any other state or territory, our kids are achieving year 10, year 12, are in further education and are in employment beyond school as well. Whether it is from a preschool, right through those aspirations programs, you see that effect of that effort in the later years.

THE CHAIR: Is that involvement with the UC that you mentioned a minute ago, Ms Mitchell, to do with a specific research project that they are undertaking?

Ms Mitchell: No. The UC project is a new project, and they wanted to work with us and work with some students specifically at risk. So they are providing mentoring. It is just one small component. We have other projects within schools. At Erindale College they have got their own Mindyigari centre, I think is the name, and they have an Aboriginal group from the community working out of their college with their Aboriginal students in years 11 and 12. They have quite a large number of Aboriginal students there specifically on football scholarships. That is their speciality. Another school would do something differently.

THE CHAIR: Is the Koori preschool that you mentioned a specific Koori preschool?

Ms Mitchell: I can talk a little about it or I can—

Ms Burch: There are five. Ngunnawal, Wanniasa, Richardson, Narrabundah and Kingsford Smith all have Koori preschools. Leanne Wright, I think, is going to talk a bit more about them.

Ms Wright: The Koori preschool programs, as the minister has said, operate in five

sites. The main aim of those programs is to engage early with parents and children. Parents are encouraged to come along to Koori preschool programs with their children and with siblings of children. In actual fact we enrol students from three years of age into Koori preschool. The programs students can access—three-year-olds and four-year-olds, pre preschool—are for nine hours per week, generally over two days. That is in addition to mainstream preschool. When students are generally four years of age, they are engaging in up to 20 hours per week of early years learning, preschool education, through Koori preschool and mainstream preschool.

The program differs a little from mainstream preschool but has a stronger focus on connectedness to school and developing those relationships with the school setting. There are also opportunities for rich cultural connectedness for students within the school environment. One of the really key outcomes of participation in Koori preschool is that really terrific transition into mainstream preschool. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are also offered an additional six months of mainstream preschool. They can generally start at 3½ and go through their normal preschool year as well.

The programs provide that rich, play-based learning, very much connected to family. If you go into a Koori preschool setting, you will see children in prams and in arms of parents connecting with the teachers and assistants there. Through our employment strategy, we aim to have engagement with workers within the Koori preschool sites as well.

The other thing that Koori preschool has done is connect with other ranges of services, and we have had some work to really engage in those essential early skills around speech and articulation and some of those things, in partnership with speech therapists that have come into Koori preschool to deliver those services and work with teachers as well.

There is an opportunity also through partnering with some of the child and family centres operated by the Community Services Directorate to really connect families to services early, to supports early, and to forge those really strong relationships. Previously, as a principal—I was principal of Ngunnawal Primary School—it allowed me to engage really early with those families, in their first experience of formal schooling settings, and develop those relationships and trust relationships with families that allowed that really smooth transition into formal schooling.

Ms Burch: At the other end of the spectrum, Mr Stenhouse might have some comments.

Mr Stenhouse: Just to add to the picture of what we are doing for Aboriginal students, I would also like to mention that, in my former role as principal of Canberra College, we had CC cares, the young parents program, which has a much larger percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders than you would find in a normal program in years 11 and 12. It might have been as high as something like 20 per cent of those students. And it is the nature of the challenge that faces our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that they tend to be overrepresented in any disadvantaged section of the population. There is some excellent work going on in that program, not specifically aimed at those students because of their Aboriginality but aimed at those

students because of their life circumstances.

THE CHAIR: Ms McAlister, I had one other question about the employment situation. You said there has been quite an increase. Is the aim to continue to increase that year on year?

Ms McAlister: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Is it also the aim to be able to spread the employment across different sectors of the Education and Training Directorate?

Ms McAlister: There is a whole-of-government target of two per cent. We are very focused on that target. Our plan really looks at: how can we create the environment, a culturally aware environment, that attracts employees? How can we develop them when we have them? How can we regain them? The plan really articulates that, and yes, we look at the data closely and are pleased to see that we are trending in the right direction.

THE CHAIR: Minister, my question was around the involvement of the Indigenous communities that is mentioned on page 59. Does that work with the elected body and the other people and other stakeholders that are mentioned there continue? That is an ongoing conversation?

Ms Burch: It most certainly is. In addition to what is almost part and parcel of standard practice, its partnerships will come in for different aspects. Whether it is within Winnunga or whether it is with other services around the city, that is certainly a hallmark of it.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, referring to page 25, your major achievements, I have some questions on the literacy and numeracy field officer program. The literacy and numeracy field officer program was delivered to 21 schools to support best practice in literacy teaching and learning. How were these schools selected?

Ms Burch: Leanne Wright can go to the detail of that.

Ms Wright: I believe the process was looking at those schools where results and data indicated a greater level of need for additional support and resources directed from the directorate. The introduction of the program coincided with the national partnerships on literacy and numeracy. The federal government provided additional funding to jurisdictions to support literacy and numeracy.

Alongside the field officer program, which is a specific resource at a school, the directorate also established literacy and numeracy coordinators in every ACT public school. That group of literacy and numeracy coordinators and field officers is the group that we target systemically to provide an evidence-based strategy approach for all schools that brings those groups together for professional learning, to ensure the “systemness” of the advice going to schools about best practice strategies.

The coaching and mentoring aspects of the field officer roles have been supported through professional learning for principals and school leaders around coaching and mentoring as a key strategy to improve both teacher capacity and also how to work side by side in the classroom. The field officers specifically have that resource where they can go into the classroom, work alongside the teacher, model best practice, review practice, provide feedback to the classroom teacher around practice and best practice strategies. But it is the combination of the field officers and the work that central office do around identifying best practice programs and strategies that ensures that professional learning is available to classroom teachers as well as school leadership, because it is about an overall picture of a coherent process to address improving literacy and numeracy outcomes.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. You have gone into a fair bit of detail. I am interested to see how the program is delivered. Also, there are a couple of other questions regarding how long those field officers are there. Is there a set, determined period?

Ms Wright: They have been in place since the program commenced in, I think, approximately 2009.

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking about the selected schools. How long do they operate within those selected schools?

Ms Wright: They have been in place in those schools for that period of time.

Mr Gniel: Mr Doszpot, I think you are asking about how long they stay there.

MR DOSZPOT: Correct.

Mr Gniel: It depends on the school.

MR DOSZPOT: You are very perceptive, Mr Gniel.

Mr Gniel: Thank you. I think last time we were here, I got it completely wrong, but this time, hopefully—

Ms Burch: He reaches executive level because he is clever.

Mr Gniel: Thank you, minister. I hope that is on the record.

THE CHAIR: It reminds me of the great train robbery. Now you are asking me—

MR DOSZPOT: Who is Mr Biggs?

THE CHAIR: Now you are asking me who made—

MRS JONES: Just take a note of it for your next financial appraisals.

THE CHAIR: I know it is getting late.

MRS JONES: Some people have been in this room for a long time, yes.

Mr Gniel: We are talking about how often we might rotate those people through. I think that was your question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Mr Gniel: I think what Ms Wright was talking about was that it was a set period under the national partnership at the time. The ACT government has continued that investment through the own resources of the ACT government to make sure that those 21 are still in place as well. I think, importantly, though, over that period, that was training up people across schools—the literacy and numeracy coordinators we have talked about.

But I wanted to just then lead into where we now are, because obviously that was five years ago. There are two parts, or even three parts, to that, I think—that we have as follow-up from that. One is our movement into any school being able to have people in executive teacher professional practice. Rather than a program level saying, “You must have this,” we are looking at schools actually identifying that that is something they want in their schools, to increase the literacy and numeracy levels. And it is then having those people in the places where we need them most. That is the transitioning into new programs. Ms Hamilton, who is one of our network leaders, is also involved in a “principals as literacy leaders” program, and I might ask her to expand on that.

Ms Hamilton: I am the network leader for North Gungahlin and also one of the facilitators of the PALL program, which is a source of literacy leaders. Eighteen months ago, three principals—including Sue Norton from Fraser Primary School and Jo Padgham from Turner School—initiated and developed a program for principals as literacy leaders, to develop the skills and capacity of principals to lead learning and to lead literacy in their schools—then filtering down from principals through to executive through to the whole school.

Over that last 18 months, we have had 31 schools participating in that. Earlier this year, we had some reading institutes at the ANU; we had over 500 teachers and executive and leadership teams attend those days, which was fantastic. This particular program will come to an end at the end of this year. For next year we have developed another program, which has got two streams to it—a primary focus and also a secondary focus. We have already had 31 primary and secondary schools enrol for that program, so that is another 600 or 700 teachers that we will be able to work with over the next 12 months, to build their skills to lead learning and literacy in their schools.

MR DOSZPOT: Excellent. How are the literacy and numeracy field officers selected? Is it open for anyone to do that?

Ms Hamilton: Yes, Mr Doszpot, it is. They are advertised as a school leader position at open advertisement. Initially they were centrally selected. With our changes in focus on school-based decision-making, it has transitioned to principals selecting to fill those vacancies in their school to best meet the needs at the local level.

MR DOSZPOT: And I come back to the 21 schools. Once the period of time has

elapsed that you feel that there are another 21 schools to look at—I guess that is what I was trying to get to. Is there such a program—to go to the next level of the number of schools?

Ms Joseph: It could be. We have got an existing program. We have continued that program because we do see the results from it. We continue looking at the individual school data where we have put those resources in to see whether we are getting change and improvement.

MR DOSZPOT: Sure.

Ms Joseph: But as Mr Gniel referred to, those field officers do not just work in their one school.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Ms Joseph: It is also about capacity building. It might be time to change the title of those teachers as well, because at the same time, we have put 46 executive teacher professional practice positions into our schools, again targeted to where we think there is most need. So really, looking at who are our expert teachers, and part of the executive teacher professional practice role, just like our literacy and numeracy field officer role, and the roles of many of our staff in central office—their job is to build the capacity of other teachers.

The focus is on teacher quality, the use of our Australian professional standards, and how we are making sure every teacher is a teacher of literacy. The principals as literacy leaders program that Ms Hamilton referred to is part of that strategy, together with assessment strategies, together with access to the Australian curriculum. When we talk about improving literacy and numeracy, and how we make sure resources are targeted to where they are most needed, that is where we look at what are the central resources that we have to apply, what are the flexibilities schools have within their resources, and, really importantly, how do we know every teacher is a quality teacher and, at different levels, particularly executive and leadership levels, are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Again, we go back to the teacher standards. In the ACT this year, for the first time, we are really getting teachers across all sectors to reflect on their professional learning and how they are developing. The ACT Teacher Quality Institute is playing a key role in that. It is not just about what a literacy and numeracy field officer can do—we need to make sure they are absolute top quality—but we need to make sure our resources are placed where they are most needed, based on student need and based on data. We also need to be able to have a guarantee in all of our schools for all of our parents and students about the quality of our teachers.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. Just a further question on that: you mentioned that you measure the success of how the program is going.

Ms Joseph: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: How do you measure the success?

Ms Joseph: I will refer to my response before about when we look at data in the schools. Again, each school has an annual operating plan. That is based on school data. Schools look at that every year in a holistic approach, but it is data along the way. You would go to many of our schools, Mr Doszpot. I do not know if you have ever seen any of the school data walls where they track the data of individual students. We have different—

MR DOSZPOT: I saw a data board yesterday.

Ms Joseph: Yes, the data walls.

Ms Burch: Quite impressive, really.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Joseph: Our teachers, our principals, our school leaders are absolute experts in assessment. They can diagnose and then they can respond. That is their skill and their craft. We can look at individual data on a weekly basis, or a daily basis with some students. All of our schools, particularly our primary schools, have individual learning plans. You can go to a school like Fraser Primary School: the students have got on their desks their individual learning plan and what their learning goals are. We can drill down at the school level to data there, at that level—on what are the students achieving in literacy and numeracy against the Australian curriculum.

We also then look at the satisfaction survey, attendance, enrolment data—the whole process. How do we judge literacy and numeracy improvements? Are teachers doing what we are expecting them to do? We go back to the data and see the improvements as well as looking at the contribution more broadly to the profession and to the improvement of teaching in all of our schools.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Ms Burch: Ms Ellis is now with us, the chief executive of the Teacher Quality Institute. This entity is playing a critical role in making sure that every one of our teachers is a literacy expert. Anne, you might just talk about professional standards.

Ms Ellis: Sure. One of the important things to note here is that the territory, through the introduction of the Teacher Quality Institute act a few years ago, put in some very powerful legislation which was about raising the quality of all teachers. A really important part of our role is that, because we are an independent body, we have the responsibility, with the directorate, the Catholic schools and independent schools, and with universities, to ensure that some monitoring, assurance and quality assurance of what happens with a teacher is actually implemented in quite a serious way.

It is really interesting for us in the ACT when you think of the period of change that we are going through at the moment with the introduction of the professional standards. The professional standards for us drive all our work. As the director-general mentioned, in terms of the work that TQI has been leading with professional learning, we have now got a requirement for teachers to think about themselves as

continuance learners. We have formal assessments against the standards at all career stages.

It is really important to note that a key part of that in raising the bar of teacher quality is that you start thinking about teachers becoming professionals when they are at the university. They begin their professional journey and are looked at against the graduate level standards when they graduate. Then when they come into schools and continue their professional growth, it is about how you keep improving. As people point out, there is information in the standards about literacy and numeracy; there is information about knowledge, engagement, parents and carers. We have a really effective framework, in line with the national framework, to raise the bar of teacher quality everywhere. Every ACT student, no matter which school they go to, with the grunt of the Melbourne declaration and the importance of quality schooling for everyone, now has the responsibility and an opportunity to keep increasing their quality.

What is really important in terms of the change management with this is that we now look at the sort of input, the accreditation of professional learning, the accreditation of teacher education courses. We have to ensure that for teachers to be the best they possibly can, they are provided with quality learning opportunities. Yesterday, at the forum the minister mentioned, one thing we did was launch two pull-up banners. On the pull-up banners, one of the messages is “TQI—Setting standards for the teaching profession”. That is what the legal framework of the TQI is about. The other pull-up banner says, “Continuing learning, reflective practice, professional growth”. Every part of our work is focused on that. And the wonderful thing captured on the banners was a teacher from a Catholic school, a teacher from a public school and a teacher from an independent school, because that is where all the work is going.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, could you update the committee on the task force on students with learning difficulties?

Ms Burch: That was a piece of work that involved parents and teaching experts to look at what we do to support children with learning difficulties. The task force provided a report and we have adopted pretty much all of the recommendations in the report. The focus was on professional development, in-class support and some simplification of, and I think a plain English approach to, assessment and some information for parents. Beth Mitchell can give an update about where the recommendations are at.

Ms Mitchell: With respect to the task force on learning difficulties and the work that we have done this year, it has been, if I do say so myself, really fantastic. Over a thousand teachers have accessed this whole suite of professional learning. Over 100 parents have attended workshops. I will tell you a good story regarding an email I have had from one of the parents. About 87 learning support assistants have also attended some of the workshops and the little conference in September.

We have a comprehensive website—a life page—link for all of our teachers, where you can see videos and examples of strategies that have worked, links to sheets, plans

and documents. It is a really big thing; you can spend ages on the life page. We also have online modules that staff can do that are accredited with the TQI. There is one on dyslexia, one on speech and language, one on autism, one on disability standards, and there are two others. I could tell you about them in a second, if you want, but I cannot quite recall them.

The email I got the other day is a really good example of this. We are running workshops on apps and how to use iPads. This is a specific one on dyslexia, spelling things and things you can do with technology to make sure your child is able to access the curriculum and access a dyslexia-friendly school, if you like—a friendly curriculum. This parent was attending with a six-year-old and her email said that it was fantastic for the six-year-old and that she was getting a great start. But her 10-year-old brother loves it as well. He does not have a learning difficulty. Actually I am using it at work all the time; I love it as well. It is just a really good thing. That is the kind of thing that the task force is doing.

With respect to what we do in our classrooms, while you may be doing something that is dyslexia friendly, it is actually just a great strategy that anyone can access, whether you are six or 10, or whether you are working. They are just smart, make-sense type things that you do at different levels. So that was just one email I had.

Parents are also emailing and saying things like, “It would be great if we could have more of these, and next I want things like this with my school, with my child’s teacher sitting there with me.” The fact that a thousand teachers have already done this means that will now start happening in networks and pockets of schools. Instead of going into the Hedley Beare centre, “Our own little school, our own little cluster, is going to run this now and we want parents to come in here after school or in the evening and we will do these workshops ourselves.” Schools already do things like that with their community. They have reading days or evenings. But this is specifically on learning difficulties. I think that is the main part of what I wanted to tell you. Is there anything else you would like me to elaborate on?

MS BERRY: With respect to what has been done in the task force and the increased training that is being provided to teachers, how is that flowing through, how are you going to be able to measure that with parents and how do parents find out about the story you just told?

Ms Mitchell: It is about raising this awareness and making sure that every school has a DECO—a disability education coordinator. It is about a family being able to walk in to a school and say, “We are here; we are enrolling. We think our child has this learning difficulty,” or, “We know our child has this.” They will straightaway get the right advice on, “This is what we do here at our school. This is what happens at a system level,” et cetera. So we are making sure that there is a systematic approach. With respect to the other part of that, I am not sure what else—

Ms Burch: The progress of their little one, of their child, how do they see them develop and grow?

MS BERRY: I think it is part of that, but it is also seeing whether or not the training that you are providing is actually having an impact, and whether it is able to be

delivered by the teachers in the classroom.

Ms Mitchell: That was the other part; thank you for reminding me. We are doing some specific studies and collecting some data. Part of the learning difficulties task force, one recommendation, was about a response to interventions and models for response to intervention.

I will talk a little bit about what is happening in some of our schools, and the data that they are collecting. That is a program where everybody gets a universal amount of literacy strategy—reading, numeracy, whatever it is—and they are tested and they know they are at this level. If someone is not at that level, they can apply another certain amount of hours and then there is another layer on top of that. So we have had that going on in three schools, and it is amazing what we are getting back, in the sense that someone six months ago who was well behind their peers has now caught up, with the extra hours and the extra support. The schools are keeping all of that data and it depends on the student’s level of need, how much more they have caught up, as to whether they stay and just do the universal stuff et cetera. So we are getting that, if that is what you mean.

Ms Burch: It links to the comment that Ms Joseph made about schools having their data walls. So every teacher is assessing and providing an intervention. For some it would be the strategies that are held within the learning difficulties, and then they can just measure that child’s progress.

MS BERRY: I had read online somewhere about dyslexia-friendly schools. I do not know whether the ACT has adopted that as a way forward—and maybe it is because it is all-encompassing, across all of our schools.

Ms Burch: That is right. All of our schools are dyslexia friendly.

Ms Mitchell: Yes, they are. This is the interesting part because they always have been, but this now is putting it out there and saying, “We are really proud,” and, “If there is something that you are finding, because in this instance this did not work for you or that did not work for you, you need to tell your DECO, you need to talk to your school principal. If you would prefer your child to do their test on paper of this colour then that is what will happen.”

MS BERRY: The other question I had was about diagnosis of all of these very complex difficulties with learning, including dyslexia, and also things like developmental delay, autism and other things like that. How are schools supporting families to get those diagnoses so that they can get that additional support?

Ms Mitchell: Mr Gniel will talk about this, because his primary school background helps him there.

Ms Gniel: One of the things that came through in the learning difficulties task force recommendations was about exactly that. You mentioned those couple of things, and there are obviously very different approaches as to how you might diagnose all of those different conditions, if I can use that broader term. One of the things that we have been working on is using some easy flow charts with our school staff.

Ms Mitchell mentioned that putting in place a disability education coordinator at a central hub allows people to try to navigate through some of that area. I know you are fully aware that parents do not necessarily know what condition it might be. They say, “There’s something not right. I’m not sure what’s going on here. Can I get some help?”

A disability education coordinator is helpful from that perspective as well. Our counselling service is the key link there, and how they might look at, in the first instance, what is going on in the classroom. They will often look at behaviours in the classroom and results from the classroom. Importantly, they will talk to parents, who know their kids best and are often seeing this at home on a one-to-one basis.

It is related not just to some of those learning difficulties; also some of these kids have gifts and talents. The way we have been working relates to what you have been asking us about, and also to what the task force said, which was, “How do we raise awareness about how you even broach this?” So the flow chart is one way. Some of the work we will be doing in the future is not only related to those life pages, the internal work with the teachers, but also information on an external website for parents and others about how to navigate that area.

One of the things that we need to make clear with parents is that we are not just talking about the disabilities end here. In some ways it is clearer when we talk about a child who has autism, which is the example that you used. Some of these learning difficulties and developmental delay are really difficult to identify and diagnose. Ms Mitchell was talking about how we respond to whatever the need is. Sometimes the diagnosis is really important. With dyslexia, for example, it might be different coloured paper and a different approach. At other times it is about how the teacher teaches all of the students in the class and responds to all of the inputs.

MRS JONES: What about the cost of the diagnosis? That is something Ms Berry has raised before. For families to go to specialists it is quite expensive.

Ms Mitchell: I do have a bit to add on that. I am familiar with the flow chart, and, whether you have a diagnosis or not, we are really making it prominent in that flow chart to use our school psychologist and not to go out and get an expensive diagnosis because—

MRS JONES: It does not change anything.

Ms Mitchell: it does not change anything. We work with the students whether they have a diagnosis or not, because we work with every student. And every student is different and every student’s learning needs are unique.

Mr Gniel: That is what Ms Mitchell’s team have been working on. Clearly, it is about getting that information to parents. One of the things parents go through when they have a child that is exhibiting signs of a delay or issues at school is wanting to fix it as a parent wants to do. They say, “How do I help my child?” It is about simple things like having places where they can go and talk in the first instance with a disability education coordinator. If things are happening and we are seeing that in the classroom, it is about trying to put those things together. “What are we seeing in totality here?”

The first step is not necessarily to go off to diagnosis over here. The first step is to say, “Let’s actually look at some of the samples of their work, their behaviour in the classroom, matching that with what is happening at home.” If things can be put in place that address that, and we find we are addressing these things and it is working, we do not need to go down the other line of diagnosis.

MRS JONES: Unless there is other funding available.

Mr Gniel: Sometimes what we find—and this is where we need the experts involved—is that you will go down this line of trying to help the kids with different levels of intervention and things do not work. It is at that point that you have to reassess and maybe come across to this side and look at the expense of diagnosis. Whether that is external or the expense is provided through ACT government resources—the counsellors are a huge resource as well—we do not want to waste that, either way. So it is about making sure that we have that filter on about where we invest that time and effort to make sure it is in the best interests of all kids, and making sure that we have done everything we can before we get to anything that is going to cost the family or the community through their taxes.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on the level of intervention applied for dyslexia. My understanding was that, a few months back, we had some students approaching us about having difficulty in obtaining special intervention on their behalf—say, when they are sitting for an exam and they are not supposed to sit under certain lights. I do not believe that option was available. Is that level of intervention now available?

Mr Gniel: That is what Ms Mitchell was talking about around the adjustments for assessment. With NAPLAN, for example, there are adjustments that are allowed for learning difficulties or disability. I am also aware that within the college—

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking about dyslexia specifically.

Mr Gniel: There are. I am looking for Ms Stewart, who might be able to give you the exact information about NAPLAN in particular, and I think the BSSS also has specific things that are allowable within a test environment to make those adjustments. No-one wants to see that there is an impact of a learning difficulty on someone’s assessment. Did you want more specific details?

MR DOSZPOT: If you have more specific, but I am simply voicing a concern from students that they were not given that. If that is available, that is fine.

Mr Gniel: I remember the one you are referring to. Part of it was their not necessarily thinking it was accessible about what they could have as adjustments. I think we were making sure that that was clearly available through the BSSS and through our own websites. I will hand over to Ms Stewart.

Ms Stewart: Mr Doszpot, we do make adjustments for students in the NAPLAN testing, for example, to accommodate their learning difficulty or disability. In the case of NAPLAN, we have quite broad options around the adjustments that can be made

available, and in most cases we apply adjustments that are particular to the individual student's needs. For example, we might allow extra time in the testing or they might need a support person with them to undertake the testing. We also make adjustments for students specifically around dyslexia. The aim with NAPLAN testing is that we want as many students as possible to participate. We do encourage participation, so we do make sure that we are giving students the best option to participate and meet their individual needs.

Mr Stenhouse: The BSSS has been involved in giving special provisions and reasonable adjustments for almost 20 years now. In terms of the AST test—that is, the ACT scaling test—students can apply for special revisions for a range of disabilities, including dyslexia. Those special provisions are subject to discussions every year between the various boards of studies, the ACACA agencies. There is some not national agreement but national consistency on what special provisions can be given—with dyslexia, obviously, coloured paper, but there are other things like extensions of time, rest breaks and the use of a laptop. There are a number of things that we do and have been doing for some time.

As far as special provisions at the school level are concerned, again, the BSSS has been involved in this for over 20 years. There is a brochure which is available on our website about reasonable adjustments for students and school assessment. The adjustments that are available are similar to the sorts of adjustments that we have for the scaling test, except that in some cases, where we are talking about the take-home assignments, students might just be given an extra week to complete, something like that, or they might be given the provision that, instead of doing a written assignment, they can record it or podcast it—in this day and age—or any of those alternatives. It is certainly something that we are well aware of and do provide for. As I say, there is a national discussion that goes on about it on a yearly basis.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS BERRY: I have a supplementary on what Mr Stenhouse was talking about just then.

THE CHAIR: Yes, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: With regard to the Australian curriculum, I understand—and correct me if I am wrong—that part of the assessment requirement through the Australian curriculum is about observing that a student can complete a task rather than having to do a test on the student to see if they can do a task.

Ms Joseph: Regarding assessment against the Australian curriculum, our teachers do that every day. The Australian curriculum documentation actually looks at the outcomes. As you say, it could be teacher observation; it could be teacher observation of how a student interacts with others around a particular task. The breadth of assessment strategies that our teachers use are many and varied. It goes back to the outcomes that are expected through the Australian curriculum. That is where our schools working cross-sectorally. We have the Australian curriculum as the guiding document and our cross-sectoral task force on how we implement the curriculum and, therefore, how we manage the assessments and the reporting to make sure we have

great practice in our classrooms.

Mr Stenhouse: Can I just add that the year 11 and 12 level is probably a little different to the P-10 level. As far as the Australian curriculum is concerned—and, in fact, as far as the ACT’s curriculum is concerned—students would normally have about four assessment tasks per semester per course which would count towards a score and a grade, or just a grade. Those are required assessment tasks that have to be completed if the student wants to get recognition for that particular unit on their certificate. Having said that, there are the other forms of assessment. There are ongoing and in-class observations, there are small tests and the work that is done in class—that is all still part of it—but there is a formal requirement for a certain number of assessment items so that we can record grades and scores.

MS BERRY: You were just talking about children being able to do things differently—podcasting, verbal assignments, assessments or testing. Is that only in the senior schools? Does that happen in the primary school setting as well?

Mr Gniel: Absolutely; that is right.

MS BERRY: So how does that count then with their school report, which is consistent across the board, and you have As to Es?

Mr Gniel: Ms Joseph, the director-general, was talking about the achievement standards. The achievement standards are the outcomes of what we want our children to learn and be able to demonstrate by the end of each of the schooling years. In assessing—and this was your point—whether they have met those, it is not necessarily having a sit-down test with different coloured paper or anything like that; it is about how you observe that in everyday interactions with children in the classroom. That is what goes towards an A to E grading and, therefore, results and information for parents. Parents want to know: how is my child performing against their peers and also against a standard?

Earlier we were talking about more national testing approaches. NAPLAN, for example, at the moment in nature is a sit-down, paper-based test, although the ministers have agreed that that will be moving online, which will offer different opportunities about how we might deal with students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Mr Stenhouse was talking about the ongoing assessment throughout the years in the college sector, in years 11 and 12, but there is also the AST, which is a test. I think they are the two things that you are alluding to, Ms Berry—the two differences. One is a test that Ms Joseph was talking about, that spectrum; the other is ongoing assessments which can take many forms. For some of our students they are really important, because they are not just demonstrating through a written test.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a very quick supplementary, and then we are going to Mrs Jones for her substantive question.

MR DOSZPOT: My final question on the recommendations from the task force on students with learning difficulties: in your annual report it states that the

recommendations will continue to be implemented. How many recommendations have been implemented, and how many remain to be implemented?

Ms Mitchell: I am thinking they have all been implemented, and some of them have not been finalised. We still need to build some things on the life page and we still need to—

Mr Gniel: We also report to the Assembly, if I remember rightly, and in that, Mr Doszpot, we do talk about it against the recommendations.

MR DOSZPOT: Has there been a recent report on that?

Mr Gniel: I think the last one was the July report. Is that right, minister?

Ms Burch: I can provide the committee with a copy of the most recent report. If there is any further information I will just put it as a supp under that.

MR DOSZPOT: Basically, I am interested to know how we are progressing; how many recommendations remain to be acted on.

Ms Mitchell: We are progressing really well. I am not losing any sleep over it, so that is really good.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not suggesting you are; I am simply—

Ms Burch: I hope not.

Ms Mitchell: It is one of those things where you just feel that not only has it been implemented at this level but also it has been implemented far beyond our greatest expectations, and it is just going to grow and grow. It is something that we found really easy to do because of the things that were already happening. We have now put a structure around that. It is really rewarding, right across the board. We are very confident too, because of the momentum. This is just the start. It is not like, “Okay, tick the box; end of story”—not at all.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Going to page 25 of the report, the last dot point about teacher professional learning delivered to meet the needs of gifted and talented students, I am just after an update of where we are at. How many teachers accessed or were offered this high quality teacher professional learning to meet the needs of gifted and talented students? I have a second part, but let us just start with that.

Ms Burch: The gifted and talented policy was again worked through with experts and educators and input from families to make sure that we extend and support each and every one of our kids, and that includes those that are gifted and talented. Leanne Wright, who was front and centre in all that work, can talk to it in a level of detail.

MRS JONES: And particularly how many teachers have accessed it.

Ms Wright: Thank you for the question, Mrs Jones. The delivery of the policy into schools is just the first step in enacting a comprehensive approach to ensuring that we are meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. When the policy was first launched it was accompanied by some online learning resources into every school that every teacher could access, and those were through the University of New South Wales-GERRIC association—some online training packages for teachers. That accompanied the rollout of the policy back in February.

Following that, in May there was a series of fact sheets both for parents and teachers, a comprehensive suite of 14 fact sheets that cover the aspects that we receive the most questions about and that there is a need for teachers to be familiar with. Those fact sheets are available online publicly and are accessed regularly by teachers in the schools.

Within each of our schools, it is a requirement of the policy that there is a gifted and talented liaison officer who acts as a conduit around ensuring that teachers are not only familiar with the materials, the fact sheets and the professional learning that is available but also act as the source of the interactions from the systemic level to ensure that that is filtering down into every school.

The work around the policy, the initial fact sheets and the work that we did at that point was supported by Dr Catherine Wormald, as an external expert adviser to the directorate, to ensure that the approaches that we were providing and strategies that we were providing to our teachers were of an evidence base and current in terms of research.

MRS JONES: How many teachers have accessed it?

Ms Wright: They are available to every teacher in—

MRS JONES: How many have accessed it—the training that has been mentioned here, the programs?

Ms Wright: The specific training sessions have commenced this year through the Gateways organisation, who won the tender process to provide a series of 12 professional learnings over the next three years to support implementation. I have not got the exact numbers with me, but in excess of 100 participants have been at each of the sessions.

MRS JONES: Will you come back with the exact number on notice for us? That would be good.

Ms Wright: Yes.

Ms Burch: We will bring back what we can, yes.

MRS JONES: Obviously it depends how you define the classes that those students are in, because they would be in a lot of different classes. Are they in schools with a

gifted and talented stream or are they mixed directly, continually, with the entire school population? If so, do we have teachers delivering gifted and talented students their extension work who have not completed this training?

Ms Wright: To take the first part of the question, how is support and instruction that meets the needs of gifted and talented students delivered across ACT public schools? Through the policy and in practice, there are gifted and talented students in every school—

MRS JONES: Yes, but at the classroom level, in every classroom.

Ms Wright: Part of the policy is that the principal, in conjunction with the school community, articulates how that school and the programs within that school address those needs. That is a requirement of the policy. That can take the form of designated classes in some school settings. We do not collect information about how each school does it but each school is expected, under the policy, to provide information on its website for the community on what approaches it has in place.

MRS JONES: Right. With the 100 or so teachers who have accessed this new training, and presumably there was an old training beforehand—

Ms Burch: I think there were 100 per—

Ms Wright: 100 per session—

Ms Burch: We will get the numbers back to you.

MRS JONES: Whatever the number is. Then my question is: do we have classes that do not have people who have finished that training?

Ms Wright: There is other training as well. There are some decisions associated with this. There are also a number of teachers who have commenced and completed a certificate of gifted education, which is a postgraduate qualification. The directorate has provided a number of scholarships, and some 30 teachers went through that. So there is a range of professional learning that includes those certificated and postgraduate qualifications in gifted and talented education, along with participation. There is also what they call mini-certificate of gifted education programs, which a number of entire schools have undertaken.

So it is not just one thing; there is a breadth of opportunities for engagement. Gifted and talented students being in every classroom, there is an expectation that every teacher is conversant with and able to meet the needs of those students in an inclusive way within the mainstream classroom. The other approaches are targeted, decision-based strategies that a school may choose to employ, but are not prerequisite, and there is certainly no requirement that teachers need to have a particular qualification or have attended a particular course. It is an expectation—

MRS JONES: So there is a range, and it is up to the schools to decide if it is a high enough level of training for their needs?

Ms Joseph: That is right. As Ms Wright has outlined, we are going for the universal approach, so all of our 5,000 teachers have access to supports. That could be anything from a fact sheet to attendance at professional learning which could be a one-off. It could even be a professional learning community that is held at the school. Where those 30 people have got their certificate III and/or a postgraduate qualification in gifted and talented education, I would expect that it would be fairly common for those teachers to be working in a professional learning team with other teachers to upskill others.

There is no specific qualification that we would expect our teachers to have in regard to gifted and talented programming, however; it is about access to upskilling and making sure they are meeting the needs of that particular group of students. There are many and varied opportunities to be engaged in that. Our gifted and talented policy clearly puts the expectation that all teachers are able to respond to gifted and talented student learning needs. How that is delivered and what it looks like come down to the leadership of the principal, together with the support of our office in central office, to design what is best for that school community based on working with the parents, working with the teachers, working with the students and working beyond the school boundaries. We have a lot of schools that have classes across traditional school boundaries, if you like.

MRS JONES: That is fantastic.

Ms Burch: On professional development, Anne Ellis, through TQI, would offer a range of ongoing support as well.

Ms Ellis: Yes. Thanks, minister. The other important thing to raise in relation to reference to high quality professional learning for gifted and talented students is that the whole framework that all ACT teachers, including the directorate teachers, now come under is that when they undertake professional learning, the compliance aspect, in effect, is that they do a professional reflection of the impact of what they have learned on their ability and their role as a teacher.

The partnership we have with the directorate and every other teacher employer in the ACT is, through the professional standards for teachers, to look at whether you are catering for all students, including gifted and talented students, but that whenever a teacher undertakes professional learning—whether it is informally through professional learning communities, whether it is through formal academic study or whether it is through an actual accredited program—what they do with that at the end is to stand back and think, “What was the most significant thing I learned? How is this going to affect my ability to cater for a range of student needs?” It is always targeting a framework to support the learning of the students in the classrooms, and that is really significant.

There is another thing that is really important to note with this, and this happened with our launch yesterday at the forum. We are now hosting, for all teachers, access to the digital portfolio platform of Mahara, which will allow every teacher in the ACT to continue the journey that many of them will have already started through an ACT university and to think about professional evidence in digital platform way, continuing on in their work as a teacher. Whether it is about videoing their practice,

about community conversations cross-sectorally or within a school, about focus on gifted and talented, about focus on EL students or whatever it is, there is now a framework for ACT teachers to be able to have what they need to do to keep their professional registration allied very closely with what is going to make them the best possible performer, including being able to cater for gifted and talented students in their class.

MRS JONES: Just for a final summation there, my final question was this: the measurement of whether teachers are fully skilled up for the classes that they have got is done by the principals, based on school satisfaction at that local level—is that right?

Ms Joseph: No.

MRS JONES: Right. Total misunderstanding.

Ms Joseph: It starts off, as Ms Ellis has explained, with, first of all, teacher registration.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Joseph: So every year—

MRS JONES: At the basic level, of course.

Ms Joseph: That is right. However, what we are just implementing is a requirement for—

Ms Ellis: A requirement for all ACT teachers to maintain their professional knowledge with 20 hours a year. That is right across—

MRS JONES: But it is not dictated what that training is, is it? There is a range?

Ms Joseph: We are looking at accredited training—as well as other training, obviously.

MRS JONES: Sure.

Ms Joseph: So it is making sure teachers maintain their professional practice base, for instance, and then how teachers are put onto different classes and how—

MRS JONES: Based on what their training has been, and then updated?

Ms Joseph: That is right.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Joseph: And then, based on how well they are performing, every year, through our enterprise arrangements, teachers are required to be provided with feedback; they have an annual performance discussion and are given formal feedback on how well they are going against the roles and responsibilities of our teachers and in line with the

national teacher standards.

Ms Ellis: It is also important to note—

MRS JONES: But my point was about gifted and talented. When I said—

Ms Joseph: Yes.

MRS JONES: What I am pointing to is that it is possible to have a teacher who is having to deal with gifted and talented and has not yet done this training. I guess that kind of thing happens in lots of big systems, but we are not mandating a particular—

Ms Joseph: No.

MRS JONES: But just trying to fit the best teacher to the best class?

Ms Joseph: That is right. You look at a range of factors. Where there might be a skill gap or an experience gap, that is where there is a range of in-school, departmental run, university-run opportunities to upskill. Particularly with teachers who might need to fill a skill gap, that is where we look at what are the resources around. That could be even team teaching in a classroom. It could be the mentoring relationship. It could be access to specialised professional learning. It could be using our teacher scholarship program to do some postgraduate study, and so forth. It is filling the gaps as best we can. Teachers grow professionally all the time; it is through that experience, coaching and mentoring, and working and learning collaboratively from other teachers—they are often the best ways to upskill, particularly around a specific content area.

Ms Ellis: Mrs Jones, can I just add one thing? In terms of assisting principals with the workforce decisions in their schools, one of the things that is now being provided for them is information about not only the qualifications but the professional learning that all their teachers have undertaken. Every year, each teacher is building up a data source of work that they have undertaken, and principals have access to that. They are getting a clearer picture about not only the initial qualifications but the ongoing qualifications of their teachers.

MRS JONES: Yes, additional, yes.

Ms Ellis: That is going to be a very significant support for decisions that they make within schools.

MRS JONES: Fair enough, yes.

Ms Wright: I can provide those numbers you requested on the specific—

MRS JONES: Thanks.

Ms Wright: There have been two sessions of the 12 that will be delivered, and 184 teachers have attended those.

Further to the current discussion, meeting the needs of gifted and talented students, a

fundamental part of a teacher's skill set is the capacity to differentiate the curriculum for whatever students sit in the classroom in front of them. The focus on differentiating curriculum, content and teaching strategies is fundamental to the work of every teacher every day.

MRS JONES: And every teacher is trained to do it.

Ms Wright: Every teacher is trained to do it. It is an expectation, whether they are differentiating because English is a second language for that student, they have a disability or they have gifts and talents and require an adjustment in content or pacing—

MRS JONES: Yes; there are a lot of individualised learning plans going on these days in the average classroom.

Ms Wright: There are.

MRS JONES: I think we all know that.

Ms Wright: I would say to you that part of the commitment of teachers is that they want every child every day to be making progress. The only way you can do that is to structure the differentiation of your curriculum and your pedagogy within the classroom on a daily basis.

MRS JONES: Tough job.

Ms Burch: In concluding this, let me say that we have done this work in both the learning difficulties and the gifted and talented areas. The independent schools and the Catholic system have both looked to these policies and have adopted them through those. That is testament to the rigour and the work that was done in them.

MRS JONES: And the investment, yes.

Ms Burch: And the fact that it is evidence based and a good approach.

MRS JONES: It is good to know that taxpayer dollars are going far. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Talking about the registration process, on page 57, minister, it talks about a review of non-government school registration processes. I was wondering if you could tell the committee about the review. Is it completed? Are there recommendations that have come from that?

Ms Burch: Ms Garrison can go to the detail of that, but I had an interest in looking at the registration or the validation processes across government schools and non-government schools and in many ways running a bit of a ruler around those two processes so they could be aligned and with a focus on what are the educational outcomes for students. Good work is being done. The independent and the Catholic schools have welcomed the opportunity to work through that.

Ms Garrison: Just to re-track, in 2013 the minister commenced a review into the in-

principle approval and registration processes of non-government schools. That review sought the views of all key stakeholders and individuals across the ACT. What resulted out of that were some review findings. To progress those findings, we established a cross-sectoral working group which included Catholic Education Office officials and the Association of Independent Schools.

We have been working with that group over the last year to implement many of those findings—which have already been implemented. Some of those findings were about how to better communicate to the community around when we receive an in-principle approval application. We have done that already; it is on the website. Letters are sent to the chairs of GSEC and non-GSEC to disseminate amongst all of their key stakeholder groups. We believe that we have implemented a higher level of communication to the community and stakeholders, which was one of the findings of that review.

In addition to the findings, as the minister just mentioned, it was to try to align elements of validation with registration. That work is continuing. And it is looking at some of the compliance areas that are required for all schools in the ACT and developing some tools that will assist the schools—trying to reduce red tape once again and not duplicate—to provide guidance and assurance that all of the schools in the ACT do comply and meet those requirements. Plus it is looking at the review process of registration and our public school validation process, and looking at those elements of school improvement that all schools do but that, under the registration process, are not actually required in the same way as under the validation process.

So we are really looking at what the common threads are. All schools want to make sure that they improve student outcomes. That is their goal, regardless of which sector they are in. We are working with the Catholic Education Office and the independent schools to get to that point. We are hopeful that by 2016 the new registration process will be in place that will show that alignment. Schools are already preparing for registration at this point in time for next year. We are going to work through that so that we are fully in that validation and registration time frame every five years, or three—you must have had one of those processes every five years, but it does not mean that it has to be five-yearly.

The other element of the review looked at in-principle approval and provisional registration before you actually start operating as a non-government school. We have become more explicit in the requirements of those processes. One of the findings was to be more explicit about how you show and demonstrate community demand for your school—being explicit about the policies and practices that you have to have in place in your school that show that the wellbeing of the students is there. They are quite broad statements currently. The cross-sectoral group defined what it looks like, what could be the evidence that was provided. There has been a lot of work happening, and it has really been very positive because it has been cross-sectoral. There has been agreement around the steps that we have taken to move forward.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, turning to pages 27 and 21, matters of staffing, the number of school leaders and teachers in public schools increased by 1.5 per cent, and the

number of students enrolled in ACT public schools increased by 7.1 per cent. Given the high increase in the number of children enrolled in preschool, 10-plus per cent, is there a concern that pressure will come through either a shortage of trained teachers or a reflection of larger class sizes?

Ms Burch: In short—Ms Joseph can go to the recruitment process—we recruit to the number of students that we have. In the last recruitment round, as Ms McAlister comes to the table, as I think I said in my opening statement, we recruited 470. There were many more than that that were seeking employment within the ACT public education system.

Ms Joseph: I also say that when we get an increase in enrolments, that could be filling up spots in a school classroom or within a school. It does not necessarily mean you should have the commensurate growth in staffing as within—

MR DOSZPOT: I am just looking at the thought behind the process, that is all.

Ms McAlister: We have no evidence to suggest that that situation is in play, and we have empowered our principals to recruit locally. We have had 30 local site selections in the first semester this year. All of those site selection processes have had good fields and resulted in the recruitment of a teacher. We have had a high degree of engagement in our annual equipment round and we are increasing engagement by our schools in recruiting teachers who might be there on prac arrangements and so on. We just do not have the evidence to suggest that that would be a problem.

MR DOSZPOT: Is the recruitment process a national recruitment process?

Ms McAlister: Correct. We do visits to universities across Australia. We also advertise locally as well. We visit universities locally. We have got close partnerships with our universities locally but we have a recruitment drive through universities.

MR DOSZPOT: I think New South Wales has an overabundance of teachers. Is that correct? Are we getting more teachers from there than anywhere else?

Ms Burch: I think you are referring to some comments about the number of graduates that are out there compared to the number of jobs that are in the system.

Ms McAlister: I would have to do some analysis for you, Mr Doszpot, but we recruit quality teachers and we would happily recruit quality teachers from New South Wales as well as the ACT and other states. Obviously local, ACT, is our main supply and then New South Wales, but I would have to analyse that data for you.

Ms Burch: I think the local universities put great store in the placement opportunities at schools. They like to see a good graduate in placement. I know that they encourage them to apply for jobs.

MR DOSZPOT: Just to go back a little, given the increase in students, you are confident that school sizes will not be increased as a consequence of this apparent imbalance in the number of students coming in?

Ms Joseph: I question the imbalance assumption there, for starters, but I do not think it is a problem, no.

MR DOSZPOT: Given the number of schools that are at close to capacity, what confidence have you that more schools will not be forced into larger classes, portable accommodation, changes to priority enrolment areas or other strategies outlined in response to a media article on the question of school capacity?

Ms Burch: Ms Joseph and Tracy can go to school capacity. If you took as a given, as absolute fact, everything that was in that article, I think you are misrepresenting the ACT government education system, but I might let Tracy Stewart talk to that.

MR DOSZPOT: Our task is to question what is going on, and that is what we are doing.

Ms Stewart: We do monitor at all times enrolments in our schools, growing enrolments. We do have a process in place to project enrolments into the future, and that involves taking a range of information, including births data, current enrolments at the school, new residential developments in growing areas and that sort of thing. We do focus on a five-year enrolment period but we also project forward even further than that just to keep an eye on projections.

My team do continually monitor situations in schools and their projected impact. We then do have a range of strategies in place to cater for changing enrolments over time, and these include school facilities. We can put in short-term solutions or longer term solutions around school facilities. We look at planning for new schools in some of our growing areas, where those are required. At the moment we have got to focus around the growth areas of Gungahlin, particularly north Gungahlin, and Molonglo.

We do also have some local solutions around changing enrolments as well. We can, for example, look to change priority enrolment areas if that is the right solution. As I said, we have quite a range of solutions to take into account changing enrolments in individual schools. In the end, our priority is about making sure that children have access to a school in their local area, and we ensure through our strategies and through our approaches that that always happens.

MR DOSZPOT: Moving on to the 46 teachers promoted to executive teacher positions, how are they allocated to schools? Are those executive teachers promoted at the request of the principal of a specific school or are these teachers promoted and put into other schools?

Ms Joseph: A bit of both. First of all, in any recruitment process, you have got to be able to identify a vacancy and have a funding stream for that vacancy. Through the last round of enterprise negotiations, there were additional resources put into the system to create the positions.

The priority in identifying the vacancies and then recruiting to the vacancies was again to look at the school data, where do we really need to strengthen teaching and learning, particularly schools potentially with less experienced staff who may need the expert advice of one of those positions, where the school data was not trending as

strongly as we would like it. There was some mixing and matching, but, for each of those positions, there had to be a vacancy in the first instance and then we upgraded those vacancies and placed those teachers.

Irrespective of which school those executive teacher professional practice teachers are at, they are a system resource and there is an expectation that those teachers will work particularly with schools in their cluster or their network. We regularly bring that group of executive teacher professional practice together. I think we call it the professional learning, the brains trust, learning where all teachers could come and meet with those teachers and really look at what are good teaching and learning strategies to implement in the classrooms. Those executive teacher professional practice experts play roles of mentoring and supporting other teachers, and they access professional learning to further develop their skills.

Where we are at with that initiative now is that any school can identify an executive teacher professional practice because we have now established the role and the expectations of that role, that it is an executive teacher focused in the classroom and as a clear career pathway for our very best classroom teachers. So the emphasis was on keeping our best teachers in the classroom doing what they can do best and getting them to support the development of other teachers.

I would hope, and I expect, to see that career opportunity and the use of that position in all of our schools, but our emphasis has been really to say, “Where are they most needed? How do we do the vacancy matching with the recruitment?”

MR DOSZPOT: That was my next question. You would like to see them in every school, obviously?

Ms Joseph: As a former principal, I think that is a key role in improving everything in our schools so that we are doing it systematically but, at an individual school level, to be able to have a teacher whose job is to create more and better teachers, rather than going into an administration stream for a career. I think that speaks volumes of what we expect to happen in our classrooms.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, it is 1 o’clock. We have only got half an hour for lunch.

MR DOSZPOT: I want to finish the question I am about to—

THE CHAIR: You may not be able to answer this question. Take it on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: When a teacher is promoted in this way from ETD, does the additional salary that is required come from the school budget or is that budget supplemented from central office?

Ms Joseph: Both of those options.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister.

Ms Burch: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: And thank you very much, Ms Joseph and all the officials that have come today. There may be some questions on notice, and you may have taken some questions on notice. We will get the *Hansard*. You will be able to refer to that. Let us know if there are any issues with it as well. You have five working days to get answers to questions to us. Members have four working days after they get the *Hansard* to get other questions to you. We will finish now. Thank you very much for your attendance at such a long session.

Ms Burch: Thank you.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 to 1.34 pm.

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to this public hearing of the education, training and youth affairs committee. Minister, this committee has decided to do an Indigenous welcome at the beginning of hearings. I meant to do it this morning. We have just introduced this. I will do it now and acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Ngunnawal people and the traditional custodians and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future.

I welcome you to this hearing, Ms Burch, as Minister for the Arts, and all the officials appearing today. As you are aware, this is the annual reports hearing for 2013-14. I will talk about questions on notice et cetera afterwards. Could witnesses indicate that they are familiar with the pink privilege card? I should think you would be by now. You are happy with that? Thank you. We are dealing first with arts administration and then we will go to cultural facilities. Is that your understanding, minister?

Ms Burch: Absolutely. Madam Chair, I alert the committee that it will be necessary for Mr Whitney to leave us at 2.30.

THE CHAIR: Right. We will get straight on to that area so that Mr Whitney can go when he needs to go. Do you have an opening statement, minister?

Ms Burch: Not in the sense of a lengthy statement; suffice to say that artsACT and the Cultural Facilities Corporation are wonderful assets to this community. The ACT has one of the highest participation rates for arts activity, and that is in no small part due to the dedication of the staff, their attention to detail and their absolutely heartfelt commitment to the arts and creative activity in the ACT. I want to say to artsACT, the officials involved and to the CFC and its board an absolute thank you from the outset.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. My first question is about page 52 of the annual report and relates to the upgrades of the Ainslie and Gorman House arts precincts. Where are the upgrades up to and why are we particularly choosing these arts hubs to invest in?

Ms Burch: We have made an investment in a number of arts precincts. This builds on what we have done over the last number of years. Certainly our focus in recent times has been on Gorman House and the Ainslie arts precincts. That has built on the work we have done at Strathnairn and down at The Street Theatre. I will ask David Whitney to go to the detail of those two areas in particular.

Mr Whitney: Part of the arts policy framework is talking about the creation of arts hubs, which are to agglomerate arts activity to provide synergies amongst the arts organisations that are currently in those arts hubs and to create the impacts and accessibility for arts, for people to access part of the arts program and for the arts to be seen across the community.

Ainslie and Gorman House are now managed by the one organisation, the Gorman House Arts Centre board. Those two buildings are in need of a little bit of rework in order not only to upgrade the buildings but also to make the facilities more accessible and more available. There was a lot of work done in the 1980s in Gorman House to create a series of small performance venues. At the Ainslie Arts Centre there has been very little work done from when it first opened as the Ainslie infant school way back in the early 1920s.

The capital works program that we are rolling out there—the tenders for that program have closed and will be assessed and the tender announced next week—will be to undertake a major body of work around a master plan that we had drawn up for us by Philip Leeson Architects, principally to look at how to maximise the activity in and around the area.

If we start with the Ainslie Art Centre, which is plainly focused on music, and young music, there is a performance hall there which is a little sadly lacking. So part of the study will be to revitalise that as a community-accessible music venue. It is critically important in Civic and in Canberra that there is a venue that is more accessible and more usable. So we will put some technical equipment in there—lighting, sound equipment—a stage, proper dressing rooms and also a public front door so that people can find their way into that venue. Of course, as it was designed as a school, it is very difficult to find your way through a venue that was initially a primary school. So that is a critical area.

With respect to the other things we are doing, we are trying to remove some of the early partitions that were put up during the time of the school. There was a breakdown in the size of some of the teaching rooms, to open those teaching rooms up so that they are a better size for teaching some of the ensemble work that organisations that operate out of the Ainslie Arts Centre can do. We are also looking at creating some acoustically separated rehearsal spaces so that young people learning music are able to do that without consuming a large room. They can go into a small space to do that sort of activity.

Whilst we are doing the capital works there are also some very interesting developments with some of the organisations that are based in there. The International Music Festival is one of those organisations. Also, Canberra Youth Music and Music for Everyone have, over the last 15 months, been working together to merge into one new organisation. This is part of the notion of arts hubs being much stronger in the way that they actively promote and create arts activity. This new music organisation, which will be in effect from next year, will provide not only the programs that currently exist but also look at expanding their accessibility and their programs that are happening and are delivered out of Ainslie.

In Gorman House we are looking at creating some new opportunities around, again,

how to find your way into the centre. Originally designed as a hostel, it had a very different public feel to it. With the proposed developments at the end of Batman Street, with the ABC flats and opening up into Civic, we need to define, effectively, how the public can find their way in. And with all the attention that is going on in Braddon at the moment, particularly in Lonsdale Street and the hipster culture that is occurring there, if we can attract the same activity within the Gorman House Arts Centre then this will impact. As Lonsdale Street becomes more and more accommodation focused, we will be able to expand the degree of arts activity within Gorman House.

The Bogong Theatre, which is one of the theatre spaces in the middle, is to be turned into a more accessible space with a cafe opportunity associated with that. The administration will be moved closer to there and we are also looking at creating an arts hub for emerging artists to come in—a little bit like a pop-up. That is happening in places like the Chop Shop. We will be able to have that happening at one end of the Gorman House Arts Centre.

All of this can be developed according to the master plan that we have in place. That is due to commence before Christmas, and in Ainslie it will be finished by the time term 1 starts next year and we will finish the work in Gorman a little bit later.

THE CHAIR: Will there be much disruption over the Christmas period for people that have come to town from elsewhere?

Mr Whitney: The major disruption probably would be within the organisations that are providing activities within there. We have already relocated the office accommodation for people at Ainslie Arts Centre and they are delivering their programs in other facilities across Canberra. During the time of construction the builders will have open access to the building and be able to work through there.

Within Gorman House there will be some disruption. You cannot knock walls down and repaint without having some disruption, but Gorman House is large enough to move the activity around to try and create that activity. The greater disruption will be to the Gorman House administration as opposed to the arts activity that happens within there, and they are quite ready for that.

THE CHAIR: What about the Kingston arts hub? Where are we up to with that?

Mr Whitney: With the Kingston arts precinct, we received funding last year for a feasibility study which is now at a final draft stage. That is a report that has come to artsACT. It is yet to be formally considered by government but we are hoping to have that before Christmas. It is a very interesting and pretty exciting project that is looking at pulling all of the visual arts organisations of Canberra into one location to provide a central area of activity and a synergy of those organisations, to bring life and vitality into that area of Kingston, in association with the development of the apartments and the living that is already beginning to roll out in Kingston and will continue.

If we look at the example of the Canberra Glassworks and the Powerhouse, and now Megalo in the Wentworth Avenue offices, we have already seen *Glint*, which is one of the exhibitions where glass and print worked together. That, as a program activity, was remarkably successful. So if we can move people like the Canberra

Contemporary Art Space, PhotoAccess and Craft ACT onto that same site, that will really provide much greater synergy. Also we will be bringing in people like ArtSound FM to be part of that precinct.

What has been very interesting is that with the feasibility study, which has looked very strongly at the land opportunities and the development opportunities that are there, we have talked a lot to the private sector. Again some of the synergies that are occurring there are providing us with some great opportunities to look at how we can include the creative sector. Architects, designers and those sorts of people are very keen to move into that Kingston precinct, as well as some of the retail and commercial side of things. So there could be commercial activity sitting alongside arts activity. We are certainly looking at spreading that across the development within the Kingston precinct.

THE CHAIR: Given the success, obviously, of these different hubs and what you have been finding, we understand there was a feasibility study undertaken for the second stage of the arts centre at Belconnen. Given that feasibility study and the obvious success of the other hubs, and the obvious success of the first stage of the Belconnen Arts Centre, minister, would you like to say what value you see in actually being able to get on with the second stage?

Ms Burch: I understand many in the region want to see stage 2 realised, and I am certainly sympathetic to that. We have done the work to look at what the feasibility would look like. Also, as it grows and develops as an arts centre, it is growing under its own steam and it is doing a fantastic job for both the arts community and in being a point of venue hire for many in our community who are seeking to have quite a neutral space and quite a beautifully situated space as well.

I am absolutely aware of the desire. Yes, it makes sense to do it in time, and it will probably get down to budgetary decisions. But I am sympathetic to it. I know that as the community there grows—Belconnen is certainly a growth area—we will see it evolve over time.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I think it is under demand from people in Gungahlin. Of course, Canberra wide, people are travelling to that centre. So thank you very much.

Ms Burch: I do not know whether Mr Whitney wants to explain in a bit more detail how it is becoming a place of use for the various government agencies around there. Recently it has come to my attention that organisations and community groups want a neutral space that is not attached to another institution. They are seeing that they can self-cater and that it is in magnificent surrounds. So it is becoming very popular.

Mr Whitney: A lot of the cultural inclusion outreach work is dealing with a lot of the new migrant communities in west Belconnen in particular. Those organisations are looking for a central place for social gatherings. Often the places that are available are aligned, as the minister was saying, with some other association. So to have a neutral space is very important.

We are finding also that the gallery program is now completely subscribed; in fact about 30 to 40 per cent more activity is expressed to be shown in the gallery than is

available and the dance program in the dance studio is also fully subscribed, which is terrific. One of the programs, Dance for People with Parkinson's, is now extended to be developed and delivered out of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre as well. This is the sort of opportunity that can come out of an arts hub and a centre like Belconnen.

It is also interesting, as we get to the Christmas season, that a lot of the larger commonwealth government agencies in Belconnen are looking for a space to have their Christmas functions. The Belconnen Arts Centre hosts two or three of those a year. A very large marquee is put up outside and 300 or 400 people come to those activities.

What has come through the community consultation we have done for Belconnen is the need for a town hall—the sorts of functions that would normally occur in a town hall. So it is a space that is very adaptable. Whether it is for citizenship ceremonies, the local dance community, a visiting performance or indeed a car show, those are the sorts of spaces that are not currently available. If we look at Lake Ginninderra College, their hall is about 98 per cent booked with activity. So this is one of the needs of the community. They are saying, “We need a hall like that but closer to the Belconnen Arts Centre,” and that is our aspiration. We just note that there is a queue.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, 2014-15 priorities, on page 53: can you give us an idea of what are the key initiatives that have arisen as a result of the review and update of the ACT arts policy framework?

Ms Burch: Certainly the framework drives the work of artsACT and how we distribute our funding, the focus of funding, the focus of activities into arts hubs and, indeed, the key arts organisations and everything that artsACT does. I might let Mr Whitney go to the detail of that.

Mr Whitney: The arts policy framework was quite deliberately established as a framework in 2002 in response to the Peter Loxton study that had been done across the arts landscape. We are already beginning to implement some of the changes that are coming through there. Principally, that is around the approach for access to the arts, which is a key priority. It is a diversion from previous arts policies and, indeed, policies and policy frameworks around the country that often have arts access second or third in the list and with pursuit of excellence being the first. We are not shying away from that pursuit of excellence but we are absolutely focusing on people being able to access the arts in its first instance. We have found that to be universally accepted, which is terrific.

The development of arts hubs which we have just spoken about was another very important part which is about the sustainability of the arts sector. Again that has been welcomed. With respect to the support for excellence in programs, particularly we can look at some of our organisations like the Canberra Glassworks, Megalo or, indeed, The Street Theatre. Any of our organisations have that as a fundamental for where they are going.

What we need to do now is a sector analysis—to look at, across the arts, what is being

served by the arts policy framework, and where are the gaps and the opportunities, for us to go back and look at that and to revise that framework. It is always the intention to use next year as the process to go through that exercise.

One of the critical things that we find with the arts is that, whilst those people who are directly involved have a very strong rapport, there are many people who do not particularly understand what the arts is about or believe that it is not for them. One of the critical things that we need to do within the sector analysis is to look at the public value of the government's investment in the arts.

I think the public value question is the most important one that we can offer because we talk about Canberra being a livable city, about it aspiring to be a sustainable city. We talk about some of the various parts of Canberra that we like. We certainly all love the parklands and we all love access to the lakes. It is surprising how highly the people love being engaged in the arts, whether that is through the national cultural institutions or through our own.

We are proposing to do a lot of work around that public value. We are doing our own sector analysis, but to try and test that we are suggesting that early next year we call together a group of people involved in the arts. It could be people from the ANU, from our key arts organisations, independent arts practitioners and some of the lobbying groups that we work with—people like the Childers Group—and to have a select panel to come in and work with our recommendations to test what they are like. That will inform the next stage of our arts policy framework and how that could look forward to the future.

Ms Burch: Just on the arts policy framework, one of the key planks in that is support to the key arts organisations. Yesterday we announced \$966,000 to key arts organisations. Ausdance, Belconnen Arts Centre, the Ainslie and Gorman arts centres, Megalo Print Studio and Gallery, and Warehouse Circus will receive funding. In regard to Gorman House, they have increased their funding from \$110,000 a year to \$200,000 a year. Megalo has also received increased funding. Warehouse Circus, which is the only dedicated circus in the ACT—if any of us want to run away to the circus we can do that—have had increased funding as well. Belconnen Arts has retained its current funding of \$322,000 plus. That is a fundamental way of supporting arts, artists themselves and also that community connection more broadly, and facilitating connection with the arts.

MR DOSZPOT: On what you have just said, minister, have you considered or reconsidered recognising the efforts of the CAT awards? The New South Wales government has now chosen to make a fairly substantial grant to that organisation. Why is it that the ACT government does not recognise that to the same extent?

Ms Burch: We have provided support to the CAT awards, the Canberra Area Theatre Awards. I would say that up until now our support has not included any contribution from New South Wales—that is my understanding—yet 50 per cent of the CAT award recipients or participants come from regional New South Wales. I would say to New South Wales that it is high time they made a contribution to regional New South Wales residents to participate in this. We have, over time, provided support to the CAT awards. I am aware of their disappointment around access to Llewellyn Hall, I

think it was, last year. The patron has made the case for the CAT awards—and rightly so; as a patron, it was the right thing to do.

On New South Wales and support to the arts, one of the other things is that we recognise regional artists through our artist grants, yet New South Wales do not equally recognise that they have an island of ACT within their state. It is my understanding that they have no ability to or do not recognise ACT artists in any of their grants. Through our arts grants, we would fund regional artists that would live in New South Wales.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, there seems to be an “us and them” situation: “We do this; they are not doing that.”

Ms Burch: No, not at all.

MR DOSZPOT: What I am suggesting to you is that you reconsider the sort of support and the financial support that an organisation like the CAT awards need and the fact that New South Wales has recognised them with a substantial grant. Why could the ACT not do likewise?

Ms Burch: I am quite happy to put on record, through Mr Whitney, the support we have provided to the CAT awards.

Mr Whitney: The support for hiring Llewellyn Hall is what the CAT awards have asked for in the past—and, in fact, just this week they have asked for it again, because the application process for that fund is available. We are expecting the CAT awards to apply. It is a competitive fund. There is \$200,000 available for the hire of Llewellyn Hall. About half of that, \$100,000, goes to the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, to roll their programs out. The other half is available for community groups to make application to that fund. Groups that are currently receiving support are Canberra Youth Music, the Eisteddfod Society, the Llewellyn Choir, Musica Viva ACT, Pro Musica and the Canberra Choral Society. They are the successful groups at the moment; there are six of those.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I ask why the CAT awards were not successful in getting that last year?

Mr Whitney: It is a competitive area, and the other organisations probably were able to mount a stronger case in terms of their need. In relation to the criteria for Llewellyn Hall, principally it is the best acoustic venue in Canberra. It is designed specifically as that. It also has a capacity of 1,400 seats, which is greater than the 1,200 seats at the Canberra Theatre Centre, so it is a capacity question. And then the third is the community engagement element of that. In previous years, when the CAT awards have been successful, they have been able to satisfy those criteria—or enough of those criteria to warrant funding.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the value of that grant?

Mr Whitney: For the CAT awards, in 2011 they received \$10,750; in 2012, \$14,165; and in 2013, \$14,190, which was the amount they asked for. So there was no cutting

back on what their application—

MR DOSZPOT: Are they in a position to ask for that now, or have submissions or applications closed?

Mr Whitney: Submissions have just opened. They are certainly in a position to make application for support for future years.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I have a couple of questions further to my original question. Has the review of the framework now commenced?

Mr Whitney: It has commenced internally within artsACT. We are proposing to have two elements of the review. One is to have an open questionnaire that will be seeking the community's interest in questions that we will create. That questionnaire will also have an opportunity for people to put their own commentary in and around that. The other element of that will be to have a panel who we will call together to review recommendations that we come up with and that come from that questionnaire and response process.

MR DOSZPOT: Who will be on that panel?

Mr Whitney: We have not yet determined who will be on that panel. I did mention earlier that we are looking to have on the panel representatives of some of our key arts organisations, people who are involved as artists themselves and also probably someone from the ANU, to try and pull together the best advice that we can to pull that together. I would add that normally in our community consultation process we will have an open meeting at some stage during that process, so the committee could be actively engaged to be a part of that.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, you had a supplementary.

MR SMYTH: A supplementary on the policy. When do you think the review will be done?

Ms Burch: When will it be completed?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Ms Burch: By the first half or quarter of next year.

Mr Whitney: Yes. We have said that we would do the review for 2015, and we are proposing to have that completed by the middle of 2015.

MR SMYTH: The website says 2014.

Mr Whitney: We need to update the website.

MR SMYTH: So now it is 2015?

Mr Whitney: Correct.

MR SMYTH: In the policy framework, it says on page 7:

The Framework provides a structure within which arts policy and the goals and outcomes associated with policy will be developed ...

In the two years and four months since the minister launched the framework, what policy goals and outcomes associated with the policy have been developed? And could you table copies of them, please?

Mr Whitney: No, we cannot table a formal development of a policy. We can table implementation of the directions that are set within the policy framework.

MR SMYTH: So in two years and four months there have been no policies developed as a consequence of the framework?

Ms Burch: That is not what Mr Whitney said.

MR SMYTH: You cannot table a policy?

Mr Whitney: No; I cannot table the developments that you are asking for. The policy framework is what we have been working to. We certainly have been using the arts fund as a funding mechanism to respond to the arts policy framework and also our capital works development to implement elements of that. That does not mean that we have changed the policy framework—which I think is your question?

MR SMYTH: No, that is not the question. The paragraph, which the minister signed off on and which is published on page 7, says:

The Framework provides a structure within which arts policy and the goals and outcomes associated with policy will be developed ...

In the last two years and four months since this was first launched by Joy Burch MLA, Minister for the Arts, in July 2012, what arts policies have been developed, what are the goals of those policies, and what outcomes have been achieved?

Mr Whitney: The implementation of the arts fund has been in response to the policy framework, so we have made changes to the arts landscape as a result of that arts funding—decisions that are based back on that access to the arts policy framework. With applications to the arts fund over the last two years, they had to quite significantly change from previous applications. We were now talking about access as a key goal of the funding mechanism. I mentioned that as an issue and a change at the beginning of this session; it has certainly been a development and a change within the implementation of that arts policy framework.

MR SMYTH: The arts funding has changed, but what other arts policies have come about as a result of the framework, and what are the goals and what are the outcomes? Can you table your KPIs for the arts framework?

Mr Whitney: The arts policy framework principally is the driver for our arts funding;

the outcomes of the arts funding, I think, would be the way to indicate that.

MR SMYTH: That is not what page 7 says. Page 7 says that the framework provides a structure within which arts policy will be developed, within which the goals will be developed and within which the outcomes will be developed. Are you saying that two years and four months after the framework was launched, there are no new policies, no goals have been established and you cannot measure what outcomes have been achieved?

Mr Whitney: Given the line of your questioning, we could certainly provide changes to the guidelines for the funding mechanism. Those changes would be substantial. There is a substantial change in each of the two years since the framework was introduced. I am very happy—

MR SMYTH: So the only policy we have inside the arts policy framework is the funding guidelines? Is that what you are saying?

Mr Whitney: You are asking for documentation to be tabled, and I am providing you with an option where we can provide that, which certainly would show a change to the delivery of the arts fund that draws a direct connection back to the policy framework.

MR SMYTH: So the only consequence—

Ms Burch: Mr Smyth, if—

MR SMYTH: of the arts policy framework—

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, the minister wants to say something.

Ms Burch: You have asked me; you have asked the Chief Minister. Without paraphrasing, the Chief minister's response was that the never-ending search for a strategy by Mr Smyth, who appears to be not happy until there until there is a strategy or a piece of paper that is clear for you to read—

MR SMYTH: I have not mentioned the word “strategy” this afternoon. We have not got there yet.

Ms Burch: We have been very clear in the arts policy framework that it is the driver of arts activity. We have amended and adjusted guidelines around funding. We have made a clear decision to support arts hubs from the mechanics from online grants management to facilities upgrades through the capital works that we are doing and to the asset management. All of that is held within the framework. The fact that we can show the number of participants within certain key arts organisations and the increased activity through the cultural inclusion workers—all that shows a successful arts policy. If you want me to be able to table—

MR SMYTH: No. Minister—

Ms Burch: If you want us to be able to table something on an A4 piece of paper that

goes to satisfy your desire—

MR DOSZPOT: But minister—

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, don't interrupt.

MR SMYTH: I would have expected something far more significant than an A4 piece of paper.

Ms Burch: You can keep on searching; you can keep on asking.

MR SMYTH: So there is—

Ms Burch: We are comfortable with the framework.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Smyth is quoting your own words to you.

Ms Burch: Mr Doszpot, I am talking, thank you. The framework is there. We are reacting to the framework. It drives our activity, and I think our activity on record is very successful. We continue to have good participation in arts; we continue to have good investments in arts.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, if I can just finish.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry has a supplementary too, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: You have said that there is good participation. Has that met the outcomes and the goals that were developed under the framework, and can you please table those goals?

Ms Burch: What we will table is the arts policy framework.

MR SMYTH: So there are no goals?

Ms Burch: And every document that sits underneath that, which is all available publicly on the artsACT website.

THE CHAIR: So you are taking that on notice, minister?

Ms Burch: If that is a difficult task for you to do, Mr Smyth, we will table them.

THE CHAIR: The minister is going to table that information.

MR SMYTH: The final question is: what is the overall budget figure for the arts in the ACT?

Mr Whitney: It is in the annual report, but approximately \$8.3 million.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR SMYTH: In the 2014-15 budget for the arts, the appropriation was in fact \$21 million, government payment for outputs. Government arts engagement—\$11,096,000 was the GPO. What is the difference between the \$8.5 million and the \$11 million?

Mr Whitney: I think that might include capital support. I would have to check this; I am not sure if that includes the capital support as well and I am not sure—

MR SMYTH: It is GPO. Capital should be separate.

Mr Whitney: It would be separate then. It may well include the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

THE CHAIR: Can you take that on notice and get back to us?

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Mr Whitney, you talked about a survey that was going to be developed to find out some information from the community about arts in the ACT. Will you be looking at ways to include schools in that process so that children can also participate in that survey and put their feelings about arts in the ACT?

Mr Whitney: We certainly can include that. We work very closely with our colleagues in the Education and Training Directorate, particularly in our program of engaging artists in schools. There are schools that operate independent artists in schools programs as well. We can try to embrace that in that equation. Also, there are the activities that the Education and Training people support through the step into the limelight program which connects to support that we provide through the community outreach program at the ANU. It is connected to the very successful music program to all of the primary schools. The visual arts support program occurs in schools as well. It is a significant part of the rollout of arts activities. We certainly can find a way to include recognition from young people of what they would like to see in arts activities.

MS BERRY: And does this survey go towards that perception that Riverview found in their survey of the community about arts only being for the elite and not for everybody else in west Belconnen?

Mr Whitney: That perception is a difficult one to change. Certainly the people whose young children might be involved in ballet schools or dance schools, for example, tend not to, on a form, identify that as an art. “Have you been involved in an arts activity in recent times?” It is about changing people’s perception, particularly in response to questionnaires that might be asked of their engagement in activities.

We certainly have a pretty solid box office response of the number of people that go to activities. We measure the number of people who go to galleries. That is an indicator that sits us way above the national in terms of attendance at arts and cultural activities. The perception question is one that we do need to turn around and change.

This might be an interesting time to talk about the back to arts hub, the conglomeration of arts-based activities in the inner south. Most of them, supported through artsACT, have just recently announced that they are going to be doing a walking tour of the inner south arts hub, as they are calling themselves. Clearly it is Glassworks and Megalo but also picking up PhotoAccess, ArtSound FM, M16 and connecting also with Bilk Gallery. They will be having this walk around, connecting tour as part of their inner south arts hub. If that is able to change perception and the degree of retail activity that they have and the support that comes out of that, then maybe that is something that we can have a look at and pick up those sorts of activities as well.

MS BERRY: What are organisations or art spaces like Strathnairn doing to encourage people who might not normally have that exposure to more traditional arts by definition other than the music or—

Mr Whitney: Strathnairn is a very interesting one. The territory has invested substantial money in recent years to assist some of the capital needs that are out there. We have been able to open up Strathnairn Homestead now. It has actually got a more substantial gallery program as well as an independent shop to sell the activities that are made on site. We have also built some additional studios, stabilised the woolshed and created a foundry, the only community accessible foundry in the country. There are many private foundries but it is the only one of its kind where members of the public can go and learn about the process of sculpting and casting.

You mentioned the Riverview Group. We are working very closely with them in terms of their much longer term developments in west Belconnen and looking to try to find an existing cultural activity that can provide a hub for the development that they are looking around and about.

In the first instance it might be as simple as access to community gardens and access for other activities that could link people in. There is certain development along the Murrumbidgee River. There is a bushland corridor preserved there. If we can get some walking trails through there that might have art interpretation of Indigenous relics as well as contemporary art activity and reference points on those walking trails, then that is the sort of activity that we can engage in.

We have already engaged very strongly with some ornithological groups and some zoological groups who are very keen on preserving the bush landscape, and those people now see Strathnairn as part of their home. Food is a great attracter. The extension of the little cafe that we have out at Strathnairn, now run by a commercial operator, means that on weekends you have to book now to get your pizzas and your luncheon activity that is occurring out there. We often find that is a great way of bringing people in.

If I jump to the other side of town, back to Kingston, and look at the work rolled out in the former transport building by the bus depot markets, do people who go to the bus depot markets and then spin across to look at what is happening in the Canberra Glassworks or at Megalo value that as an art experience or as a shopping experience or as a market experience? It does not necessarily matter from our perspective because they can access those facilities and our arts facilities and see that as part of a much

broader cultural experience and part of that engagement. But if you were to question those 6,000 or 7,000 people a weekend that are around Kingston, they would probably say that they are going for the market experience.

We know that it is a much broader social experience which gets back to the challenge. It is not a straight, hard economic answer about the value of the arts in Canberra. It is a much closer, a much more complex argument about the community value of the arts in Canberra.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whitney, I am conscious of the fact you need to leave at half past 2. Have you got a substantive question, Ms Berry? And then we need to go to Mrs Jones.

MS BERRY: I do. It should not take too long. I wonder whether you could give us an update, minister, on the vandalism of *On the staircase* public art.

Ms Burch: Yes. That is a delightful piece of public art but unfortunately it has been the attention of far too many vandal attacks. We have removed that due to the work that is being done on the Christmas lights in that area. But the little men on the staircase will not be returning. It will have some repair work done and it will be restored to a public area. Unfortunately it has been far too much of a point of interest for silly behaviours. The work is being undertaken now, is it not, Mr Whitney?

Mr Whitney: Yes, it is. Regrettably it became a bit of a trophy piece and there were too many acts of vandalism for it to remain in that location. Not only was it distressing for us, the artist, Keld Moseholm, was quite disappointed. He is a regular attendee at the *Sculpture by the Sea* in Sydney. In fact, he came down the last time we restored and repaired the work. He has artworks around the world and this is the only one that has had that degree of attention. And we tried to share the humour about the *Little Mermaid* that is in Copenhagen which has her head knocked off regularly but, of course, it is not an amusing issue. We had to remove the work, and we are in the process of restoring, repairing and then relocating it to another location.

MS BERRY: Has the government decided where the new location will be?

Ms Burch: Not definitively. There are areas we are looking at. We want to keep it in an open public space with perhaps some relevance to the concept of it, which was learning and growth and that. It is a shame. When you see them, though, they are much loved because a couple of their heads, in particular, are getting polished up very nicely when children pat them. They are very accessible. It is unfortunate. A trophy piece is probably a way of describing, unfortunately, that silly behaviour attached to them.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I want to go to the artists in schools program. Which schools hosted an artist in 2013-14 and which schools are being flagged for 2014-15?

Ms Burch: Mr Whitney has probably got the detail but the artists in schools program is very successful and the schools that have them get quite a delight out of having them.

Mr Whitney: I am sorry, I will have to take that question on notice about the particular schools and the artists. I just have not got that here. But we can certainly provide a response to that, and we can provide, in the same reply, a response to the previous years as well. We have been moving through the early transition years, with the first rollout of that program now into primary schools, and we also have included the school at Bimberi as part of that rollout program.

MRS JONES: A comprehensive list would be great of who, where, when and historically. You are now into an older age range of students. You have worked through the younger years. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Whitney: That is correct, yes. They are still in primary schools. We have funding from the Australia Council for a further couple of years. Whether we move beyond the primary school program into the secondary school program, we still are working with education.

Ms Burch: Bimberi is an exception.

MRS JONES: As an aside, does the government intend to require more training in arts and music education in the ACT's training certification?

Ms Burch: As in teachers? There is a national curriculum on arts, and we had a discussion this morning around the professional development and professional training opportunities for our teachers. But in regard to support for arts development within schools, we have provided funding to Ausdance and Kulture Break, for example. Their focus has been on providing PD and working with teachers within the schools for that. I have been to a few schools where they have had Kulture Break. The kids love it. The teachers like it because it gives them that confidence around working with kids and dance.

MRS JONES: Just to clarify, obviously there are lots of good things going on but there is not a minimum training for teachers in music. There are outcomes from a curriculum but I am talking about the training.

Ms Burch: No. If I can just go back to this morning's conversation where similar things around learning difficulties and gifted and talented students were raised, our approach within our education system and our teachers would be that they are able to teach, but as you move into more specialist areas like PE teachers and school sizes, there would be dedicated teachers that would be for that stream of learning, regardless of what it is.

MRS JONES: There is not some move to change that at this point, though?

THE CHAIR: Mr Whitney has something to add, I think.

Mr Whitney: There are two issues following on that theme. The support that we provide to the ANU for their community outreach program is very particularly focused on delivering in schools. One of the activities, the music education program, is about people from the university working with school teachers and principals to

give them professional development in the schoolroom as well as activities for the students, principally using voice as a mechanism, learning to sing, and then carrying that into other musical activity.

We have also extended in the last two years the visual arts program, working with the School of Art, to run professional development summer schools. That is an activity that is now conducted at the university to provide education and training for teachers in independent schools to come along and be part of that professional development activity, which is not available during the school year, but we are able to work with the ANU to roll that program out.

MRS JONES: And no doubt it depends to an extent on the teacher and their interest. One of my kids had a teacher who taught singing and it worked quite well. But it is not something that every teacher could or would want to do.

Ms Burch: I agree with that.

Mr Whitney: We will respond formally, but I can now tell you that in 2014, the artists in schools program is in four government primary schools in terms 3 and 4. There is a glass artist, Lisa Cahill, who is working at Arawang primary at Weston Creek; a textile artist, Meredith Hughes, who is at Lyneham primary in north Canberra; a visual artist and sculptor, Mary Kayser, who is at Macquarie primary in Belconnen; and a street artist, Dan Maginnity, who is at Gilmore Primary School. We selected those artists. We called for applications, and the artists responded. We had an assessment panel, which was Education and Training people as well as independent artists and artsACT, and that is how we arrived at that list of artists. I could read through 2013 down to 2009, but it is probably more useful—

MRS JONES: You can table it. That is fine.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you give us some detail on Arawang's artist?

Mr Whitney: That is glass artist Lisa Cahill. I have not got the detail of the program with me here, but we can provide some example of that. Part of the activity is actually very much about the documentation, the development, the rollout and the response from that. So we will take that on notice and provide that.

Ms Burch: And some of them leave a legacy. I think Caroline Chisholm Primary School—I could be wrong—had an artist, either glass or pottery, but there are still pieces of their work that they have created embedded in the school wall. It is not just a one-off term activity.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, did you have a substantive question?

MR SMYTH: I have a quick one. Continuing on page 7 of the framework, it says that the framework will guide the implementation and review of existing policies and programs and this will include the ACT arts fund. Was that implemented and was the policy reviewed?

Mr Whitney: Yes, I mentioned that earlier. For the two years since the framework

has been in operation we have reviewed the framework. The example of the changed funding landscape that the minister announced this morning increased to organisations that have picked up in response to the framework. We have moved some organisations from one level of funding to another and we have moved some organisations away from our funding. Their applications were not successful in response to revisions to the arts funding guidelines.

MR SMYTH: Can a copy of the review be made available?

Mr Whitney: Certainly an outcome of that can be made available, yes.

MR SMYTH: All right. Next was the ACT arts hubs policy, which is currently in development, it says. Has that development been finalised?

Mr Whitney: I think the development would be more in line with the implementation of the hubs and the directions around the implementation of those hubs.

MR SMYTH: So is there an ACT arts hubs policy document?

Mr Whitney: I will take that question on notice. I am not sure if that is a resolved document that the minister may have seen or a document that we have been working with.

MR SMYTH: So 2½ years after this document we do not know whether we have got an ACT arts hubs policy?

Ms Burch: We certainly know we have an ACT arts hubs policy in the sense that we are very clearly investing in The Street Theatre and we are clearly investing in Gorman House.

MR SMYTH: Anyone can invest. It is whether you invest through a policy. Okay; you have taken that on notice.

Ms Burch: Mr Smyth, obviously it is of interest to you and I can tell by the smile on your face—

MR SMYTH: It is of interest to the rest of the community out there, minister.

Ms Burch: that you are enjoying this immensely. So knock yourself out, Mr Smyth, and ask your questions.

MR SMYTH: Well, 2½ years later you have not done it, minister; that is your failing. The ACT artists in residence policy—is there a policy?

Mr Whitney: Yes, there is a policy.

MR SMYTH: Has it been reviewed?

Mr Whitney: Yes, it has.

MR SMYTH: Could we see a copy of the review?

Mr Whitney: Yes, a copy of the policy.

Ms Burch: We will provide what we can.

MR SMYTH: The arts residencies ACT funding program—is that a policy?

Mr Whitney: It is a program that connects back to the policy you were talking about just before.

MR SMYTH: All right. Has that been reviewed, or is it contained in the previous one?

Mr Whitney: It is contained in the previous one. The rollout for that has been part of the development of the arts fund.

MR SMYTH: The artists in schools program—is there a formal policy document for that?

Mr Whitney: There is an agreement between the ACT government and the Australia Council, which has the guidelines for how the artists in schools program is to roll out. We have an agreement between artsACT and the Education and Training Directorate.

MR SMYTH: So there is no policy document you could table?

Mr Whitney: The Australia Council agreement is very clearly about the framework for artists in schools.

MR SMYTH: Has that been reviewed?

Mr Whitney: It is part of the five-year funding cycle, so it has not been reviewed since it commenced.

MR SMYTH: Even though it is listed here for review. That is okay. The ACT youth music forward plan—is that a policy document?

Mr Whitney: It certainly is a plan, yes.

MR SMYTH: Okay. Has that been reviewed?

Mr Whitney: It is quite new, and I guess the review of that is that two of the key players in there—and I mentioned them earlier: Music for Everyone and Canberra Youth Music—have taken that document and substantially rethought their business model and are looking to merge into one organisation.

MR SMYTH: Finally, the strategic asset management plan which is currently in development, has that been finalised?

Mr Whitney: The strategic asset management plan certainly has been finalised. It has

been funded by Treasury and has been developed as a comprehensive document about a strategic asset management plan for arts facilities

MR SMYTH: When will that be reviewed?

Mr Whitney: It has only just been completed this year.

MR SMYTH: Can a copy of that be tabled?

Ms Burch: We will have a look and see what we can provide to the committee.

MR SMYTH: All right.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

MR SMYTH: If there are any other policies, could they be tabled and, if they have been reviewed, a copy of the review tabled as well?

THE CHAIR: The minister will take that on notice. Mr Doszpot, you had a quick supplementary, because Mr Whitney needs to leave.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a quick supplementary with regard to the minister's comments on what Mr Smyth was asking for. Mr Smyth was asking for your words that you have presented about the policy direction. I think this committee and members related to this committee have every right to ask you those questions. For you to say, "Mr Smyth, knock yourself out"—can I suggest, minister, you try and pay a little bit more attention to the issues that we are trying to cover at the moment, which include some very substantial questions that you have to answer. Thank you.

MS BERRY: I just have one more question, if that is okay, chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes, very quick.

MS BERRY: Art in schools has just been mentioned a couple of times by Mrs Jones and Mr Smyth. It probably happened after this report came out; it is about the program at Bimberi during the school holidays. Can you give us an update on how that went?

Mr Whitney: Yes. There have been two elements to that program. They are specifically targeted during the education and training school holidays when the classroom is available for artists to work there. We engaged an artist called George Rose, who is a street artist. She has worked with the young people at Bimberi now on two occasions. The first time she created a series of quite large panels of the designs of the young people. They were involved in learning how to do street art as opposed to a quick tag and a bit of graffiti. Those panels have now been on display at Tuggeranong Arts Centre and, I believe, Belconnen Arts Centre as well. So it is an opportunity for them to express themselves and have their work displayed. George Rose has done a second program as well, and very successfully.

Ms Burch: That is in addition to the regular art program that operates out of Bimberi.

You may recall—perhaps it was last Assembly—that there was an exhibition here in the Assembly of art work from Bimberi.

MS PORTER: We will finish this particular part of the hearing now. Any questions you have taken on notice, if you could get them back to us within five days, if possible. Members have four days after the proof transcript comes out to get any other questions to you. Thank you, Mr Whitney.

We will now go on to the Cultural Facilities Corporation. Good afternoon, Ms Elvin and Mr Tidy. Welcome to this hearing of the Cultural Facilities Corporation annual report for 2013-14. Are you familiar with the pink privileges statement before you on the table? If you could indicate that you are familiar with that?

Ms Elvin: Yes.

THE CHAIR: You understand the implications. Did you want to make an opening statement in this area, minister?

Ms Burch: No, only to recognise the Cultural Facilities Corporation as a centre of excellence for art and cultural development and leadership here in the ACT. I thank Harriet and her team for her work and, indeed, the board, with the current chair of John Hindmarsh, and recognise the two new board members that have just recently had their first board meeting. Virginia Haussegger and Justice Richard Refshauge have joined the board.

THE CHAIR: That is fantastic. One of my favourite topics is volunteer involvement, Ms Elvin. There are many volunteers that support the Cultural Facilities Corporation in many ways. I notice that they are in historic places, mainly. Is this their major involvement, in historic places? Could we get an idea of the volunteer workforce, how they are supported and what they do?

Ms Elvin: Indeed volunteers are a very important part of our workforce. They really span across three main areas. You mentioned, Ms Porter, the historic places volunteers, and those are our longest standing volunteers. Some of those volunteers were working at our historic sites long before the organisation itself started—perhaps up to 25 years, which shows their commitment to and interest in the organisation. There are about 30 of those historic places volunteers, across National Trust volunteers and others as well. They work across the three historic sites—Lanyon primarily, and also Mugga Mugga and Calthorpes' House.

We do record in the annual report each year the hours that those volunteers donate. We think it is very important to acknowledge their contribution. As noted in the annual report, collectively those historic places volunteers donated 1,700 hours of service, which I think is a wonderful contribution. We try to acknowledge that contribution and support our volunteers in a number of ways. For example, we provide them with a range of training, whether that is in first aid or even things like flower arranging at Lanyon. We provide a volunteers outing each year for them to visit another important cultural site. Duntroon House was a recent example. That is a way in which they can get together as a group. It is great bonding and networking, skills development and a recognition of their service.

Each May we also have a volunteers day. Usually I speak at the opening of that. We have a range of other speakers. Again it is all about skills development and keeping abreast of recent initiatives, so that they can use that knowledge in their work as volunteers—and, again, recognition. We are just coming up to the annual Christmas brunch for those volunteers—again, an opportunity to thank and acknowledge them.

I should say, though, that there are two other categories of volunteers that we have engaged with the organisation. The first of those is our advisory committees. We have three advisory committees. These are actually required under our enabling legislation, the Cultural Facilities Corporation Act. They cover the three areas of the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, and historic places.

Each of those committees has about six to nine members. Again they donate all of their time and we record those hours in the annual report. Across the three committees they donated about 110 hours of their time. Again we undertake a range of ways to acknowledge their contribution. We publish full details about the advisory committees in the annual report. They, like our historic places volunteers, are free to be nominated for our annual staff and volunteer achievement award. This is called the Don Aitkin award, and it is named in honour of our former longstanding chairman, Professor Don Aitkin, who particularly wanted to be recognised in this way following the completion of his lengthy chairmanship with us. We are just coming up to the 2014 award, and I know already a number of volunteers have been recognised, as they have been in previous years.

The third and final category was a special category of volunteer that we had during the centenary year. The centenary of Canberra organised for volunteers to be present every day in the Canberra Museum and Gallery, which became a sort of hub of centenary information. Those volunteers were able to assist members of the public with accessing information about the centenary in the city centre. That could be information about CMAG's own activities, its own exhibitions and other centenary events or through touch screens in the CMAG foyer. Those volunteers could help people access information about the wide range of other centenary activities.

Those are the three categories of volunteers. In all cases we consider them to be an integral part of our workforce. Also, importantly, they are a way in which we are able to link to the wider community. We have been talking a lot about access to arts activities. I think volunteering is actually a very important part of that because it involves people in your work. It reaches out into a whole lot of different communities.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. I am very glad that you mentioned the people that work on committees. That is often forgotten by organisations. We do not volunteer for this one; we just get volunteered! I often notice, when people talk about the volunteer workforce in their organisations, that they completely forget that their boards of governance spend many hours volunteering their time, quite often.

Ms Elvin: I should say, in the case of our own board, it is a paid board, but now all members of the board very generously contribute their fee back to the organisation. This has been very much led by our chairman, who is a very generous donor. As a result of that, each board member now donates back their fee for us to use within the

organisation. So you could say that they are another category of volunteers, in fact.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary to Ms Elvin on that, and then a substantive question. Ms Elvin, just to get it straight in my mind about the total numbers, you mentioned 30 historic places volunteers; is that correct?

Ms Elvin: Roughly, yes, about 30.

MR DOSZPOT: In total numbers, do you have any feel for what your total number of volunteers is?

Ms Elvin: In addition to the 30, there are the members of our three advisory committees.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned that.

Ms Elvin: They are actually listed in our annual report. Each of those committees has roughly about seven or eight members.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, you mentioned that.

Ms Elvin: So that is, say, another 24 people. And during the centenary year we had a large group of additional volunteers.

MR DOSZPOT: That is what I am trying to find out.

Ms Elvin: One every day. But because that was just for the centenary and that has now been disbanded. I would not include those in the total.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there a cost that you have to bear associated with having the volunteers, like insurance and things like that?

Ms Elvin: Certainly, they would be covered by—

Mr Tidy: Volunteers insurance. It is a very small price, though—a couple of hundred dollars. We certainly pay volunteers and volunteer insurance through ACTIA, the ACT Insurance Authority. That is a few hundred dollars, from my recollection. There is some training money spent, particularly on first aid and perhaps a little bit of work health and safety. So we do pick up some minor costs in that area as well.

Ms Burch: For lots of organisations there is an inherent cost with having volunteers but the benefit outweighs that built-in cost.

MR DOSZPOT: Sure. I am not questioning the benefit. I think they are a very good resource to have. I am trying to understand, in light of other volunteer organisations I am aware of, whether you are handling it any differently to others—whether things can be done more cost effectively. My questions relate to that. Would the insurance include things like public liability insurance and personal insurance in case they hurt

themselves in the course of their activity?

Mr Tidy: That is correct. I understand that volunteers insurance covers them for personal accident insurance and then they are covered under our public liability insurance. That is not separately costed; we just get a price for public liability for our operations, which includes having 1,700 hours worth of volunteers a year.

MR DOSZPOT: Are there any other costs? Do they bring their own lunch or do you provide lunch for them?

Ms Elvin: I think they have access to a range of tea and coffee-making facilities. For example, at Lanyon there is a kitchen that they can access. Generally speaking, they would bring their own lunch. We would provide refreshments on certain occasions. For example, the annual day that I spoke about is fully catered, so we would provide refreshments. We also provide a Christmas brunch for them. For example, our advisory committees have drinks with the board at least once a year. So there is a certain amount of refreshment provision. I guess we feel that is a small way in which we can recognise their contribution. There are certainly some costs involved. I think we would say that those costs are more than repaid by the contributions they make.

MR DOSZPOT: I could not agree more. I think they do a great service and they do you proud in the work they do. I have seen them in action.

Ms Elvin: Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: Going to my substantive question, page 21 looks at challenges. Can you give us an overview of resourcing pressures of servicing the CFC's major contribution to Civic planning initiatives?

Ms Elvin: I suppose I am acutely conscious of that because a lot of that work tends to be done by me. It is work that I welcome. I think it is very important work. Something that Ian and I have spoken about many times is perhaps getting some additional corporate support to help us with that. I think at the moment we are coping. We are also working very closely with our colleagues in economic development. Of course we are now all under the one directorate, and I think it really helps to have colleagues within the same directorate who are working on this with us. I guess it is an ongoing challenge for us to participate at that sort of strategic level when, as an organisation, we are much more focused, I suppose, on service delivery.

MR DOSZPOT: "The need to ensure operational continuity in light of the major capital works projects". Again, that is on page 21.

Ms Elvin: This is an ongoing challenge for us, because obviously, with somewhere like the Canberra Theatre Centre, which is where we have been carrying out a lot of capital works, we want it to be open as much as possible. We do not want dark nights. So trying to ensure that we keep it open while we are having various works done is a challenge. We tend to use the Christmas-new year period, which always tends to be a traditional downtime in theatre, to do a whole block of work then. For example, most recently we replaced all the seating in the Playhouse. I do not know if you have been in the Playhouse recently and seen our beautiful new seating, but you can imagine that

replacing every one of those 622 seats with all sorts of different seating was quite disruptive. We did schedule that at what we hoped would be the quietest time of the year. It took a little bit longer than we expected and that was one of the reasons that we did not quite achieve our venue usage targets.

MR DOSZPOT: For how long did the previous seats last?

Ms Elvin: I think they would be original seats. The Playhouse opened in 1998, so they were over 15 years old and well due for replacement.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary to the previous question that Mr Doszpot asked you, Ms Elvin. How much contribution to the planning process did the corporation have to make in relation to the centenary?

Ms Elvin: We were certainly involved in a whole-of-government planning committee. We participated very actively in that. We saw that as very important because the centenary was a real boost to our activities. We have benefited a lot from it and we have many important legacies from it. I guess it was a more strategic initiative but one that we were happy to take part in.

MR DOSZPOT: I just have a couple more questions. Can you elaborate on the challenges in relation to the capacity of the Canberra theatre to attract better known productions to the ACT?

Ms Elvin: Yes. This is, I guess, our major challenge. In the theatre world, nothing is guaranteed, obviously. We are not really a production house—only in a very small sense—so we do not actually produce the theatre shows that happen at the Canberra Theatre Centre.

There is a small exception to that in the sense that we have done some work with a very innovative company, Big hART. Indeed, we will be working with them in 2015. They are putting together a beautiful little piece that focuses on Cooma and the Snowy Mountains scheme. But with small exceptions like that, we bring in product from elsewhere. That means that we are reliant on what product is out there for us to bring to Canberra, what is available for touring around the country and what can be accommodated within the Canberra Theatre Centre in terms of the capacity of our auditoria and the technical requirements that the particular production needs. All of those factors go into the mix.

However, we have exceptionally good contacts within the performing arts industry. That means that we are able to bring some really top class product to Canberra. You may have seen an enormous banner go up in the Canberra Centre just recently advertising the major commercial show *Sweet Charity*. It is quite a coup for us to be able to bring that to Canberra.

MR DOSZPOT: There are some very good school productions that take place—musicals. I have been to quite a number of them. With all the effort those schools go to and the limited space they have to work with to put their productions on, do you have any capacity to perhaps occasionally reward some of these schools by enabling them to mount a major production in the Canberra theatre, for instance?

Ms Elvin: We certainly do try to work very closely with the schools. In fact, if you look at the pie chart of the Canberra Theatre Centre's usage on page 154, you will see there that there is a range of ways in which we work with the local community—the dance community, for example. More recently we have just had a very successful Bell Shakespeare schools initiative, which you may be aware of. That was a wonderful way in which, each night, three different schools took a third of Macbeth and presented it. That was a great way of involving schools in our activities. It is something that we try to do on a continuing basis.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you very much. Just a final question: the challenges associated with seeking non-government funding sources,—how do you find that?

Ms Elvin: Of course, our main non-government revenue source is theatre revenues. As I think we say here, that remains a major challenge, but one that we try to address through things like sharing the risk on theatre activities. That can help a promoter who is trying to bring a product to Canberra to feel more confident in the Canberra market—if we are able to say, “We will do your marketing for you,” or, “We won't charge you rent until you get to a certain level of ticket sales.” We have also been able to develop what we call our theatre reserve. Due to the good trading results we got at the end of the 2013-14 year, we were able to add \$150,000 to that reserve. That helps give us a bit more confidence in terms of our programming and protects us a bit against the fluctuations of the performing arts industry.

Beyond theatre revenues, we have recently put a big effort, particularly led by our chairman, into the whole area of sponsorship, philanthropy and fundraising more generally. That is an area where we felt the centenary, for example, was a great boost to our efforts, and is one that we will continue to pursue—not only in terms of cash donations, though we always love cash; we also very much welcome donations of works of art.

In the past year, for example, we have benefited from a very generous donation from the family of Jorg Schmeisser. You may recall the outstanding print artist Jorg Schmeisser, who, sadly, died about 18 months ago. His family carried out his wish to ensure that Canberra Museum and Gallery became the recipient of a major collection of his work. It is wonderful to have that coming to us as a donation. It is also great for the balance sheet, of course, but more importantly, it is great from the point of view of recognising one of Canberra's foremost artists.

MS BERRY: I have some supplementaries about the Canberra theatre if that is okay, chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: On page 15 of the report, you talk about the Canberra theatre fulfilling the function of Canberra's town hall. What events and performances constitute the town hall functions?

Ms Burch: There is a range. Mr Doszpot made mention of schools. I know that many a school award event and activity happens over there in youth productions. I think we

have all walked through the car park when Wakakirri is on, and there were kids everywhere recently for TEDx. It goes to Harriet to work with those organisations and connections in town, and promote them. Bringing things like TEDx into the ACT is a great opportunity as well. Harriet might like to talk a bit more about that.

Ms Elvin: Because Canberra does not have a town hall as such, we feel that the Canberra theatre helps to fulfil that function with a range of community-based events, performances and presentations. The minister has mentioned things like graduation ceremonies. In the past year, we have hosted school graduation ceremonies for Canberra College, Hawker College and Dickson College. We also host quite a lot of business where federal departments want to have a whole-of-staff meeting and perhaps the only place large enough will be the Canberra theatre. There is a certain amount of that sort of business. We host award ceremonies. I think the minister mentioned that. For example, we hosted the year 10 excellence awards for outstanding achievement in high school years. There is conference-type business. The minister mentioned TEDx.

I would also put in that same sort of town hall category—this relates back to Ms Doszpot’s question—dance school end-of-year performances. We are right into that season now; it is almost back-to-back dance school performances. I am amazed at how many dance schools there are in Canberra. For example, there is Capital Dance Studios, the Lisa Clark school of ballet, the Canberra Festival Ballet School and the Kim Harvey School of Dance. It is a very active dance community, and they all want to put on their end-of-year performances at the Canberra Theatre.

MR SMYTH: And Dance Central has two performances tomorrow—one at two and one at 7 o’clock.

Ms Elvin: I am very pleased to hear it.

MS BERRY: I have a couple of other supplementaries about the Canberra theatre.

THE CHAIR: Then we will go to Mr Smyth’s supplementary.

MS BERRY: I note that it is the Canberra theatre’s 50th birthday next year. Have you got any celebrations in mind to mark this important anniversary?

Ms Burch: I would have no doubt that the board is considering those celebrations. It is important to mark 50 years of the theatre; it has served us well. It also reminds us that there is work and commitment to look at how we continue providing services to the Canberra community with a new theatre.

Ms Elvin: Perhaps I could mention it in a bit more detail. Yes, we do have a range of celebrations. I hope you may have seen our subscription season brochure for next year. That has on it our logo for the 50th year. It is our golden anniversary, so it is a golden logo. The Canberra Theatre Centre was actually the first government performing arts centre in Australia. It pre-dated the perhaps more famous ones like the Sydney Opera House, the Adelaide Festival Centre and the Victorian arts centre. We are actually older than they are.

It is a wonderful opportunity for us to recognise this golden anniversary. The whole season next year will help us with that celebration. Within that, there are particular shows that are really only part of the season because of the 50th year. For example, the Australian Ballet is bringing *Giselle* here in May next year; that will be a great delight to the many people in Canberra who are ballet lovers. We have just seen how many ballet schools there are, and that translates into a lot of ballet lovers. They will have an opportunity to see all-white ballet from the Australian Ballet. We also have that major production *Sweet Charity*, a big commercial musical. That will be a very big season. And there is a range of other works within that season.

We are doing a couple of special events. We have a dinner on stage to mark the actual birthday; we hope that people will get involved in that. And then, to spread it out more to the wider community, we will have an open day. We are conscious that the Canberra theatre has a very special place in the hearts of Canberrans. Many people attended there as children and have perhaps gone there on a first date. It is something that is very special, and we want to provide opportunities for everybody to celebrate. I notice that the minister is looking at some of the vintage photographs that we have included.

Ms Burch: These have all been performed at the theatre?

Ms Elvin: That is right, yes.

Ms Burch: Fats Domino has performed at Canberra theatre.

THE CHAIR: It is a bit hard for Hansard to record that, minister.

Ms Burch: I will make sure that the committee gets a copy of this.

MRS JONES: It is worth putting on the *Hansard* my lobbying for photos of early Canberra for this building on the art committee here, and that some do not see it as art, but I think it is.

THE CHAIR: Just one last supplementary?

MS BERRY: Yes, just one more supplementary on the Canberra Theatre Centre. On page 22, it talks about the Canberra Theatre Centre's program next year. You have it in your hand right now, minister. It talks of focusing on more family-friendly shows to help contrast some of the negative impacts of the federal government's cuts to the ACT.

MR DOSZPOT: Or the local ones.

MS BERRY: Can you talk a bit more about those? It is my question; you can ask your question in a minute, Mr Doszpot.

Ms Burch: Thank you for that. It is important that we continue to support family-friendly shows. We need to recognise that the ACT is taking a hit from different decisions made by federal government, and that will create a ripple effect. I am just looking here. One of the activities is *Monkey ... Journey to the West*. I am assuming it

was based on “Monkey magic”, which was a favourite TV show—not of mine, of course, but of my children. But I watched it. It is important that we introduce young ones into theatre so that they experience the wonder and the imagination that come from being part of this and inspire them, hopefully, to maintain that attendance through their adult life and also participate through school activities or through some of the other community organisations as well. Harriet, did you want to talk any more about that?

Ms Elvin: I can perhaps fill in a bit more detail. I think your question relates to us going for some more general public, family-friendly commercial product next year in terms of perhaps a more difficult economic climate. Certainly that has been a focus of our own programming and also in terms of what comes to us for venue hire.

The minister has mentioned a number of children’s programs. We have put out a children’s programs brochure. That includes things like the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, *Stripey the Emu*, *The 26-storey Treehouse* and other children’s productions like that. There are also a number of productions within our 2015 general season that are suitable for a family audience. The minister has mentioned *Monkey ... Journey to the West*. I think *Giselle* is a lovely ballet for the whole family. Circus Oz is something that is of wide appeal. *Storm Boy* is another one that I think will be very attractive to family audiences. We also have a whole range of commercial hirers coming in, bringing shows suitable for children like *Wombat Stew* and *The Gruffalo*.

Ms Burch: *Giggle and Hoot*.

Ms Elvin: *Giggle and Hoot*, *Mary Poppins*. That is going to be a wonderful production by Free-Rain Theatre Company. So there will be a whole range of things that are suitable for children and family audiences.

MS BERRY: Thanks very much.

Ms Burch: Does anyone without children know *Giggle and Hoot*?

MRS JONES: They should. Every time you turn on ABC it is on.

Ms Burch: It is.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, you had a supplementary.

MR SMYTH: Just on the study about the location of potentially a major new theatre, I note the reference on page 19 that we have now bumped it up to “national” in character, which I have to say pleases me. Where is the review? Has it been completed?

Ms Burch: Yes, we have done a review. Colin Stewart Architects were certainly part of that final report. It has been to cabinet and there have been decisions agreed about the site of that location. It will be parked behind the Playhouse here and front onto the back of Northbourne Avenue there. It is now very clearly a commitment of government. The when would be the next question—the when and the how—but we recognise that it is something that we need to consider. The existing theatre is 50

years old. It is a wonderful old building but, as our city grows, we need to always invest in our institutions and our infrastructure, and that will be part of that.

MR SMYTH: Who conducted the review?

Ms Burch: Colin Stewart Architects.

Ms Elvin: Yes, a study was done. This was looking at sites within the cultural arc around City Hill that had been identified in the city plan. The study was commissioned for what was then called the Economic Development Directorate, working in conjunction with the Cultural Facilities Corporation, and that led to the identification of the site that the minister has mentioned as being the most suitable site. Subsequently government has agreed that that is the preferred site for the new theatre.

MR SMYTH: So the car park behind CMAG and the Playhouse or the grass—

Ms Elvin: It is actually the grassy area.

MR SMYTH: The grassy knoll.

Ms Elvin: The grassy knoll, yes.

MR SMYTH: Mr Dawes, are you waving?

Mr Dawes: No, I was just saying it is that grassy knoll, section 19, opposite the—

MR SMYTH: How much did the review cost?

Ms Elvin: That cost would have been incurred by Economic Development—

Mr Dawes: We received \$170,000 to work with the cultural facilities to look at developing a strategy for expansion of the theatre. As Ms Elvin has already pointed out, we complemented the theatre in forming that cultural arc that faces Vernon Circuit for the new theatre. There are further studies to be carried out over the course of the next few months just to further refine that. We will be working with the cultural facilities to further refine that.

MR SMYTH: Just finally, can a copy of the review be given the committee?

Ms Burch: If it can. I will have to have a look and see if there is anything in there that is commercial-in-confidence, but we will certainly provide what we can.

MR SMYTH: Just on the facilities, there was a notion that a bushfire museum might end up at Lanyon. Has that been progressed given all the work that has been done at Lanyon?

Ms Elvin: We certainly have had a number of further discussions with the bushfire community. As you are probably aware, Mr Smyth, they are coming up to a big celebration next year. I believe it is the 100th birthday of the Rural Fire Service. We were having discussions in that context. As I understand it, we stood ready to support

them with information about how you would go about a bushfire museum, the sort of focus you might take, the sorts of artefacts that you would need and so forth. But I do not think those discussions have matured yet. However, we have had more focused discussions about their 100th birthday next year. I understand that a number of ideas have been considered, including perhaps launching a book at CMAG that commemorates the 100th celebration.

THE CHAIR: Before we go on to Ms Berry's substantive question, I had a supplementary on the Canberra Theatre, seeing as we are all getting into that area. On page 49, minister, it mentions marketing and growing the audience. It talks about a research commission to better understand the existing audiences. Could you clarify for the committee who did the research and how this will help us achieve bigger audiences for our theatre?

Ms Elvin: That was a general strategy rather than a specific activity, I guess. That is a general strategy that is identified within our five-year strategic plan. It is really something we try to do on an ongoing basis. For example, from time to time we will do specific surveys, focus groups and so forth, but we are constantly trying to improve our knowledge of our audiences. We undertake surveys on a regular basis. We record satisfaction levels in the annual report. As part of those surveys, I guess we are always asking for more information about what people have enjoyed and what they would like to see improved. That then helps us improve both the facilities and the actual programs that are offered.

Ms Burch: If I can just add into that, there is another piece of research which we are just finalising with the terms of reference. That is the work between CFC and Economic Development, a cultural arts audit as well, just to do a bit of a stocktake about what is here and what sort of economic leverage we get from that. Ms Elvin, you may want to talk about discussions within CFC board about that piece of work?

Ms Elvin: Yes. We have certainly had discussions at board level and then within the directorate about looking at the economic impact of the arts sector, I guess an understanding of what that sector is and what it puts back into the ACT economy. We have also engaged a lot with the Childers Group, and this is of great interest to them as well. I understand that this is something now that is being worked on with artsACT and Economic Development so that we can get that better understanding more generally of the sector.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Thank you, chair. Minister, on page 13 of the report it talks about the cultural facilities attracting nearly more than 350,000 visitors, which is quite extraordinary given the size of Canberra, and patrons to its facilities over the course of the past year. It also notes that this is above the target that was set, especially in relation to visitor numbers to CMAG. Can you take us through some of the ideas around why you think that might have been the case and also what was the number of visitors to CMAG in the 2013-14 year, and has this increased on previous years?

Ms Burch: CFC have certainly had a very successful year. I think it is a combination—and Harriet can go to the detail of that—of smart partnerships between

providers and groups that may want to come here and also bouncing off the effort from our centenary year as well and being very smart about that exposure and those connections. The centennial program under Robyn Archer brought some significant contributions to the theatre and CFC. As to how did you gain from that and continue the momentum, Harriet, do you want to talk a bit more?

Ms Elvin: In terms of actual visitor numbers, this is rounded; I think it is easier to understand in rounded terms. During the 2013-14 year, visitation to CMAG was 93,000. This is a terrific result, a very pleasing result, because just a few years ago, 2010-11, visitation was 43,000. So you can see there has been a more than doubling in that time. As the minister said, I think the centenary year was a great boost to CMAG's profile and programming and activities. Having those centenary volunteers there made it a real hub that people would come to.

But there was a range of other ways in which we sought to increase our reach into the community—things as basic as signage. We have had a great improvement in our external signage. It is always a challenge when you are operating as one tenant within a multi-tenanted building to get profile so that people know where you are. I think that very bold signage has really helped us; ditto with marketing. Both in terms of traditional marketing and social media—tweeting and so forth—I think we are really out there now. The minister has mentioned that we now program in conjunction with many different groups. I think that helps us because it means that they bring their audiences to us as well—whether it is Craft ACT, PhotoAccess, Megalo or the other arts centres, Belconnen and Tuggeranong.

We have also got involved in things like the You Are Here festival, which is a wonderful multi-arts festival, particularly attractive to young people. Again, that has brought different audiences to CMAG. We have had some major exhibitions. I am sure a number of you went to the Elioth Gruner exhibition. That was the largest attendance at a CMAG exhibition that we have ever achieved. It attracted 34,000 people during its run. In fact, the National Gallery often had to redirect people to CMAG. People who naturally thought such a spectacular art historical exhibition would be at the National Gallery were redirected to CMAG, which I have to say was rather pleasing for us but it must have been a little frustrating for the National Gallery. It was great, and that brought us a lot of interstate visitors as well. We are seeing a change in our profile of visitors, with a lot more interstate and, indeed, overseas visitors now.

Finally, I should say that the cafe at CMAG is a great attraction, and our philosophical barista, Grant. You always get philosophy with your coffee, and I think he attracts many repeat visitors as well.

MS BERRY: Yes, he certainly does provide some relief.

MRS JONES: Even for members of the ACT Assembly.

MS BERRY: How do you measure the number of people that come into CMAG?

Ms Elvin: We now have an automated counter. We have had various methods in the past, and we are always trying to improve the accuracy of our measurements. Now at

CMAG we have door counters. There is actually a beam that you break as you walk through it. However, what we then do, so we get an accurate count, is subtract from the raw data a number of visitors who we have calculated would be members of staff or trades people so that we get to a true visitor number. That calculation has all been audited by the Auditor-General and, indeed, varies between the weekday total and the weekend total. Clearly there are not so many staff movements at the weekend. We think it is a pretty robust measure.

MS BERRY: How do you get feedback from people about the exhibitions? I must have visited the Downer exhibition about three times just to see if I was not missing anything, because it brought back so many memories for so many people across Canberra. I just wondered how you get feedback about each individual exhibition that is on over there, because I have not given you any. Here is some now: it was good; I enjoyed it.

Ms Elvin: That is great feedback in itself that you went back a number of times. I suppose there would probably be three mechanisms. One is the formal survey. We carry out formal surveys throughout the year and then we report the results, and, indeed, those are audited as part of our statement of performance. We also have a visitors book. We encourage visitors to leave written comments, and a number of them do. Then through engagement with our staff and, indeed, with volunteers, when volunteers are present, we like to engage them in conversations and ask them their reaction to the exhibitions. I think that all helps us to understand what people are looking for and what they want to see more of.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Thank you, chair. On page 166 and the list of acquisitions, both purchases and donations, can you talk us through, particularly in the area of purchase, what area you have been focusing on and what gaps are trying to be filled in the collection? With regard to donations, is this something you encourage or is it a difficulty sometimes when you get offered works? Is there something you are particularly hoping over a period will—

Ms Burch: Have you found something in your roof?

MRS JONES: No. I just know from sitting on the art committee here that there is always a mix.

Ms Burch: It is always a challenge about what gifts you accept.

MRS JONES: Yes. I find this an interesting list. I wonder if you could enlighten us.

Ms Elvin: All of our acquisitions, whether they are purchases or donations, are made within a formal collections policy. You are quite right; it can be a real challenge for collecting institutions to resist very kind donations or offers of donations. They do say that for every museum the thing that is most often offered are wedding dresses, which is wonderful, but you do not need everybody's old wedding dress. We do have some wedding dresses, but they have been collected for particular purposes.

Within that collection policy, we identify particular priorities for collecting. For example, one of those is art historical works like the Gruner works. When we did the Gruner exhibition, everything apart from one work in that exhibition actually came in as a loan. I guess it highlighted to us that we only had one work by Gruner. We have since acquired another work at auction, and an area that we want to continue to pursue is those works of art historical importance.

I think you also see that there are a number of Indigenous works. That is another area that I certainly want us to build up. We were delighted to be able to purchase Matilda House's possum skin coat during the year. It is a very important social history object but also it actually has designs that she has inked onto the inside of the coat. She wore that coat at Parliament House when the formal apology was made. It is a very significant item.

These do, in fact, cover both art acquisitions and social history acquisitions. I guess we would always, when we are offered something, assess whether we want to acquire it against our collection policy. That is a very important protection for us because when something comes into our care we need to conserve it in various ways, and there are all sorts of costs associated with that. We want to be sure that, despite all those kind offers, we are actually getting the right things.

MRS JONES: Are you able to table or come back to us with a copy of the policy?

Ms Elvin: We can certainly provide a copy of the collection policy.

MRS JONES: I am done; thank you very much.

MR DOSZPOT: A supplementary sort of related to Mrs Jones's question.

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Elvin, has there been any—this is a little bit left field—discussion about a sporting museum associated with CMAG? It is not exactly totally in the arts fields, but there are a lot of sporting artefacts.

Ms Elvin: It is interesting that you should raise that. It is certainly an area that we do collect in and we do exhibit in. In fact, we do have about to open shortly an exhibition that is coming to us from the Bradman Museum. This will be a cricketing exhibition and will coincide with Canberra hosting a number of the Cricket World Cup matches. We think there will be a lot of interest. It is a great opportunity for us to explore the links between cricket at a national level and with the local community. Within our existing collection we have a number of sporting artefacts, and we draw on those to enhance our exhibition program.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. It is something that is pretty close to my sports-related portfolio. There may be some relevance in the Asian Cup that is coming. There are lots of art-related activities that are taking place at the moment within the multicultural Asian community. There are some artefacts that it could be quite useful to hang on to. Anyway, that is just a thought.

Ms Elvin: We are always on the lookout for appropriate artefacts.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any more questions, Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: I just have one supplementary. The school museum at Hall—is that you? No, that is not you.

Ms Elvin: It is not us.

Mr Dawes: That is probably a question for next week under Property Group.

MS BERRY: That is okay.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a substantive. I do not have any more.

MR DOSZPOT: I realise it is getting late so my final question for the afternoon: Ms Elvin, what are your thoughts on the strategic planning for the future of the Canberra theatre? What is the impact in ensuring that sufficient parking spaces are retained nearby to keep the theatre viable, basically, from people being able to come in? Is much consideration being given to the issues relating to that?

Ms Elvin: This is certainly something that is an ongoing priority for us. On page 21 of the annual report we identify that as a forward priority. It is our experience that in terms of the demographic of theatre patrons and the fact that most theatre activities are taking place at night, public transport often is not suitable or available for those people. It is something that we are working on with our colleagues in the wider directorate as the planning of Canberra evolves. We put inputs into parking strategies across government. I guess at every opportunity we feed into those strategies that are providing sufficient parking for theatre patrons.

It is not only critical to our business as a theatre centre; it is also a good revenue generator because the car parking space that can be used during the day for someone who is coming into the city to shop or to work can then be reused at night and paid for by a theatre patron. Our experience certainly is that theatre patrons are quite happy to pay for parking. In the context of the overall night out—the ticket, perhaps the babysitter, the dinner—a car parking charge is not a large proportion of that.

MR DOSZPOT: Do they currently pay parking charges after six?

Ms Elvin: They would pay on Friday nights only when there is late night shopping. We have certainly tested their willingness to pay more generally and it appears to be there.

Mr Dawes: If I could just add to that, Mr Doszpot. Obviously we are working quite closely with the cultural facilities, but as part of the city plan and the activity that we are undertaking as regards city to the lake, parking is quite critical for a number of different reasons that Ms Elvin has already pointed out to ensure that we support businesses, but it is also important that we support the theatre in the evening as well.

We do know that the current car park becomes quite full. One of the key things that

we have been looking at is how we actually increase the number of car parks. There are a number of strategies that we are working towards as part of city to the lake as we further develop that which will enhance the car parking and actually provide it in a more dispersed way around the city.

MR DOSZPOT: With the city to the lake car parking—just concentrating on that—certainly the major infrastructure that has been looked at, as I understand it, has been delayed. I should imagine the car park has been delayed from that point of view as well, or is that a separate—

Mr Dawes: That was always a separate one. If you look at some of the major car parking as well, obviously that is dependent on Parkes Way. Some of the car parking that will come on Parkes Way will be done. We have always programmed it that Parkes Way has got to be dealt with at some stage. There has been no firm proposal about that. What I am referring to is, more importantly, the current existing car parks that surround both the Assembly and the theatre as we look at potentially sequencing those. As you are aware, we have and will be discussing further next week the government office proposal that we have been looking at, which will be important. Whether it is close to the Assembly or within that circle within an easy walk of the Assembly will be taken into account with car parking as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and thank you, Mr Dawes, Ms Elvin and Mr Tidy and other officials that are here this afternoon. Questions on notice—within five working days. Members will be able to get to you within four working days of getting the proof transcript any further questions that they might have. The *Hansard* will come to you, obviously, for you to review as well. Thank you very much for your participation this afternoon. That is the completion of the hearing.

The committee adjourned at 3.21 pm.