



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2013-2014**

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2013-2014 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2013-2014](#))

**Members:**

**MR J HANSON (Chair)**  
**DR C BOURKE (Deputy Chair)**  
**MR M GENTLEMAN**  
**MR B SMYTH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 26 JUNE 2013**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Ms N Kosseck (Ph 620 50129)**

**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 9.15 am.**

Appearances:

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

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission  
Jones, Mr Greg, Chief Executive

Economic Development Directorate  
Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Ministerial, Cabinet and Policy,  
Economic Development, Policy and Governance Division

Education and Training Directorate  
Cover, Ms Leanne, Acting Director-General  
Johnston, Ms Jayne, Executive Director, Tertiary Education and Performance  
Whybrow, Mr Mark, Executive Director, Corporate Services  
Gniel, Mr Stephen, Acting Deputy Director-General  
Mitchell, Ms Beth, Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education  
and Student Engagement  
Wright, Ms Leanne, Director, Learning and Teaching  
Garrisson, Ms Joanne, Director, Information, Communications and Governance  
Bateman, Mr Michael, Director, Office for Schools  
Stewart, Ms Tracy, Director, Planning and Performance  
McAlister, Ms Coralie, Director, Human Resources  
Bray, Mr Rodney, Director, Schools Capital Works  
Gwilliam, Mr Stephen, School Network Leader, Tuggeranong, Office for  
Schools  
Kyburz, Mr Steve, School Network Leader, North/Gungahlin, Office for  
Schools  
Ellis, Ms Anne, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Teacher Quality Institute  
Strauch, Ms Helen, Executive Officer, Office of Board of Senior Secondary  
Studies  
Huxley, Mr Mark, Chief Information Officer  
Sullivan, Ms Susan, Manager, Children's Policy and Regulation

Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate  
Peffer, Mr Dave, Acting Deputy Director-General, Policy and Cabinet

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, minister and officials. Welcome to day 9 of the estimates committee hearings. I would like to go through some administrative matters before we start. These events are being webstreamed. Are you all aware of the privilege statement?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You have read it and understand it? Thank you very much. Minister, would you like to make a statement?

**Ms Burch:** Just a very brief one, if I can, chair. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the commission for gaming and racing and all the work that it does. I want to thank Greg and his team for the work that they do in supporting the government objectives in that area.

There have been a lot of matters—routine business, but also this year we are working through an MOU with ClubsACT and looking at how we can better support particularly the small clubs to help them diversify their income. That has been a significant piece of work. Also, in this budget there is further consideration about joint administration and co-location of the sector; that follows the ICRC report of close on two years ago. I will leave it there, and we look forward to your questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I would like to go to the issue of poker machines. There are a couple of issues here. One is that the government is endeavouring to reduce the number of poker machines from the original number of 5,024, I think, down to 4,000. Can you give me a bit of a progress report on where that is going. The second issue is that the casino, in their budget submission, are often making statements about their desire to get class A poker machines as opposed to class C poker machines within the casino. Can you tell me what the government is doing in terms of a response to that—whether the government has got that under active consideration or what the position is.

**Ms Burch:** I will go to Greg around the number of machines and where we are, but there were a number brought back into the pool with various forfeitures or handing back of a number of machines. We have made a very clear commitment that we will look to 4,000, but also, in the MOU, there was a notion about reconfiguring that and moving that to a population base. So as our city grows, do we need to consider that level of activity as well? Also, in the MOU, there is the notion of a trading scheme. From my discussions with the club sector, I am happy to consider a trading scheme, but harm minimisation strategies would be factored into that, and that would include, I would hope, a reduction in the number of machines.

As for the casino, the government's position is quite clear: the machines are held by community sector entities; our community clubs in the main own those class A machines. I might go to Greg about the numbers and how we are tracking.

**Mr Jones:** Just to expand on what the minister said, the cap a little while ago was 5,200, as you have indicated. It is now down to 5,024, so there has been some small reduction over the last 18 months or so. And there are now 50 machines in a pool which are available for allocation to new or greenfield sites. So there is a pool available there. In terms of approaching the projected target of 4,000 which the government has identified, the progress under current arrangements will be relatively slow; but, as the minister indicated, a possible trading scheme is being looked at with the industry at the moment. We would envisage that, if that trading scheme did get up and running, there would be a potential for some sort of forfeiture or some arrangement with the trade of machines which would certainly accelerate towards that target of 4,000.

**THE CHAIR:** Any supplementaries on the issue of poker machines, members?

**MR SMYTH:** The casino put in a submission to the budget process. How has the government reacted to that submission?

**Ms Burch:** The government has considered all of the submissions that have been put forward to a number of the agencies. I have regular contact with the casino. Their call for class A machines has been long and constant, certainly over my time as a minister. The government holds to its position that that level of electronic gaming machines will be held by entities that are considered community-based clubs.

**MR SMYTH:** Is the government going to purchase the land that the casino owns at the back of the Convention Centre?

**Ms Burch:** I understand that is in train. Ms Gilding might like to answer that.

**Ms Gilding:** My understanding is that that is in progress, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Is the purchase by the government conditional on the issuing of poker machine licences?

**Ms Gilding:** No.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** When is a sale likely to be completed?

**Ms Burch:** I do not know. Unless Ms Gilding has the detail, we will take it on notice and provide what we can to the committee.

**Ms Gilding:** We will take it on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, on a personal level, are you concerned about a conflict of interest, with the Labor clubs, as part of the Labor Party, owning poker machines and donating to the Labor Party, running for the purpose of election campaigns, while the government is also regulating the poker machines?

**Ms Burch:** No, Mr Hanson. I would ask: do you have a conflict of interest every time you turn up to a ClubsACT dinner, take part in their functions, participate in their hospitality and have that benefit of gaming machine revenue as well? It is a question to all on the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** Do I have a problem going to an awards night as compared to \$652,000 of annual donations?

**Ms Burch:** The principles are the same. We have been very clear that the Labor club has its own borders, independent of the party and certainly independent from the executive. There is strong oversight of the commission. We have been through that. That was reviewed, as I understand it, a number of years ago. You put this question

forward, yet you are not backward in coming forward—neither you nor Mr Smyth—to turn up to any club and benefit from their hospitality. And I put to you that there is gaming machine revenue in that as well, Mr Hanson.

**THE CHAIR:** I think that it is a bit disingenuous to suggest that turning up to an awards night for ClubsACT is comparable with owning and operating gambling machines, which is essentially what the Labor Party does.

**Ms Burch:** Again, I go to the principle of your argument, Mr Hanson. Gaming machines are then—we should not be in the business of gaming machines? There should not be any benefit from gaming machines? Then the million-odd dollars plus that ClubsACT gives to various community groups, including cerebral palsy groups—what do you ask of them?

**THE CHAIR:** The question is not whether clubs—

**Ms Burch:** It is the same principle, Mr Hanson.

**THE CHAIR:** No. The question I am asking you is not about whether we should have clubs or whether we should have poker machines. The question is whether the Labor Party, which is the party of government, should be owning and operating gaming machines which it uses to then fund its election campaigns and be the regulator of the gaming industry—whether you consider that ethical.

**Ms Burch:** As I have said, the inference is that owning gaming machines is unethical.

**THE CHAIR:** But I am asking you the question—

**Ms Burch:** Is that the precedent?

**THE CHAIR:** For a political party, yes—

**Ms Burch:** Is that—

**THE CHAIR:** The inference is that for a political party to own and operate gaming machines—is that ethical? That is exactly what the inference is. It is not a broader question. I know that you are trying to twist my words, minister. I can see what you are doing; it is quite evident. My question is quite simple: do you think it is ethical for your political party to own and operate poker machines which bring in millions of dollars which you then use to fund your election campaigns? Do you think that is ethical?

**Ms Burch:** I would say the same, that—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes or no?

**Ms Burch:** It is a community organisation. The Labor club is a community-owned organisation.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes or no?

**Ms Burch:** There is no yes or no, because you cannot separate the benefit. The inference is—

**THE CHAIR:** So you cannot categorically say it is ethical?

**Ms Burch:** I can say that I am very clear in my ethics in my position that I think it is fair and reasonable. There are enough guarantees, and robust rigour and ethics, around the operation of the club and how it meets its guidelines, like any other club that operates here in the ACT. For you to make an inference that any benefit from gaming machines flies in the face of all the other benefits that ClubsACT provides to the community—

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what projects are you undertaking with the problem gambling assistance fund, and what do you constitute as a project given that you have a target of three projects each year?

**Ms Burch:** Our problem assistance fund is managed through Mission Australia, in the main our harm minimisation agency, who run one-on-one counselling. It runs education programs as well. I will go to Mr Jones around how we work through those various programs and products.

**Mr Jones:** The problem gambling assistance fund, you may recall, was set up approximately two years ago under the Gaming Machine Act with a levy on gaming machine licensees; also, the casino and ACTTAB voluntarily put \$50,000 a year into that fund so that they can participate with the benefit of the projects. The total level of funding available for allocation is in the order of \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million a year, all targeted for assistance for problem gambling or to inform the commission or the government about problem gambling matters.

As the minister indicated, there is a gambling counselling and support service. Following a national public tender process, a contract was let to Mission Australia on a three-year basis to provide counselling and support services. They not only provide face-to-face and telephone counselling on gambling issues: they provide financial counselling; they provide a liaison service with the clubs and other stakeholders in the gaming industry, including the casino and ACTTAB; and they provide education, self-help awareness and things like that.

That is probably the main area of funding or the main project under the problem gambling assistance fund. The commission, following advice from a consultative or advisory committee, which is made up of industry and some community groups, allocates funds to other projects. Some of these other projects include research. We have got a couple of research programs going on at the moment. We have just finalised getting some high-quality signage for each venue about how to contact the gambling service—which is quite prominent. That is being distributed to industry participants this week and next week. We also are looking at upgrading the commission's problem gambling website so that it is more responsive and a more dynamic source of information for both licensees and those that participate.



One of the main areas that has been taking up our time over the last six months or so is where we are developing an online electronic database for the exclusion of persons who wish to control their gambling activity at a particular venue by no longer attending. This database was developed in two stages. In the first stage the commission investigated whether there were other databases around the country which we could use or get assistance from. We looked at the Tasmanian one. In the end, the IT advice suggested that that was not worth pursuing because of the security implications of that database. We then went to phase 2, which was to develop our own database. We had a public tender process just before Christmas last year when we asked what was then a locally based firm to develop that database. It is almost finished now. It is in the process of being tested. By the time we finish testing and do some training with the industry over the next few months, we are expecting it to go live around September-October this year. That is probably one of the main sources of projects.

So there are a number of projects going on. And to answer the second part of your question, we determine each project in terms of our performance criteria, each discrete unit measured as a project, such as the signage, the database, the research. That is what we define as a project initiated or completed.

**DR BOURKE:** You mentioned industry training associated with the database. What does that encompass?

**Mr Jones:** Because it is going to be new for the industry to actually have an online database, at the moment there is a paper-based system, which is a bit cumbersome for the industry to use and takes a bit of time for those forms to be filled out at the time where someone has decided to self-exclude themselves. Because it is a database, even though most of the menu screens are very user friendly, clearly if it is new, we will be doing both group training and individual venue training with the industry to make sure that they are right on top of how it is used, what the privacy applications are and things like that.

**DR BOURKE:** Just going back to things online, you talked about upgrading your website. Could you take us through what that will involve?

**Mr Jones:** At the moment we have got some basic information on our website about information on research, where to get help, some self-help tips, things like that. What we are aiming to do is make it a lot more targeted to the people that are more likely to look at the website. We are being informed from our research program with ANU about the age groups and the profiles of the people that actually access our website so that we can target our self-help messages and how to communicate with those a lot more specifically to their profile. We hope to make it a lot more dynamic and a bit more interesting so that people spend more time on that website and are more likely to get some more benefits out of it compared to the way it is at the moment, which is reasonably static, I would have to say.

**DR BOURKE:** What sorts of things would make a website more attractive to this audience?

**Mr Jones:** We are still waiting on the final version of the research but the sorts of things are a dynamic presentation where, rather than a static display, for example, of brochures, there is some sort of dynamic or moving message or model so that it just looks a bit more interesting and is more likely to hold someone's attention. We are just waiting on advice from ANU, which is coming out over the next month, about what is the best way to target particularly the younger age group, which is our primary target—younger males, those under 25—which is one of our primary targets in terms of problem gambling.

**DR BOURKE:** And you talked about high-visibility signage in clubs. What does that involve?

**Mr Jones:** At the moment there are brochures available on counters and various other places where they are not necessarily conspicuous. What we have done in consultation with the industry is develop a sign which is at least A4 size and is metal based. It is fairly sophisticated. It is a high-quality visibility sign with a simple message "ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service". The 1800 number, which is a national number, is highly visible and very prominent. It has got the commission and the participants' logo—Clubs ACT, the casino and ACTTAB—on it to show that there is support from the government and the industry on that. So it is basically a sophisticated sign which hopefully will be put up in all venues so that it will attract attention and will add a bit of sophistication to the signage and it stands out.

**DR BOURKE:** Had you thought about putting one of those QR symbols on it so that people can read it with their smartphone and get a link to your website?

**Mr Jones:** That is perhaps next, and I think when we get our research back from ANU about how we communicate with different people, especially younger people that are very electronically savvy, then that would certainly be one of the options we could look at, yes.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, if I could just bring you to the statement of intent for the commission, page 5, there is some detail there about problem gaming and support services provided by Mission Australia. Can you give us some of the details of the benefits provided by Mission Australia in regard to support services?

**Ms Burch:** We have contracted Mission Australia, as I think Mr Jones has made mention, through funding through the clubs, the casino and ACTTAB. And it is an important piece of work around harm minimisation because it certainly is at the forefront of our mind about reducing harm and minimising problems that are associated with gambling. Mission Australia run a number of programs. They do one-on-one counselling with individuals who identify their need for help. They also run education sessions as well but they also do a lot of work with the clubs about working with the clubs around the in-house gambling.

I have forgotten the name but there is a designated position with each club, a GCO,

and they identify and manage issues with gambling in house. Under the detail of the contract, they report on those programs. They report every six months or thereabouts and we keep a track on their activities through their regular contractual report.

**Mr Jones:** And perhaps to add to the minister's answer, the GCO, the gambling contact officer, which each venue has, Mission Australia works very closely with them at each venue and, in fact, conducts regular sessions with groups of GCOs so that they can compare problems like contacting people that are suspected of having a bit of a gambling issue. One of the difficulties is how you approach someone without either getting your head knocked off or embarrassing yourself. There is a lot of assistance and a lot of discussion about that which Mission and their counsellors assist the industry with. So there is a lot of good work that they do in providing additional advice and liaison with the industry.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** And those one-on-one sessions you mentioned, they are with people that have indicated they have a problem?

**Ms Burch:** And certainly Mission Australia have also gone around to other organisations in the sector where people could present for financial support or turn up to the GP because often their first referral point is not a problem they have with gambling. It will be relationship breakdown, perhaps drug and alcohol concerns, other concerns, and through that narrative and conversation it will come up that there is also a gambling problem, in which case there is a referral through to Mission Australia as well.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Again on page 5, there is a discussion there about the relationship that you have with law enforcement agencies both nationally and internationally. Can you give us a bit more detail on those relationships and how they can assist the commission in its service delivery?

**Mr Jones:** We have an extensive network regarding those harm minimisations which we have been talking about, but certainly on our compliance side we deal with local police on more local issues, whether they are theft, drugs or what have you. But we also deal with some of the national organisations including AUSTRAC, ACCC to some degree, and national AFP in terms of some of their national crime investigations, and that includes the National Crime Authority. It is particularly with money laundering, perhaps drugs, that sort of thing. So there is a pretty big network. And we have a very good understanding with National Crime Authority, AFP in terms of, as I said, mainly money laundering associated with drugs and the proceeds of crime.

We have networks there and it is usually through those and through an organisation called the International Association of Gaming Regulators—I cannot remember the exact acronym—which is an international organisation of all gaming regulators that tend to meet at fairly exotic parts of the world, which we do not attend, but some of my colleagues in Australia do. We get feedback on those twice a year when the Australian regulators get together. I use their travel budget to inform myself on what is happening internationally through that network, in addition to the Crime Commission and the AFP.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Jones, on page 424 of budget paper 4, your staff outcome this year is down three because of unfilled vacancies but you expect to go up by three staff this year. If you go to page 11 of your statement of intent, your employee expenses for the year are going down one per cent. How do you get three staff back on and have your employee expenses go down? I am sure the Treasurer would love to know how you work that.

**Mr Jones:** It is to do with part time versus full time and also the particular level of people that are put on. As people at higher levels move out of the commission or retire or whatever, there will be additional persons at a lower level. At the moment we also have a number of people who are part time through maternity leave and personal choice and we are expecting some of those may come back full time as well.

**MR SMYTH:** Why then are your superannuation expenses going down by seven per cent?

**Mr Jones:** It is because of the change in super schemes as newer employees that come on are in a cheaper expense scheme, shall I say, rather than perhaps some of the older, more expensive schemes. Again, it is a reflection of the different level of the employees.

**MR SMYTH:** The ongoing matter of Sports Alive, has that been resolved?

**Mr Jones:** Largely it has, yes. The liquidator is just finalising the wrap-up of the company, which is going to be relatively complex just because of the situation they were in. I do not think, from the liquidator's point of view, that is going to be necessarily very quick. From our involvement, it is largely completed. We are just continuing to keep in touch with partly the liquidator but mostly ASIC and Victoria Police on what moves, if any, they are going to be making with the directors of Sports Alive that are Melbourne based. So we are continuing to get updates from Vic Pol and ASIC.

**MR SMYTH:** You, no doubt, have received lots of correspondence and calls from those affected by this for a review and allegations that you were deficient in your job. Were you deficient in supervising Sports Alive?

**Mr Jones:** No, certainly not. The Ombudsman spent a lot of time and a lot of effort having a look at our systems. We had at least three different interviews with the Ombudsman to assist them in their investigation. We provided a very large amount of material and the Ombudsman's conclusion was that we did everything that was reasonably possible in the circumstances to regulate a company. I think the bottom line is: if someone is hell-bent on defrauding someone, then that is extremely difficult to detect and that was their conclusion. They are currently having an internal review of that investigation but that is a matter for the Ombudsman.

**MR SMYTH:** Why is the Ombudsman having an internal investigation?

**Mr Jones:** I understand that one of the complainants to the Ombudsman has asked for an internal review and they will do that as a matter of course.

**MR SMYTH:** So now the Ombudsman was deficient as well?

**Mr Jones:** That is a matter for the Ombudsman.

**MR SMYTH:** In the normal course of somebody being registered in the ACT, how many audits would you do annually of their books to confirm that the detail that they are providing to you is correct? And in the time that Sports Alive was registered here, how many audits were done of their books?

**Mr Jones:** We get monthly returns from all of our licensees, including the sports bookmakers. Those monthly returns indicate what patron or customer accounts are open, what funds or funding balances are in those accounts. We look at all of that. We also on a monthly basis have what we call keyhole or read-only access to their betting systems so that we can check that the level of turnover that they are reporting to us is, in fact, what is occurring. So we do regular audits at least monthly on all of our licensees.

**MR SMYTH:** If you did those audits, why did they not identify the lack of a segregated account for account holders' money?

**Mr Jones:** The accounts that were presented to us and identified as customer accounts had the appropriate balance in them which was consistent with the level of activity and the number of account holders that they had. The identification of that account name as customer funds, to us, was fairly clear at the time. What was happening was that they were moving funds behind the scenes so that the monthly balances being presented to us were a mixture of their own funds as well as customer funds, which is where the fraud occurred.

**MR SMYTH:** And in a reasonable way, how could you have picked that up? Do you have the ability to go to the bank and ask the bank to verify what is in the accounts?

**Mr Jones:** That is a possibility. The difficulty with sports bookmaking is the number of transactions. If it was a simple trust account, say with a legal firm or a real estate agent, where you would have a relatively small number—you might have 20 or 50 or whatever—of deposits in that account, you tend not to have a high level of transactions. With a sports bookmaker, even a small one like Sports Alive, they had something like 15,000 or 20,000 customers, and some of those customers would be transacting 10, 15, 20 times a day. When you look at all of those transactions and add them up, the number of ins and outs by the time they do bets, payments made, further deposits or whatever, you have got an enormous number of transactions. So if we asked a bank, "Can you give a transaction list for that account for that month," then you would probably run into about 300 pages. And then is it a matter of having the time and the resources, based on the level of perceived risk on their monthly returns, whether that is a reasonable activity for the commission to undertake.

**MR SMYTH:** My last question is: what happens now? Are you still involved with the

Victorian police and the fraud squad? Have they finished their inquiry? What happens with ASIC, or is there any other body involved?

**Mr Jones:** That is still ongoing. The liquidator is obliged to provide reports to ASIC on the activities of directors where a company has gone into liquidation, and especially if they find anything that is inconsistent with the Corporations Law. They certainly found a significant number of inconsistencies with corp law, which the liquidator has passed on to ASIC. We have lodged a formal complaint with Victoria Police on the misappropriation of funds from the customer accounts. It is a matter of whether ASIC do their own investigation into the directors or whether they will pass it to Vic Pol and vice versa. So, at the moment, there is a little bit of toing and froing between Vic Pol and ASIC on who is going to do it and who is going to do what. We are monitoring the progress and assisting with anything else we can provide to both organisations.

**MR SMYTH:** Is Sports Alive still registered in the ACT as such? Has the company actually been finalised?

**Mr Jones:** I do not think so. That is a matter for the liquidator. I think the company still exists in liquidation, and I think they are doing that for reasons that the liquidator would know best. There are reasons why it would stay open if it is still there, in terms of finalising things. But, clearly, there is no activity.

**MR SMYTH:** Have you pulled their licence? Have you revoked their licence?

**Mr Jones:** Obviously it is inactive. Have we formally cancelled it? No, we have not, because, as a licensee, inactive or otherwise, that gives us certain powers regarding obtaining and passing on information which, without a licence, we would not have.

**DR BOURKE:** How many bookmakers do you regulate, and could you give us a picture of their operations?

**Mr Jones:** Sports bookmakers, Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Across the gamut. Give us a broad picture and then we can drill down a bit.

**Mr Jones:** The ACT has two active or semi-active sports bookmakers. One is ACTTAB, which I am sure you would be familiar with, and the other one is an organisation called Betworks. They have been licensed for quite a number of years. They have been in a position of hold. They are owned by a Malaysian company and have Canberra staff—only a small number of staff. In recent times, say, the last 12 months, they have put in a new betting system. We have assisted them to rejig their financial situation. My understanding is that they are about to become active in racing and soccer in the Asian region. That is where they see a market. I think it is a fairly competitive market, so I wish them luck. At the moment we only have those two what I would call active sports bookmakers in the ACT.

We also have a number of what we call, and they are licensed under the legislation as, race bookmakers, which you would know as standing bookmakers. They are the

people that stand on the racecourse—

**DR BOURKE:** Bookies.

**Mr Jones:** Bookies, basically, yes, your traditional bookies.

**Ms Burch:** Do they still carry white bags?

**Mr Jones:** Probably not. They are probably all electronic these days. There is in the order of about 25 of those. A lot of them are hobbyists. There are a couple of professionals. They obviously do the three racing codes, with varying levels of turnover. Some are reasonably high; for some, because they are hobbyists, it is quite low. But there is no tax on their activities, so they do it as a hobby or a service, depending on how you look at it.

**THE CHAIR:** At what point do they start paying tax? If you are a hobbyist, is there a volume beyond which you start paying tax?

**Mr Jones:** None of the race bookmakers pay tax at all. Only the sports bookmakers do. That was a decision made quite a number of years ago on a competitive basis, because most of the other states, particularly New South Wales, did the same.

**DR BOURKE:** Which tax are you talking about?

**Mr Jones:** Basically bookmaker tax.

**DR BOURKE:** You are not talking about income tax?

**Mr Jones:** No. Presumably, if they make a profit, they would pay income tax. But we do not charge the race bookmakers a gaming or a bookmaker tax.

**DR BOURKE:** You mentioned hobbyists. What sort of turnover are they having and what sort of profit do you think they are making?

**Mr Jones:** To be honest, I am not really sure. It is obviously quite variable. Some only pop out a couple of times a year. But some are reasonably regular, once a month or whatever. With respect to the level of turnover they have, I am not really sure. It depends on their level of activity.

**DR BOURKE:** Finally, talking about bookmakers, I notice in your report you talk about resolving betting disputes. How do you go about that?

**Mr Jones:** A betting dispute is not so much with race bookmakers. In fact, I do not think we have had a dispute with a race bookmaker for as long as I can remember. It is traditionally to do with sports bookmakers and betting on, for example, a football game. Often with each sports bookmaker there is a fairly lengthy list of rules about putting on a bet, what is a winning bet, because there are all sorts of margins and things like that. Quite often, particularly if a game goes into extra time, whether it is a soccer game or things like that, some people like to bet on whether it is a draw or not. Some people like to bet on, clearly, whether it is a win and what the winning margin

is.

If there is a game that finishes in a draw but goes to extra time and there is a result at the end, irrespective of whether at the end of full time there was a draw, team A won because it scored an extra point in golden time or whatever it is. So that is the outcome. Quite often someone who has put a large bet on a draw will think that they have been hard done by, whereas, in fact, the rules say if it goes to extra time then the outcome is what is determined by the appropriate organisation on the day. So we check their ticket, check what the bet was, make sure they have been properly informed of what the terms and conditions of their bet were, work out what the formal result was according to the rules and make a determination based on that. So they are the sorts of disputes we get.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Commissioner, in the statement of intent, on page 6 it says that you will be looking to do a detailed audit compliance program at the casino. Can you tell us where you are up to with that program and the sorts of things you need to look at in that audit?

**Mr Jones:** We do both regular and random audits of all our licensees and particularly the casino. Compared to gaming machine operations, which is reasonably controlled in that the machine is pre-determined as a unit to pay out a certain amount in the long term, a casino game is operated by a person and by a set of rules for a particular game, and decisions are made and occasionally mistakes are made. What we tend to do is that, on a risk basis, we spend more time with our random audits at the casino to ensure that the casino is playing the game by the approved rules and that patrons are fairly treated when they go in. For example, all the rules are published and regular patrons certainly know what the rules are. We need to make sure that that game is played according to that rule so that the return to player and the odds and everything are what the player expects.

We have an audit program where we do regular audits on those programs to make sure that everything is in accordance. We do a review of their CCTV footage on both a regular and random basis. We will then go in totally unannounced on a random basis, pull all the tapes on a particular game over the last three days and review those to make sure that the game is played correctly, all the payouts are correct and things like that. Our focus on that is to make sure that where we detect either some errors or some higher level of risk then our audit program focuses on those until we are absolutely sure that everything is going by the book.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That must be quite a bit of hard work.

**Mr Jones:** It is. We spend a lot of hours doing that and it can be fairly tedious to just sit and watch tapes and game after game after game. But it is really the only way of doing it. That is the most efficient way of doing it rather than being over there in real time where that really does take up your time.

**THE CHAIR:** We have run out of time for this output class. Thank you very much for attending, minister and officials. There is a requirement for answering questions on notice which the minister is well aware of—five days after receiving them, the first day being today. We will move to Education and Training—and, minister, you will be



reappearing—at 10.15.

### **Sitting suspended from 9.59 to 10.15 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back, minister and officials, from the other day. We are moving now to Education and Training, output class 1.1, primary education and school education, and then high school education between now and 12.30. I might remind you that these proceedings are being live webstreamed. Can you confirm that you are aware of the privilege statement? For officials in the audience, if you are coming up, everyone has got a copy of that? You are aware of the privilege statement? That is great. Minister, would you like to make a statement?

**Ms Burch:** If I could, thank you, chair. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss ACT's investment in education and training for 2013-14 and to note that ACT is recognised as prioritising education and providing around 13 per cent more in recurrent funding than the Australian average to fund education. In this budget the government is continuing to invest in education, with almost \$100 million invested in education and training. This funding will support government and non-government schools through funding for the national education reforms, with more resources for teachers and staff, new capital projects and upgrades to the school ICT infrastructure.

The most significant event for education in the ACT this year is the signing of the national education reform agreement. The ACT and the commonwealth signed the heads of agreement on 30 May and over the next six years the national education reform will see government funding to all ACT schools increase by \$190 million, from \$692 million in 2013 to \$892 million in 2019. It is anticipated that public schools will receive \$102 million, the Catholic system \$59 million and the independent schools \$30 million. This agreement will benefit around 62,000 students across the territory and will drive long-term improvements.

The ACT is also providing more than \$34 million over the four years in new funding to implement the national schools reforms. This means \$21.4 million over four years for public schools, 8.6 over four years for the non-government schools and 4.3 to support the transition of public schools to the new funding model. Our investment in new school facilities and refurbishing old school structures continues with funds to complete the design for Coombs primary school, the Canberra College cares program and also further investment in maintenance and upgrades across our system.

High quality facilities and state-of-the art technology provide great learning environments, but it is the teachers who are the key. We are determined to attract and retain the very best teachers for ACT public schools to ensure that we maintain the high standards expected of our teachers. We will be investing \$3.5 million over four years to support experienced teachers to increase their professional qualifications and to undertake research during their careers.

The government is committed to providing support for students who need extra assistance to achieve their potential. As well as support with transport for students with a disability, \$1.3 million has been funded to provide additional support for students with complex needs in our schools. There are funds there to establish a

Tuggeranong introductory English centre at Wanniasa Hills Primary School and funds to increase the secondary bursary payment for eligible students. This budget takes care of all students in all schools. \$11 million has been allocated for support for non-government school students, including students with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. We will continue to invest in our kids through healthy Canberra kids. The budget also sees funds to support the ACT parents and citizens association running canteen services in our schools.

The early years of a child's life are the most important for learning and during this time the foundations are laid for the future ahead. We are committed to ensuring that there is sufficiently high trained staff in the ACT. We are supporting early childhood scholarships at a teacher level and also to attain a certificate III. We will also continue a program of upgrading our existing childcare centres. The government continues to maintain and provide a first-class education and training system and this budget continues to do that.

In concluding, I would like to thank the officials here and also all staff and teachers of Education and Training not only for the work they do in preparing the budget and providing very comprehensive answers to the committee but also for the work they do for our students across our city.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I would like to go first to the issue of savings. How are the savings being met within the directorate and what are those savings in terms of the last couple of years? If there are savings to be made this year in the forward estimates, where are they being realised?

**Mr Whybrow:** Within the Education and Training Directorate on budget day we went through our normal communications and briefings of our key stakeholders to identify the levels of savings. There is \$6.2 million of savings incorporated in the 2013-14 budget. That is derived from prior year savings targets. What I mean by that is that in earlier budgets there were estimated savings for the 2013-14 year in those earlier years. They are the basis prior to the introduction of a funding increase under Gonski, a three per cent growth basis.

We have been extremely transparent with our key stakeholders, and within that process we have identified the \$6.2 million. It also includes, if you look within our budget papers, a number of internally funded initiatives. There is an element here of re-profiling our spend. If I can turn you to two key pages. I guess the most important element in this is that if you turn to page 290 and look at the public school education output class—at the top of the page, the column “Output Class 1: Public School Education”, you will see the government payment for outputs is increasing by \$22 million.

If I can then turn you to page 293 of budget paper 4. There is a summary of the total funding provided to the non-government schools. You will see there from 2012-13 to 2013-14 an increase of approximately \$18 million in total funding to the non-government sector. While there is an element of savings for the directorate, there is a total increase. There is a four per cent increase within the government school education output class and if you look within the non-government schools, that

represents an increase of eight per cent.

**THE CHAIR:** With all the ins and outs, when I go to budget paper 4, page 579—this is whole-of-government staffing under Education and Training Directorate—there is an estimated outcome in terms of staffing for 2012-13 of 4,765. Then the budget for 2013-14 is 4,666, which is 99 less.

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** When we had the Australian Education Union here the week before last there was some confusion in terms of what were staffing cuts and what were budget cuts. What had been explained to them, it would seem, is that you have got \$6.2 million in budget cuts to make. The way that you have expressed that is by reduced staffing, but if you can find those budget cuts elsewhere then you might do that. It is a bit of a moving feast.

**Mr Whybrow:** I would not describe it as a moving feast. My reference is the same set of figures but within the education budget chapter—so 286, which identifies an estimated outcome. I think it is probably sensible for me to provide some contextual background to the operations of the directorate and also some contextual background to the nature of how we undertake estimates for employee levels.

If you look at the education directorate's operations, the FTE arrangements of the directorate change pay to pay, primarily because we are delivering a service over a school year, over four terms of 10 weeks each. We have a high level use of casual employees. While we have probably over 1,000 casuals on our register, the use of any one pay and the actual that you see—if I point you to that estimated outcome from 2011-12—is talking about an actual outcome of 4,928. The 4,928 picks up—and it is the same for all directorates—the actual is based on the 26th pay of the year.

Unlike a lot of other businesses, in a June position, where you have flu seasons and sickness and absenteeism, when you have a teacher who is standing in front of a class they do get replaced by a casual teacher. That actual number for us is always artificially high, representing our total level or average levels for the year. So what the directorate does for consistency in delivering its budget and then developing its estimated outcome and also its budget for the following year is to take the process of using the budget—if I am talking about average levels of staffing for the year—and adjust it for known changes through the budget process.

For example, if you go to the 2012-13 budget and the estimated outcome, the difference between where there is an increase—I believe it is in the order of 67 or something like that—comes from two main things. One is the transfer into the directorate of approximately 17 staff for the childhood policy and regulation unit. But it also picks up the fact that in 2013 the directorate saw an increase of 805 students enrolled in its government school sector. As you have increased enrolments, you have increased numbers of staff serving those students and enrolments. That component is an unknown in our budget going forward.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you expecting a decrease in enrolments?

**Ms Burch:** All the trends are going up over the last five years.

**THE CHAIR:** If I can just interrupt there. We have a situation where you are saying that you are going to get increased enrolments—

**Mr Whybrow:** No, I am not saying that. I am just saying—

**THE CHAIR:** The minister just did. She said all the trends are going up.

**Ms Burch:** I have said that the trend is up. That is the evidence in front of us.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure.

**Mr Whybrow:** I am just trying to explain the basis of our number, the things that are included and the things that are not, because it is not an exact science of saying that the number of people at 29 June will be X in our department. The nature of how we provide this for a financial position in the budget papers is based on the averages and knowns of adjustments and being overly conservative. That is what I have done in this process of going through the adjustment.

I have to get to the point of an issue where I believe I have made an overstatement in that number of the reduction. Let me take you through that. As part of that adjustment for this year we talk about the savings that we have already mentioned from prior years and the redistribution or the agency-funded initiatives contributing to a \$6.2 million saving component. On average, across our directorate, the equivalent cost of an FTE is \$100,000 per person. We have identified in here a 99 reduction. That has been driven by an overstatement. If I can get you to turn to page 159 of BP3, halfway down the page “Savings Reinvestment to Transition to Gonski”—\$4.3 million. That adjustment was not taken into account in my FTE estimate.

**THE CHAIR:** I am sorry; savings reinvestment for transition to Gonski?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. There is an initiative there which talks about transitioning to Gonski for government schooling of \$4.3 million. That adjustment I did not take into account in the FTE, so I believe there is an overstatement. If I exclude that on the basis of how we do that, which is on an average—

**THE CHAIR:** So there is an error in the budget, basically, is what you are saying?

**Mr Whybrow:** I am saying there is an overstatement in the FTE projections.

**THE CHAIR:** So the figure in the budget is incorrect? You are revising it?

**Mr Whybrow:** It is an estimated position is where I am coming at.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you changing your estimate based on what you are saying now as compared to what is in the budget?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes, I am.

**THE CHAIR:** Right. So the figure in the budget is wrong, because it is an estimate and you are changing your estimate.

**Mr Whybrow:** It is a change to the estimate is what I am saying, yes.

**Ms Burch:** Of full-time equivalents.

**Mr Whybrow:** Of full-time equivalents.

**Ms Burch:** It is not about savings.

**Mr Whybrow:** It is not about dollars; it does not impact dollars.

**THE CHAIR:** So what are you changing the FTE from and to?

**Mr Whybrow:** I was just taking you through that. On that basis, where we talk about it, \$100,000 is the average cost, which includes the salary and on-costs, superannuation et cetera. If I remove—which I should have done in my estimates—that to pick up the impact of that budget initiative of 4.3, that effectively reduces the FTE reduction by 4.3. So it should read 4,709, a reduction of 56 from the estimated outcome and an increase of 11 from the 2012-13 budget. I do need to point out, given the context of what we are talking about, given the potential impact of changes in enrolments, that this is, clearly, an estimated position.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. I understand it is an estimate. What might be useful, then, minister, based on the evidence that we just heard, is if you could write to this committee formally and provide a correction to the budget papers because you are now saying that the estimate in the budget is wrong and that your correct estimate is different. I think formal advice of that to the committee would be appreciated.

**Ms Burch:** We will also include, I think, in that formal advice, as Mr Whybrow has explained, that our savings task for this year is 6.2, and it has been reflected as an FTE.

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**Ms Burch:** This is not saying that that is an absolute loss of staff; it is just reflective. Rightly or wrongly, the decision was made to reflect our savings tasks to an FTE, but it is not an absolute that that FTE will be reduced. We will provide that.

**THE CHAIR:** I accept that it is an estimate, but what I am saying is that there is—

**Ms Burch:** We will also—

**THE CHAIR:** There is now an issue that the budget papers are inaccurate, based on the evidence you have given. And I think, for point of clarity, if you can write with that formal advice and provide that so that the budget can actually be correct for the record, that would be useful.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Can I ask a supplementary?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** When did you become aware of this?

**Mr Whybrow:** This was just after the budget papers were finalised. As you have heard, our briefings to the AEU identified a 6.2 component as the total savings and identified the issue that we have represented our savings as an FTE reduction but they will not necessarily be delivered in that way.

**MR SMYTH:** Why, minister, if you were aware of this, did you not inform the Assembly earlier and, in particular, did you not inform the estimates committee earlier, rather than telling us at 10.30 on the day in which the department appears?

**Ms Burch:** It has come to light to me in the more recent time, and I thought it was appropriate to tell the committee through this.

**MR SMYTH:** So when did you find out?

**Ms Burch:** I will have to go back and count the days but it was not that long ago. And I—

**MR SMYTH:** Two days, four days, six days?

**Ms Burch:** I thought it was appropriate that I come here and that we provide that advice to you.

**THE CHAIR:** Could you please review your records and take it on notice what the sequence of events was here? If there are errors in the budget and officials or ministers are aware of them, we should not have a situation where officials are aware of errors in the budget and do not inform their ministers, or ministers are aware of them and do not inform this committee. When you provide this committee of the correction to the budget, could you please advise, Mr Whybrow, when you identified that error and when you advised the minister? We have been asking a bunch of questions on this. We have been talking to the AEU. We have been, as a committee, doing a lot of analysis and making assumptions based on estimates which are inaccurate whilst you knew that all along but did not tell this committee. And that is, I have to say, unhelpful. If you could do that, that would be good.

Regardless of that, the figure has changed by 43. But I still find it incongruous that we have a situation where you are saying staffing numbers are, I guess, predicated on student enrolments. The minister is saying the trend is up. We are hearing of record levels of funding for education, Gonski is going to bring in new money and all of that sort of stuff. Then, what we actually see as a result in this budget is an estimated reduction in staff, be it 100 or be it 56, depending on which figure you take it from. I do not understand, minister, how, on the one hand, you are saying students trending up, money trending up, record levels of investment and then, when you look at the budget, teacher numbers are down. It does not compute.

**Ms Burch:** One, they are not teacher numbers, and you are—

**THE CHAIR:** They are estimates.

**Ms Burch:** You have determined that as teachers. That is not us. You have done that. And we have just gone—

**THE CHAIR:** No, the budget does.

**Ms Burch:** No, it is FTEs. It is not teachers. It is FTEs. And as we have explained to you, we have represented our savings, which is clearly outlined through here. There is not a dollar figure that will change. We have represented our savings as FTEs, and I think the underlying principles are that we do have a trend over the last five years, the most recent census, showing an increase. There is more money coming into education, and we have got an average class size policy across the system.

So all of those things indicate that again, rightly or wrongly, we have estimated our savings as FTEs. And I do apologise for not getting that advice to you more quickly. I felt that this process was fair and reasonable, but I accept that you have a different view on that.

**DR BOURKE:** It does not seem to have changed the line of questioning.

**Mr Whybrow:** If I can just follow up as well, the normal process—and it has been in the budget papers for at least the last 10 years that I am aware of—of adjustments to the education budget for enrolments is that there are never projected enrolment increases because it is an unknown component. We go back well over 10 years of this having been the normal adjustment.

You will see within this budget paper there is a technical adjustment that happens, year on year of ACT funding, for both the government sector and the non-government sector. That will be on pages, if you need to look through it, 298 and 299, where there will be a technical adjustment that does an adjustment every year for the actual impact of enrolment numbers simply because that is based on an actual census position.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving to enrolment numbers then—it is an interesting topic—what has been the underlying trend? You talked about a trend, minister. What has that trend been over the last decade or five years or—

**Ms Cover:** Tracy, would you like to answer?

**Ms Stewart:** Yes. Over the last five years we have seen increases in enrolments in public schools. They were small increases five years out but they have been increasing over the last few years, and that is consistent with increasing birth rates. So we are starting to see more children flow through at the younger end of school. That is also consistent with us gradually increasing market share into public schools.

As Mr Whybrow mentioned, the increase this year was 805 students into public schools. Last year it was 1,064 students. So we are seeing now quite, what I would call, substantial increases into public schools.

**THE CHAIR:** What is that in terms of a percentage?

**Ms Stewart:** The growth rate? We will calculate it in a moment but my memory is it is around three per cent.

**THE CHAIR:** About three per cent?

**Ms Stewart:** Over the last two years.

**THE CHAIR:** What would be useful for the committee, if you have this information or if you can get it, is a breakdown of what the increase has been over, let us say, the last five years. Is that probably a relevant figure?

**Ms Stewart:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Over the last five years, and then break it down into primary school, secondary school, public and independent schools or non-public schools so that we can see where that is trending in both number and percentage. Then it gives a bit of an idea. You have got all that there.

**Ms Burch:** If you go to the ACT census 2013, it has all of that.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that all broken down? All right.

**Ms Burch:** And that is available online?

**Ms Stewart:** It is available online.

**THE CHAIR:** And what has been the increase?

**Ms Burch:** Now you are asking me to find it. Can we find it?

**Ms Stewart:** I can calculate that and answer the question shortly. We have had fairly significant increases into public schools. That is a fairly large component of the increase in schooling in general. Also, most of that is in the primary school sector. So we still are seeing increasing numbers of children coming into preschool and primary school.

**THE CHAIR:** Most directorates, particularly let us say Health, put in growth funding. Health anticipate an increased number of surgeries. They do demographic analysis and they say these are the trends so that they can anticipate. What they do not do is just wait for a number to turn up and then do it retrospectively. This sort of seeing what the increase is and then doing it retrospectively, have you considered, minister, maybe looking at this underlying trend—and you have got a consistent growth there, three per cent or whatever it might be—and then using that to anticipate growth numbers?

**Ms Burch:** I am happy to talk with the directorate about what is the best way to do this, but I think what is with us now since signing the national education reform is that



there is a three per cent growth in education. So that is what we will factor in, a three per cent growth across education.

**Ms Stewart:** Can I ask the committee's indulgence? Can I come back to you with those growth figures?

**THE CHAIR:** Later on during these hearings?

**Ms Stewart:** Now?

**THE CHAIR:** Now, yes, fire away.

**Ms Stewart:** The growth this year in public schools is two per cent, and last year it was 2.7 per cent. As I said, it is in that ballpark of two to three per cent over the last few years.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, Friday of the week before last, you will have already heard that in the community groups hearing we had the Australian Education Union. In their words, they emphatically welcomed the ACT's sign-up to the Gonski reforms. Minister, what will the ACT's participation in these reforms mean for our students?

**Ms Burch:** This is, again, a significant change across education systems and I think you would have heard the language: it does provide certainty in growth. So we have committed to and signed up to a minimum of three per cent growth in the education system. And I think that is a good thing. So that gives certainly the school leadership assurances about their own localised planning but it gives all students, regardless of whether they are in Gungahlin, Garran or Gordon, equal opportunity and equal access to a resource. And I think that is a very significant outcome. It also provides fair, transparent and consistent funding across the independents and the Catholic system as well, both through commonwealth and ACT funding. But I might go to the officials on how we see this operationalised, for want of a very clumsy word.

**Mr Gniel:** As part of that sign-up, we have signed up to the reform measures that are included in the national plan for school improvement. The key directions within that national plan are quality teaching, quality learning, empowered school leadership, meeting student need, and transparency and accountability. These are very much consistent with the direction the ACT has been taking over the past number of years.

You will recall our current strategic plan around everyone matters, which picks up very much on the meeting student need. That has been our agenda for the last few years. And if you look at page 287 in BP 4, which talks about strategic objectives of the directorate around quality learning, inspirational teaching and leadership, and also high expectations and high performance, that picks up all of those reform directions that we signed up to as part of the national education reform agreement.

It does also mean that we are seeing more money flowing particularly from the commonwealth and from the ACT, into those areas. That will allow us to conduct that reform at the local level and, most importantly, improve the student outcomes both

within the ACT and supporting the goals at the national level of Australia being in the top five across the world.

That change of funding does relate to a large increase in the specific purpose payment and some of the national partnerships being rolled into that fund. That is something that over the next few years we will need to be working with our stakeholders, and in particular our schools, around how that will flow through. Importantly, as the minister has mentioned, there is an element of certainty for our schools around the funding increases into the future, which was not necessarily there before, particularly from the commonwealth amount, which is indexed.

So those reforms can start happening right now, and certainly a number of the initiatives in this budget allow that to occur in the ACT government sector but also in the non-government sector.

**DR BOURKE:** You talked about this philosophy of everyone matters. Can you tell us more about that?

**Mr Gniel:** Yes, I can. In the national plan for school improvement, the focus of one of the reform directions is meeting student need. Meeting student need is really informed by the overall principle of the needs-based funding arrangements, which take into account the specific circumstances of students. I think you will have heard the Prime Minister talk a number of times about minimising disadvantage, about high quality education for every student in every school, which picks up on our previous process of everyone matters. The commonwealth funding model is based on those principles. We have a per-student amount, a base of the schooling resources standard. That is then added to, depending on the circumstances of individual children.

Dr Bourke, I think you would be particularly interested in those areas which are around school size, which we know has an impact, low SES, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, limited English proficiency, and also students with a disability. Encouragingly for the ACT, we have a funding model that includes needs-based funding right now. Some of that is already consistent and, in fact, is more specific in its delivery to our schools of per-student amounts, particularly if I could use students with disability as an example. We will be working with the commonwealth government across other jurisdictions as well around further refining those models. Those loadings at the moment are still under development in a couple of areas—namely, limited English language proficiency and also students with a disability. We will be working with our colleagues across the nation over the next couple of years to further refine and make sure those are picking up on the individual needs of students in all sectors in every school.

**DR BOURKE:** You talked about a loading for students with a disability. Is that going to be able to encompass the spectrum of disabilities and varying severities that they have, or is it going to be a flat chunk? What sort of discussions are you having with the commonwealth about that?

**Ms Burch:** There is a piece of work that is about to be embarked upon across jurisdictions looking at exactly that—what is encapsulated, what is the definition of

“disability”, what makes a difference in allowing a child with a disability to attain. There is language around the difference regarding equitable access to an education. But given Gonski is a significant reform, with the permission of the committee, I will ask Mr Peffer and then Mr Whybrow to give some overview around Gonski and the reforms. That may answer some of your other questions and give you a bit of background.

**Mr Peffer:** As the committee may recall, this process kicked off back in 2010 when the then education minister, Minister Gillard, commissioned this review. It is a process that has been iterative in nature. A review report was released. It was taken through COAG a number of times—three times it was taken to COAG for discussion. Progress was made at each of those meetings. There were various working groups set up through the COAG process. Some of them involved first ministers’ departments. Others involved Treasury and education departments as well.

Through that process the federal government refined what it saw the reform agenda to be. Central to that—and I think Mr Gniel has touched on this—is funding equity. The federal government was very keen to do away with the concept of a rich school system and a poor school system. They were about equity and outcomes and about pursuing that through a per-student funding allocation.

The culmination of all of that work was the national education reform agreement. A number of jurisdictions have signed up to that agreement thus far. You would be aware that the federal government has set a 30 June deadline on that agreement. I understand other states and the Northern Territory are looking at that.

To take it back in a broad sense, the overarching objective of the NERA is to provide students in all schools with an excellent education to enable them to reach their full potential. This comes back to the funding formula on a per-student basis that does not look at what sort of school sector these students are in; it looks at the characteristics of the students themselves, what sort of needs they may have through the schooling system and then what sort of cost pressures may be applied to that school, whether it is in a remote location or in an area that has some form of disadvantage. I might turn to Mr Whybrow on the funding model.

**Mr Whybrow:** I guess the next part is where to start.

**Ms Burch:** At the beginning, Mr Whybrow.

**DR BOURKE:** That is always the best place to start.

**Mr Whybrow:** I think the start, then, is the reference back to budget paper 2 and the statement that Minister Burch made earlier, which was: what is actually the impact of those reforms? I refer members of the committee to page 36 of BP2. It talks about an increase from the 2014 levels of funding to 2019 levels of \$190 million. Breaking it further down, and not straying into the territory of predicting questions rather than answering what is on offer—

**THE CHAIR:** I remember you asked yourself a very good question the other day.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So go again. Have another crack.

**Mr Whybrow:** It might be, with your indulgence, worth taking you through it. I believe that the ACT has the most transparent budget papers of any jurisdiction in Australia. All the information is actually included in our budget chapters. Whilst this is a complex area around what relates to Gonski, what is in our forward estimates, what are the adjustments from what has been there in the past, I can take you through line by line of those statements—

**MR SMYTH:** That would be a very good place to start.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us do it.

**Mr Whybrow:** to say, “Here are the adjustments that relate to Gonski,” provide an overall impact from the forward estimates and take your questions from that space, if that is what you would like to do.

**DR BOURKE:** Please.

**THE CHAIR:** Good question.

**Mr Whybrow:** Let me start—

**Ms Burch:** Pen at the ready, Mr Hanson.

**Mr Whybrow:** I will refer to individual lines here that relate to Gonski.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** So, yes, if pens are at the ready, I go to page 299, and we can look at, one by one, the adjustments that have been made to our forward estimates in relation to the Gonski reforms. On page 299, three-quarters of the way down the page, we see “Commonwealth grants—empowering local schools”. If you look at that, and that adjustment in the outyears, 3,514 and 3,514, that national partnership—

**THE CHAIR:** Hang on, empowering local schools?

**Mr Whybrow:** Empowering local schools.

**THE CHAIR:** There are two of those, aren't there? There is one that says “revised funding profile”. I am not looking at that?

**Mr Whybrow:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** I am looking at commonwealth grants.

**Mr Whybrow:** No, you are looking at commonwealth grants. I will also make reference back—because it is a very good point within the budget papers and

something that Treasury does that provides clarity around what are those commonwealth payments—to BP3, pages 125 and 126. That provides levels of total commonwealth payments. It provides the SP, which is the general ongoing payment, and also a list of the NPs. Just for clarity—I am probably telling you something you already know—those NPs, national partnerships, are generally for fixed periods for individual actions that are not ongoing and have a natural life.

**THE CHAIR:** But they appear in this budget.

**Mr Whybrow:** There are two components to this. I am going through the adjustments from the base numbers, so adjustments from what we did from the last year's.

**THE CHAIR:** The status quo was referred to yesterday; is that right?

**Mr Whybrow:** I do not think that is a status quo. Again, it is around the fact that you have a budget process. You update your estimates every year. It is very important to note that all of the commonwealth estimates of their funding—particularly the funding that gets on-passed by the ACT government for the non-government schools—are based on the commonwealth budget papers, and the most up-to-date information from those who are on-passing those payments. That is the process that happens every single year. I should point out that there are significant changes every single year. There are significant changes, particularly in that non-government sector, by way of updates to the non-government sector grant arrangements.

**THE CHAIR:** So the first one is “Commonwealth grants—empowering local schools”. Three-and-a-half million is removed from the budget in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

**Mr Whybrow:** That is an NP that has ended and has been rolled into the national reforms. Let me go through it one by one. With the line underneath, you can mark that as well—“Commonwealth grants—national schools SPP”. This is removing the old recurrent grant going forward. It is being replaced by the line underneath, “National education reform—government schools”.

Not all national partnerships relate to Gonski. If I jump down the next two lines—“vocational education and training”—the “Commonwealth grants—reward for great teachers” ends and is rolled into the education reforms. So you can mark that one as well. The “Commonwealth grants—improving teacher quality” is an NP that is coming to its natural end. It is not affected by those Gonski reforms, as is the “money smart schools”. But you can mark the one beneath that—“Commonwealth grants—reward for school improvement”. That has been ended and rolled in.

I turn now to page 300 and move to the line “Revised funding profile—low socioeconomic status”. That, again, has been rolled in to the overall total. I will do it in section components. That is a total of all those lines I have given you there of minus \$1.85 million over four years from the previous forward estimates. But if I take you back to page 126, which shows the actual total amount of commonwealth funding, and if you go to the total education and early childhood amounts, which includes the SP and the NPs, you will see that the 2012-13 estimated outcome of \$236.4 million grows to \$253.9 million, and continues to then grow over the forward years. So these

are adjustments to the forward estimates position. Let me continue—

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry; before you go there, you said that in the first year it is down 1.85 million.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** What is it down in the other years?

**Mr Whybrow:** From the previous forward estimate, not in actual terms. The actual increases are—

**MR SMYTH:** From the estimates. So what is it down in 2014-15? Is it down or up?

**Mr Whybrow:** I have not got in front of me the totals of the 2014-15 year; I have got totals over the entire period. I can take those totals on notice if you want a breakdown by year of each of those.

**THE CHAIR:** Are they just the public school ones?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** That you went through?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. I am going through it all. But that is not the entire story for public schools. Let me move back. I have just been handed totals for each year. The 2014-15 year is actually an increase of \$2.022 million. The 2013-14 year is an increase of 3.16. Reductions in the 2015-16 year are minus 5.2 from the forward estimates and then 1.6.

**MR SMYTH:** What is the 1.6?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is the 2016-17 year.

**MR SMYTH:** Is it a plus or a minus?

**Mr Whybrow:** A minus.

**MR SMYTH:** Minus 1.6. Let us go through that again. In 2013-14 you said it was minus 1.85?

**Mr Whybrow:** In 2013-14 it is an increase of 3.160.

**MR SMYTH:** Where did that number come from? Two minutes ago you said it was minus 1.85?

**Mr Whybrow:** I was talking about over the four years. From 2013-14 my overall statement there, of the minus 1.8 in round terms, was over 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17.

**THE CHAIR:** Can I just confirm that we are only talking about federal funding here? We are not talking about ACT funding?

**Mr Whybrow:** I am only partway through the line-by-line impact of Gonski. That component to date is only federal funding. That is what I am talking about.

**THE CHAIR:** Federal funding for government schools?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct. Again, it is based on changes to forward estimates numbers. But if I take you back to page 298, to get the entire picture, particularly within the government school sector, you have to include the lines “ACT base funding adjustment—national school reform” and “Savings reinvestment”. So it is the bottom two lines on that page.

**THE CHAIR:** Page 298?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** “ACT base funding adjustment—national school reform”.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** That is ACT funding, though, isn't it?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** I just want to know the commonwealth funding at the moment. What I am trying to do is work out what the commonwealth funding was and what it now is rather than what is being supplemented by the ACT. Can we just get the commonwealth stuff finalised?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And then look at what we are doing for the ACT.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. I will run down through the commonwealth components as well. If I go through payments for expense on behalf of the territory, effectively the vast majority of these relate to the payments to non-government schools and the non-government school grants. Just touching on it as I go down, you will note the ACT base funding reform, which is under policy adjustments, but when I focus, as you have asked me to, on the technical adjustments and relate it to commonwealth funding, the lines that relate to Gonski funding are “Commonwealth grants—reward for great teachers”—

**THE CHAIR:** Page?

**Mr Whybrow:** Page 300, three-quarters of the way down the page.

**THE CHAIR:** “Reward for great teachers”?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I thought we talked about that one before.

**Mr Whybrow:** Most of our national partnership reforms apply to the entire education sector, so that will be a component to government schools but also a component to non-government schools.

**THE CHAIR:** That is three-quarters of the way down on page 299?

**Mr Whybrow:** Three-quarters of the way down, starting with a 2012-13 component of 37 positive, followed by 316 minus.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes; got it.

**Mr Whybrow:** That is an ending national partnership, as it was for government schools that are rolling in. If you highlight that, that is an adjustment that is directly related to the Gonski reforms. “Commonwealth grants—empowering local schools”, the one beneath that, is the same.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** If you go to the next one, “Commonwealth grants—trade training centres”, that is not included, because the school resource standard is about recurrent income and this is about capital grant purchases. If I go to the next one, it is the removal of the existing SPP. That is clearly removing current estimates.

I should point out that you need to look at the figures going from 2013-14 and beyond, not figures prior to 2013-14. And to be technically correct, it is actually a half-year effect of the 2013-14 figures, because the Gonski reforms start from a calendar year rather than a financial year. That number there is being replaced by the national education reforms, the number below. If I focus on the number above, this is an area where the numbers themselves will not paint the true picture of the Gonski reforms.

Let me point out the reason for that. If you have a look at the 2012-13 year, you will see that it talks about a reduction to the commonwealth funding estimate from that provided in the budget papers the year before. It is talking about a reduction of \$7.1 million. That is completely unrelated to Gonski reforms; Gonski is not in from that point in time. So that \$7 million is—as I said earlier, there is a general update from the commonwealth government that we reflect on their payments to non-government schools. There have been no changes in that 2012-13 year around existing methodology for providing funding, but there was an update to their estimate, producing their total level of funding.

Translating that going forward, I would be saying that there is that similar level in each of those outyears that relates to simply the update of the estimates, which are mainly driven by enrolment movements or projected enrolment movements, by the commonwealth government going forward. On a simple calculation, over those four outyears you would be talking about—probably the seven by four, \$28 million, of that reduction is basically in relation to an update to the existing parameters, not the



impact of Gonski. But the next line below is talking about a replacement with the new Gonski reforms.

**THE CHAIR:** “Commonwealth grants—reward for school improvement”?

**Mr Whybrow:** No, national reforms, the positive number.

**THE CHAIR:** What about that negative number below?

**Mr Whybrow:** The negative number is a reward for schools. Like in the government sector, that is a national partnership that has been rolled in and continued into it.

**THE CHAIR:** That is a removed line then?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** In total, with the 2013-14 component of those, if you add up all those, you are looking at in the order of a \$28 million reduction. That is fairly consistent with the point that I was making earlier around that fact that, unrelated to Gonski, those estimates came down \$7 million in the 2012-13 year. On that same basis, the major driver of that adjustment is the update to those estimates, not the Gonski reforms. That is my assessment of that.

**THE CHAIR:** I have done that analysis that you have.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** As you have said a line, I have been able to tick it.

**Mr Whybrow:** Good.

**THE CHAIR:** I have got it, and you have got it. I think we are on the same page here, which is good.

**Mr Whybrow:** Great.

**THE CHAIR:** When I look at all the lines that you have said are being removed, and all the lines that are being included, which are essentially two lines—“National education reform—non-government” and “National education reform—government”—and all of the other lines, what I find, ignoring the ACT funding line—

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So we are just talking about what was planned in the budget and what is now planned in the budget, based on Gonski changes. I find that over the forward estimates there is a deficit, I suppose, for want of another term, of \$30,959,000. Is that the figure you have got?

**Mr Whybrow:** No. While there is a component that is close to that, which is in the order of \$30.2 million, I think the important distinction that I make from that statement is that I think you are saying that it is directly related to Gonski reforms. The key component of this is the line “Commonwealth grants—national schools—non-government schools SPP”, which actually has a \$7 million reduction prior to Gonski reforms which flows through every year after that, and it is not directly related to the Gonski reforms; it is related to the update in the estimates.

**THE CHAIR:** Let me rephrase it then. What was planned in the budget compared to what—before all these reforms took place, and updates from the commonwealth and so on, the money coming from the commonwealth that was planned and is now coming is \$30,959,000 less than was originally planned, based on the budget. Based on the lines that you remove and the lines that you have added, the delta is 30,959.

**Mr Whybrow:** It is in the order of a \$30 million reduction in estimated commonwealth grants payments that were identified in the 2012-13 budget based on—

**THE CHAIR:** I am saying 31; you are saying 30 million. Okay. Finally, we have got there. That is the point I have been trying to make, and I suppose it is what I have been trying to get the answer on. What is in the budget, as in removed commonwealth payments on estimates, as to what is in there, based on actuals or revised estimates between what we thought we were going to get and what we are getting, is a reduction in \$30 million of planned funding from the commonwealth.

**Mr Whybrow:** Let me point out the component of planned funding from the commonwealth. All these reductions are—primarily the component is in the estimated amounts of money that the ACT post-box on to the non-government schools for per capita contributions by the commonwealth government for their operations. I have had a look in line with that \$7.14 million reduction. If I have a look back through previous budget papers, these are normal adjustments that happen through this update. I do recall that probably two years ago there was a question about \$12 million. I had calls from the Catholics and the AIS saying, “Has there been a reduction in our level of funding?” And nothing had changed in the level of funding. The base requirements, the base methodology, had not changed at all. The estimated position is only driven by numbers of enrolled students.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. But the point is that we have been hearing a lot of rhetoric about Gonski or wherever the money is coming from from the federal government—that there is more money coming into education from the federal government. The reality is that there is not.

**Ms Burch:** No. The reality is that there is.

**THE CHAIR:** The reality is that over the forward estimates, based on this budget, based on the numbers we have just gone through, there is—I say \$31 million, you say \$30.2 million—a position that is worse off than was the position before any of these changes applied.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**Mr Whybrow:** I guess the point that I need to make—and I am obviously not making it very clear—

**THE CHAIR:** Based on these budget figures; it is in black and white.

**Mr Whybrow:** No. I understand what you are saying. But the point I need to make to represent this as what it is is that, implying that something has changed to make the ACT receive less money than it was otherwise due and entitled to in this space, is not a correct statement because the fundamental component here of estimates from the commonwealth based on the model of distributing those has not been affected to that tune by a move to Gonski reforms. The base change of this is around prior estimates from the commonwealth that—

**THE CHAIR:** But the problem is that the new money that you are getting in to replace it is called national education reform. That is Gonski, yes?

**Mr Whybrow:** Sorry?

**THE CHAIR:** National education reform is Gonski.

**Mr Whybrow:** The line of national education reform is Gonski.

**THE CHAIR:** There you go.

**Mr Whybrow:** The line above that has two components to it. One is an element of an update not in relation to Gonski but simply removing and updating in line with the actual enrolments in the non-government sector, and that is the element where, if you look at that 2012-13 year, you actually see a reduction for that year alone—nothing to do with Gonski; Gonski is not in at that time—and it is \$7.1 million.

**THE CHAIR:** You take out all of the money that was in the budget on national partnerships and special purpose payments and you replace it with the two Gonski lines, and the delta is filled in over the forward estimates. Yes or no?

**Ms Burch:** You are assuming that the world was not going to change. And I think we have said—and I think we have said it through the directorate and I think the Chief Minister's office has said it—that the national partnerships, a number of them, were coming to an end anyway, and we have seen more funds for education coming to the ACT across government, independents and Catholics, and we have seen a committed and a guaranteed growth to that funding.

**THE CHAIR:** So the commonwealth government was cutting funding anyway? So what you are saying is they were going to cut funding anyway. They have just cut it less—

**Ms Burch:** A number of national partnership agreements were coming to an end.

**Mr Peffer:** Sorry, just in terms of the specific purpose payment, which is your lump sum recurrent grant, that is indexed, based on what states and territories spend. So it is

not the commonwealth cutting funding; it is reflecting growth across other jurisdictions and what they spend on schools. So if you have the more populous jurisdictions cutting funding to schools or significantly reducing what they are putting in, that naturally flows on to the commonwealth grants.

I think the offer that was put to the ACT and accepted was an offer of 4.7 per cent as opposed to three per cent or potentially below, which is what would have occurred. The national partnerships were coming to an end. They were time limited. What has happened, though, is those partnerships have been rolled into base funding and will be indexed on an ongoing basis going forward. I think Mr Whybrow is correct that the statement of minus \$31 million is not correct.

**THE CHAIR:** It is in the budget. It is in black and white. We just went through it.

**Mr Peffer:** I think—

**Ms Burch:** Well—

**THE CHAIR:** However you want to label it, Gonski or national reforms or talking about what is happening in South Australia, when you compare what was projected under special purpose payments and national partnerships with what is in the budget now, it is \$31 million less.

**Ms Burch:** We are giving—

**THE CHAIR:** It is in the budget. We have just been through it.

**Ms Burch:** We are giving you—

**THE CHAIR:** You can justify it how you like. But they are the figures.

**Ms Burch:** No. We are trying to explain to you that your interpretation is wrong.

**THE CHAIR:** It is in black and white. We just went through the figures. We agreed—we have done the sums—that what was in the budget and what has been removed compared to what has been added is \$31 million less.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**DR BOURKE:** So which is better, three per cent or 4.7 per cent?

**Ms Burch:** Guaranteed growth, which is what these arrangements provide across government and non-government sectors, is something that has not been in place before. A student resource standard has not been in place before. Basing on need and recognising disability, size of schools, isolation have not been in place before. A clear commitment around school empowerment, quality teaching, quality learning, as clearly articulated—

**THE CHAIR:** This is rhetoric about commitments around this, that and the other.

**Ms Burch:** in the national reform has not been in place before.

**THE CHAIR:** We are not talking about the rhetoric around commitments to this and commitments to that. What we are talking about is in black and white, what was in the budget and what has been removed from the budget and what has been placed back in.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** And we agree that it is \$30 million. You can talk about commitments to this and commitments to that as much as you like, but we are \$30 million worse off than we were previously in the budget.

**Ms Burch:** No, we are not.

**THE CHAIR:** And it is there in black and white. We have just gone through it.

**DR BOURKE:** What do the stakeholders say, minister?

**Ms Burch:** Everyone that I have spoken to welcomes the national education reforms. Certainly the Catholic education system is welcoming of it. In our government system, the AEU has also articulated it is welcoming of this. So I have not heard anybody say that this is not the right reform to have.

**DR BOURKE:** And they have also said that—

**MR SMYTH:** Irrespective of whether it is the right reform or not—

**DR BOURKE:** No, excuse me, I have not finished yet.

**MR SMYTH:** There are two components—

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, and have they seen this education budget?

**Ms Burch:** They most certainly have.

**DR BOURKE:** And they have not complained about having money cut?

**THE CHAIR:** The point is, I suppose, that—

**DR BOURKE:** They would know, would they not?

**THE CHAIR:** it is not cut, and I accept that the whole budget is not, because the ACT is now supplementing it with that additional line in the budget and is having to put in an additional \$34 million-odd to fill in that delta. So I am talking about the commonwealth funding. I am not talking about the whole budget.

**MR SMYTH:** That is correct, is it not? That is correct, Mr Whybrow?

**THE CHAIR:** The ACT government is having to put in an additional \$34 million over the forward estimates to fill this up.

**Mr Whybrow:** Let me bring back to—

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, what Mr Hanson said is correct, though, is it not?

**Ms Burch:** No, and I think we have been trying to explain that to you.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Whybrow, what Mr Hanson has just said is correct, there is an initial \$34 million from the ACT?

**Mr Whybrow:** What has been said to date talked about—and I believe I have difficulty answering that question because I think it implies something which underlines that and says that there is a link to Gonski. There are two different components here. There are some adjustments to numbers, but it implies that that relates to a Gonski adjustment.

If I take you to page 293 and let us just look at one year. Let us look at the move from 2012-13 to 2013-14, commonwealth government funding, because that appears to be the issue. You are talking there, with the introduction of Gonski in the 2014 year, of an increase of \$12 million by the commonwealth government to the non-government school sector in one year. So to suggest that it is about a less component is where I have difficulty.

The issue that I was trying to explain is that there are significant adjustments every year in our budget papers, without a Gonski, with a Gonski, from the commonwealth estimates in this space. If I went back to last year's budget papers, there would have been an adjustment over \$40 million in the commonwealth estimates over those four-year periods. The year before would have been in the tens of millions of dollars. This is nothing new.

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay, but Gonski—

**THE CHAIR:** When you add all that up, it is \$30 million less.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** Gonski plus the adjustments equals \$30.2 million less by your numbers.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**Mr Whybrow:** I think—

**THE CHAIR:** You said it does.

**Mr Whybrow:** No, sorry.

**THE CHAIR:** Why is it \$30 less then?

**Mr Whybrow:** Do you want me to take you through what my numbers are and the numbers that are down there? On that basis, within the four years, and if you go

through that, my interpretation of that 2012-13 number that extrapolates over the budget papers, that number of the \$7.1 million, is that it should be included in that removal of the SPP through the outyears. In broad terms, it is seven over five years, it is \$35 million that has nothing to do with Gonski whatsoever. That is why I have difficulty answering a question that seems to be putting into my mouth a statement around an impact of Gonski which I do not believe.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us ignore the word “Gonski” then and let us just talk about commonwealth funding, regardless of what it is labelled as and whether it is NP or SPPs, Gonski—let us forget all that. Let us put it in a bucket and call it federal funding. Federal funding in this budget that is being adjusted—compared to what has been put in, ceased initiatives compared to new initiatives—the difference is \$30 million. Correct or incorrect?

**Mr Whybrow:** Look—

**Ms Burch:** You are making assumptions that the—

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, no. I am asking a question here. And I am saying—

**Ms Burch:** And we are making a response.

**THE CHAIR:** What I am asking is for Mr Whybrow to answer. When you compare just federal funding—whatever bucket you want to call it—what is in this budget and has been taken out compared to what has been put in, the difference is, based on the numbers we went through, \$30 million?

**Ms Burch:** But you are making assumptions that—

**THE CHAIR:** Correct? Yes? Can you confirm that please, Mr Whybrow?

**Ms Burch:** We are making a response—

**DR BOURKE:** The minister can answer for herself.

**Ms Burch:** Mr Hanson. And I do not think you can direct or insist on a particular response from any member on this side of the—

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, you answer the question then.

**Ms Burch:** I am saying to you that I think you are making assumptions—and I will go back to Mr Peffer and Mr Whybrow—that the world was never going to change, that there was not going to be any change in national partnerships. Mr Whybrow and Mr Peffer have been at pains to say to you that those assumptions are wrong.

**THE CHAIR:** You are assuming that I am saying things. What I am saying is a very simple question: federal funding has been removed; federal funding has been put in. The difference is \$30 million less. Correct or incorrect?

**Ms Burch:** We have, I think, tried to explain to you that a number of these national partnerships were coming to an end.

**THE CHAIR:** I get all that. The point I am making is that in this budget there is federal funding that has been removed. This is what we are reviewing, this budget. There is federal funding that has been removed. We went through them line by line with Mr Whybrow. When I compare that to federal funding that is coming in, whatever you want to call it, the delta is \$30 million. We just went through that. Correct?

**Mr Whybrow:** I think the issue that I have with that is the concept of saying federal funding is being removed.

**THE CHAIR:** It is in the budget.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**Mr Whybrow:** I am sorry, let me be clear—

**MR SMYTH:** Projected federal funding has now changed and we are \$30.2 million worse off.

**Mr Whybrow:** The projected federal funding has changed; that is correct. The projected federal funding has changed. But the nature of was the ACT entitled to that level of projected funding is the issue that I have difficulty with saying the ACT has lost—

**THE CHAIR:** But I am not asking you for that.

**DR BOURKE:** Well, that is the answer to the question, Mr Hanson.

**THE CHAIR:** The projected federal funding—

**DR BOURKE:** You cannot get the answer that you want. You have to get the answer that you get.

**THE CHAIR:** that is in the budget that has been removed, compared to the projected federal funding that is in the budget, is \$30 million less.

**Mr Peffer:** There are two comparisons that you can do here. You can compare the 2013-14 budget to the 2012-13 budget and draw conclusions from that. But the reality of the situation is now those conclusions would be meaningless.

**THE CHAIR:** But these are figures that are in the 2013-14 budget. I am not comparing an old budget. This is the current budget. The projected funding, commonwealth funding, that has been removed in this budget, compared to the projected federal funding that has been included in this budget, is \$30 million less.

**Ms Burch:** I think collectively we have had—



**THE CHAIR:** Yes? You are nodding your head, Mr Whybrow.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**Mr Whybrow:** No.

**Ms Burch:** We have answered the question. I think a number of times both Mr Pepper and Mr Whybrow have explained to you why we think your view is not quite right.

**THE CHAIR:** It is not a view; it is the numbers.

**Ms Burch:** As Dr Bourke has so poignantly said, you can keep on asking the question and this is the answer you will get.

**THE CHAIR:** I will keep asking the question, and I will say it again—

**DR BOURKE:** Members have other questions, Mr Chair.

**Mr Whybrow:** The most important way to look at this is to go back—

**THE CHAIR:** I am using your language now.

**Mr Whybrow:** No—

**THE CHAIR:** You asked me to change the projected federal funding and now you will not answer the question.

**Mr Whybrow:** No, I—

**THE CHAIR:** The projected federal funding that has been taken out of this budget compared—

**Mr Whybrow:** But—

**Ms Burch:** Do you want an answer or do you want just want to keep on over-talking?

**THE CHAIR:** to the projected federal funding that has been put into this budget, based on the numbers you went through, is \$30 million less. Yes or no?

**Ms Burch:** No.

**Mr Whybrow:** The—

**THE CHAIR:** No? He just did it. Yes or no?

**Mr Whybrow:** I do not think I can—

**Ms Burch:** No, there is—

**Mr Whybrow:** answer that because it implies other things.

**Ms Burch:** We have provided you with the answer and you were choosing not to listen to the explanation of both Mr Whybrow and Mr Pepper.

**THE CHAIR:** What word will we use if it is not—

**DR BOURKE:** Mr Hanson, would you stop badgering the witnesses?

**THE CHAIR:** projected federal funding?

**Mr Whybrow:** The clear component in here, which I would recommend people look at, is pages 125 and 126 of BP3. That actually shows money that we are getting, so actual payments. If I look at those overall totals on page 126, the estimated outcome for this year is \$236.4 million. There is actually an increase going into this budget that we are talking about, so actual payments we are receiving in this year are projected in this budget to increase to \$253.9 million.

**THE CHAIR:** They are projected and no different than they were previously. They are projections. So what has been taken out is a projection and what has been put in is a projection.

**Mr Whybrow:** I suspect—

**THE CHAIR:** I am sorry?

**Ms Burch:** We have answered the question, Mr Hanson.

**THE CHAIR:** He said he suspects—

**Mr Whybrow:** I suspect that we could go on in this vein forever.

**Ms Burch:** Yes, we could stay here till lunch time.

**THE CHAIR:** We will if necessary.

**Ms Burch:** That is fine, but our answer will remain the same.

**DR BOURKE:** Chair, there are other questions on the committee to be asked.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Let me try and conclude. The money that has been reviewed, taken out, you call projected funding. The money that has been put in is projected funding. Correct? You just said that.

**Ms Burch:** We have responded to all your questions. I understand Mr Pepper took some questions on notice. Both Mr Pepper and Mr Whybrow will work to provide you with that answer.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** I have had my question. I think we are on to Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, the funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education scholarship program, which is on budget paper 3, page 159—can you tell us how this program will operate and how many students it will support?

**Ms Burch:** This is support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship programs?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** This is aligned to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We have got existing scholarships in place and this will go to supplement that with a focus on those students that have an interest in a career in health. As I understand it, that will be allocated as a \$20,000 scholarship and then a \$5,000 supportive scholarship. At the moment that is the way we are looking to work with this. It will be administered through the student aspirations program that is managed through the Indigenous section within the directorate.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Why is that needed, do you think?

**Ms Burch:** Scholarships across a number of areas are certainly most welcome. We are making a concerted effort to support our Indigenous students. I worked in the health workforce for many years. We are looking at the needs there. This just makes a clear distinction, and it is a quite targeted support for those young men and women that have an interest across health professions, whether it is allied health professions, nursing, medicine or any other health-related area. This is a good focus to have that.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Have you had a look before at how scholarships can assist students in their career path?

**Mr Whybrow:** If I can expand on that? This actually builds on the existing scholarship program which is supporting students who wish to pursue a career in education. The additional \$25,000 per year—those programs will be administered together—brings up the total level of funding to in the order of \$215,000 per year, and then the total number of students being supported to progress through year 11 and 12, of up to 11, and then the number of total scholarships that are being provided to university graduates—increasing that from three to four.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Fantastic. Thank you.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, could you tell us a little more about the aspirations program that you were referring to in the previous answer?

**Ms Burch:** I might ask Beth Mitchell to talk on the aspirations program. It is, again, a targeted program which is supporting our Indigenous young men and women to get the careers that they are aspiring to.

**Ms Mitchell:** We have 1,379 Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students currently in ACT public schools. We have an aspirations program, which is for students from year 5 to year 12. We have 137 students in the aspirations program at this point in

time. The aspirations program involves mentors, connections with universities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers or officers in the schools and from central office working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students about their future pathways.

Every student, not just students in the aspirations program but every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student, will have a careers interview from year 9 to year 12 to talk about pathways. These scholarships, and the new health scholarships, are initiatives that will allow more diverse pathways. With the health scholarships, we are also looking at a pathway through CIT and not directly through Australian universities, if that is the pathway that the student wishes to pursue. It provides a wider range of pathways with allied health services. Is that enough information or would you like anything else?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** No, that is good, thank you. While we are on BP3, page 211 talks about the Tuggeranong introductory English centre. Could you tell us a little more about that and what you hope to achieve?

**Ms Burch:** I am very pleased about that announcement. Certainly, introductory English is an important thing for us to do. There is currently a program at Dickson, as I understand it. This supports those students that have very limited English and it brings them into the mainstream school setting. I am very pleased that it sits at Wanniasa primary school. There will be some refurbishment work there. The process is that they come in for a particular program—it will be state-of-the-art language—and then they are integrated back into mainstream schools. We will also, with this refurbishment and the arrangement with Wanniasa school, have it available after hours for adult ed language. I might ask the officials to comment as well.

**Ms Wright:** Our introductory English centres provide really targeted support in language acquisition as opposed to literacy. This is one of the key aspects of providing specialist facilities and specialist programs. We identify the difference in language acquisition for people from backgrounds where they are speaking English as their second language. We have four primary introductory English centres, with the newest of those being the Wanniasa Hills site, the senior one at Dickson College and within the Dickson College one there is also a refugee program that operates there.

We provide a focus on professional learning for teachers to ensure that the quality of the pedagogy and practice in the introductory English centres is of the highest quality, with that focus on language acquisition in terms of how we broaden skills across both teaching staff and school leadership staff, to ensure that we meet the needs of those students.

We have had targeted professional learning to really focus on the needs of those students through a focus on language acquisition as opposed to strictly literacy. The premise of those programs is that students go in for intense work, usually for one to two terms. It can be extended but it is all based on student need. So it is a significant investment in focused, targeted learning and in implementing teaching strategies that really meet the needs of those students.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Moving directly to targeting English as the language rather than

literacy, is there a challenge there where you are trying to provide the language but then not explaining what it might mean, with the literacy missing?

**Mr Gniel:** I might start that answer from the broad perspective of the national education reform agreement. In some of my opening comments I talked about the focus on meeting student need as part of that new model of funding. That does include language proficiency in that area as well. It is well recognised that that is a particular area of need and that we need to make sure that we minimise any disadvantage from that. Language acquisition as opposed to literacy development is an important distinction. That can be for kids that are coming in from other countries but it can also be for some of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who have English as an additional language or dialect. So it is about making sure that those students have the base skills that they need to progress not only in their literacy but, as you would be aware, in any element of life around their English, particularly living in this country, as the base language. For their numeracy, for example, their mathematics, they still need to build those language acquisition skills at the time.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Whybrow, could we go back to budget paper 3 on page 126. The total education early childhood funding from the commonwealth is outlined there. The total funding this year in 2013-14 is \$253 million. Next year it is \$258 million and the following year it is \$268 million—a total of \$779 million. According to budget paper 3 from last year on the same details of commonwealth government grants, when you go to the total line for education and early childhood, recalling this year we are getting \$253 million—

**Mr Whybrow:** I am sorry, I do not have that reference.

**MR SMYTH:** I have got it; I will quote it. It is from the budget paper last year. In 2013-14 we are getting \$253 million. According to last year's budget paper, the estimated funding for education from the commonwealth for the 2013-14 year was \$241 million. The following year it is meant to be \$258 million in this year's budget, but last year's budget said the expectation was \$264 million. In the following year, according to this budget, we are getting \$268 million and last year it said we would get \$294 million. In each year we seem to be getting less as a total. Therefore is there not less funding estimated to be coming from the commonwealth to the ACT over the next three years for education?

**Ms Burch:** No. What we have seen over these budgets, and I think what has been explained to you, is that a number of NPs have ceased and overall there is growth, and a guaranteed growth in that. What has not been factored in, and Mr Gniel might want to talk about it, is the AGSRC. If you look at that, you would see a number of estimates of commonwealth funding certainly taking a major nosedive. With the sign-up to the national reform agreement, this line of questioning aside—I think we are going back to that long and tortuous response we gave you a few minutes ago—government funding, both commonwealth and ACT, in education continues to grow.

**THE CHAIR:** You said commonwealth and ACT funding continues to grow.

**Ms Burch:** In the broader sense, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Not compared to what was projected, though.

**Mr Gniel:** I think the minister is referring to page 126 and those total amounts going forward. I do not have those figures, Mr Smyth, in front of me about last year's papers. But for this year, if I just do the simple sums, there is a \$53 million increase from 2012-13 to 2016-17 over those years—a significant increase. What the minister is referring to around how the commonwealth sets the amounts funded to the states through those systems—and Mr Whybrow might correct me if I am straying into territory that he is more familiar with—in terms of how that is calculated, there had been a historical level of a higher percentage.

What the minister is referring to now is that that was volatile and into the forward years there were concerns that the volatility would mean quite a steep nosedive in that area. So these figures would have been changed anyway, whether or not there was Gonski, national education reform or whatever it might be.

What we see in the forward estimates this year, in this year's budget paper, is that increase, as I have said, of around \$53 million. If you extend that out across both of the funding bodies, you see \$190 million over the forward six years. In this budget paper, though, the estimated outcomes should be less volatile from the commonwealth because we have signed an agreement that does lock in the growth rate for education from the commonwealth.

Just to finish that off, those figures will still change, as Mr Whybrow has talked about, because they are reliant on enrolments and student need. That is the period that we are now moving into, which is a different funding mechanism. Again, you can correct me if I am wrong and if I am reading this incorrectly, but it is the reason why there is a change from SPP to the national education reform. It is not just a little tinkering around as to how this works; it is a fundamental shift in the way we fund students and a fundamental shift in the direction that the ACT has been heading, anyway, which is about consistency with that model, around everyone matters and meeting student need.

Within that amount we will see amounts being based on the enrolment figure, but also added to based on the needs of those individual students. That is a positive. It means that there is that \$53 million in the outyears which, from our understanding, is a much more solid number than we have probably previously had, but it will still be adjusted, as it has been adjusted this year, as Mr Whybrow has been through, depending on the parameters that the commonwealth set. We go straight off what the commonwealth have provided in their budget.

**THE CHAIR:** There seem to be three figures, broadly. One is the figure of what was projected based on federal figures which were provided, what is now happening under Gonski, and then there is the other figure, which is what would have happened if the government did not sign up to Gonski. And that is the figure we do not know, but you are saying it is significantly less. So when you actually look at what is happening now compared to what was projected, we are getting \$30 million less. But what you are saying is that if we had not signed up to Gonski, compared to what you think would have then happened, it would have been even worse than that \$30 million; it would have been beyond that.

**Ms Burch:** Again, you are making assumptions that we have accepted your argument that there is \$30 million less and that, by reference, the ACT is disadvantaged. That is not the case.

**THE CHAIR:** If you had not signed up to Gonski then what was the offer on the table other than Gonski and what was the difference between Gonski and the other option on the table? I assume you did that analysis and that when you signed up to Gonski you said, “What’s the comparison between what is on the table and if we don’t sign up?”

**Mr Whybrow:** With reference to that, I think they are the questions that Chief Minister’s has taken on notice. The education directorate was not the negotiating directorate in relation to the Gonski reforms. I believe that Mr Peffer, who was here earlier, has taken that question on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I am not sure that that is the exact question that was put on notice, but certainly if you could answer that, I suppose—

**Ms Burch:** We are very clear that we are not disadvantaged. We are nothing but in an area of advantage and asset.

**THE CHAIR:** If you could provide it to me—you say that you signed up to Gonski because it provides the figures in the budget paper. You are saying that is better than it would have ended up being. The problem is that we do not know what that would have been. When you look at the projections then they tell us what it was, but then you say there is this other mythical figure that we do not have access to. We have not seen that analysis. The question I have is: have you done that analysis or was there a figure provided to you so that you could say to the Chief Minister, “If you don’t sign up to Gonski this is what we get, so therefore Gonski is a good deal”? But we do not have this other figure; it is not visible.

**Ms Burch:** We are absolutely clear and comfortable that we have made the right decision. We will provide that information through Chief Minister’s. Certainly Mark Whybrow will be working with Chief Minister’s, because no-one knows the detail better than Mr Whybrow.

**Mr Gniel:** If I can follow on, our focus in the education directorate is how we work within the funding that we have in the budget paper, which, as I said, has that additional money represented there. Our role is about how we transition to that needs-based funding.

**THE CHAIR:** The point I am getting to is this. It is a difficult one for us because we have got the budget papers to compare it with. When I compare it with the budget papers—we have been through this pretty tortuously; I would agree with that—what I come to is a \$30 million delta.

**Ms Burch:** I am glad you agree.

**THE CHAIR:** For whatever reason. And then you are basically saying, “Well, it is better than the other option which is on the table.” I am saying: “What was that? I do

not have it.” Can you provide the analysis of what you think those NPs, SPPs and whatever else would have been?

**Ms Burch:** But again I will say that we are more comfortable that we are in a place of advantage.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. And it is my job to make sure that this is a good deal. We have a job to do here; we both have a job to do. I want to make sure that this is a good deal; I am not just going to take your word for it. That is my job.

**Mr Whybrow:** I think there is probably an important point in relation to education’s involvement in this—Steve can probably elaborate this much better than I can—about the reforms, the directions of the reforms and what they are actually doing for student outcomes being the involvement that education, particularly, has had in relation to a national agreement. That is the key component for us: does this push us in the right direction in line with our everyone matters strategy, in the past; teacher quality; and those key pillars of the reform which we have had engagement in?

**Mr Gniel:** That is right, and certainly the minister’s involvement through the standing council has been essential to that across the country. That education agenda has been set by ministers. That is what I have spoken to already this morning. We are very keen to share any of that work with the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure; they are very separate issues. One is the funding lines. Before we move on—

**Ms Burch:** And you would be aware of the heads of agreement. That is available online; we are happy to forward that link if you do not have it. That does enunciate just exactly where we will go and sets out an implementation plan.

**THE CHAIR:** I am not sure if WA have signed up. I do not think they have signed up yet, have they—or if they will? But my understanding is that there was a deal put down; then WA basically held out and the federal government went back saying, “Here’s another \$1 billion to sign up to the reforms.” Did we sign up too soon?

**Ms Burch:** I do not believe so. We looked at this very clearly. ACT, as you would be aware, is always a unique environment. We are an island—effectively an island city-state. You cannot compare the challenges, whether it is with NT, Far North Queensland or WA, and the requirements that they need in order to have supported it. It is chalk and cheese. If you look at some of those things, it is chalk and cheese.

**THE CHAIR:** The jurisdictions are certainly different, but I suppose the point I am making is that we were one of the first to sign up.

**Ms Burch:** New South Wales was the first.

**THE CHAIR:** WA held out and then I have seen this in—

**Ms Burch:** That good conservative state of New South Wales.



**THE CHAIR:** We have seen this in health funding as well. I recall that with the mental health reforms, the ACT was the first to sign up, and then other jurisdictions ended up negotiating better outcomes.

**Ms Burch:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** That is true.

**Ms Burch:** No. You are assuming that a dollar equates as an absolute to a better outcome. This is about supporting students, the schools community and school leaderships in systems in what they need. I do not think you can compare 80-odd government schools, and I think we have got about 130 schools across our system, under 70,000 students, to the other systems. It is about what is relevant and right for us.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure, but WA got an extra \$1 billion on the table. The other aspect to that is that I know the Premier of New South Wales has raised some concerns about that, because he signed a deal based on what he thought was the final package and then he saw other jurisdictions being offered an extra \$1 billion. He is starting to raise concerns around whether this deal is still valid now. Have you had any negotiations or discussions with New South Wales to that effect?

**Ms Burch:** No, I have not had any discussions with Mr O'Farrell or Adrian Piccoli about this. As you would expect, I do sit around a ministerial table on education, but Adrian Piccoli was pretty much the champion of Gonski last time I spoke to him. Mr Gniel or Mr Peffer might have some additional comments.

**THE CHAIR:** This is not about who is a Liberal state and who is a Labor state, as you have seen with the NDIS and other things. What might be a good deal for New South Wales is not necessarily good for the ACT. This is not a Liberal-Labor issue. This is about saying that what is good for the ACT might not be good somewhere else.

**Mr Gniel:** I might just start and then hand over to Dave. In terms of the flexibility, it is written into the national education reform agreement that the reforms provide flexibility in the pace and pathways for implementation to take into account the local context, available resources and speed of learning from evidence and evaluation. So there is clearly recognition from the federal government that each state is different. The minister has talked about the fact that it is very difficult to compare our needs with those of Western Australia, the Northern Territory or any of the other states. What I think the model has that is a positive, though, is that those loadings do pick up on some of that individual circumstance that I spoke about before. Obviously, location for us is not a big one, but you can imagine that for the Northern Territory, where they have schools out in the middle of the bush, and they have to accommodate teachers and all those things, there is a very different set of challenges. I will hand over to Dave.

**THE CHAIR:** I get all that, and I appreciate it. I just could not understand how an extra \$1 billion gets put on the table because one of the jurisdictions is holding out. That is my point.

**Mr Peffer:** The deal that was offered to Western Australia is exactly the same deal that was offered to the ACT, New South Wales and all other jurisdictions. Within the funding model itself, there is a thing called a state relativity. That was largely based on wage rates and what had to be spent on students in schools. For a jurisdiction like Western Australia, it is well above 100 per cent. That reflects remote influences and the costs of having, I suppose, classrooms with three students to a teacher. Western Australia is 111 per cent. The ACT is 100 per cent, as is New South Wales. We could choose to adopt the same deal that Western Australia has been offered. It would make no difference to our funding.

What the deal means for Western Australia is that both the state and commonwealth governments have to put in additional sums of money. This is not \$1 billion extra on offer from the commonwealth. It means the state government itself needs to really put in and find hundreds of millions of dollars more. As I said before, it is something we could elect to do ourselves, but we are bang on 100 per cent, as is New South Wales, so it would have no practical implications for the funding levels here.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, the significant new funding in the budget for CCCares, Canberra College cares, budget paper 3, page 211—what are the plans for this work, and when will it be complete? And what benefits will the new facility bring to the students of the college?

**Ms Burch:** CCCares has been operating out of office space at the Stirling site out at Hedley Beare for some time now. I think it has been in place for a number of years. This investment will see a new structure being built on Canberra College campus at Phillip. Having a brand-new, state-of-the-art facility that has a fantastic learning space and childcare arrangements in place is certainly an improvement, and its current arrangements will be very worth while. Also, because these are Canberra College students, the connection on campus to other students within Canberra College would, over time, offer them opportunities across that broader campus, offering some programs as well. The relevant official will talk to it, but it is my understanding that we are calling for tenders. The designs are done and have been worked on in partnership with the school. The tender is to go out towards the end of this year, and we are looking to be ready for—

**Mr Whybrow:** We will get Mr Bray. He has got all of those details. He has the wiring diagrams and you name it in his head.

**Mr Bray:** Just replying to those specific questions, what is called the final sketch plan phase has been completed and signed off. We now move into what is called the detailed design documentation phase. That will be completed about September-October. We will be calling tenders for the builders soon after. At this stage we would like the builder employed before Christmas so that they can come back from the Christmas break which is traditional in the building industry and commence work on the site in mid-January next year. The works will be completed by no later than the end of 2014. We would like to complete it earlier than that if we can—it will depend on when we start to speak to the building industry—because we would like to relocate the students and staff prior to the end of 2014 so that they settle in and are quite comfortable with the new environment before they start the new school year in 2015.

**Ms Burch:** I will ask Mr Kyburz to talk about school network leaders, about the benefits from that deeper connection into the college campus.

**Mr Kyburz:** Just to give you a bit of a story around CCCares, it started in 2005 with 20 students. The number of enrolments has increased steadily to this year, when there are about 160 students. Essentially, it seeks to provide improved access to people who have found it really difficult to engage with schooling and to engage with a whole range of services to support them, whether they be young pregnant mothers, mothers with children or carers. What has happened over the time period is that about 15 students per year actually graduate with a year 12 certificate—students who the school had previously found did not have access to or would not engage with schooling.

The other aspect of the facilities at CCCares is that they have got a huge vocational component. Just to give you some figures with some of those outcomes, there are about 43 students enrolled in hospitality units; 27 in business units; 12 in tourism services certificate III; five in business administration certificate III; 20 in senior first aid; 15 in white card training; 21 in a hairdressing certificate; and 14 in beauty services certificate II. The school is not only delivering the service to those students who perhaps would not have access to or did not want to engage with schooling; it is delivering year 12 certificate outcomes and also vocational outcomes for those students.

**DR BOURKE:** I know that you track employment outcomes for students, as I recollect. Do you have any particular employment outcomes for the CCCares graduates?

**Mr Kyburz:** Employment outcomes? I can take that one on notice and get back to you, but I have got a lot of stories about students who have come to—

**DR BOURKE:** Tell us a story.

**Mr Kyburz:** I have got a couple of good stories here. I will tell you one about—

**Ms Burch:** Before you go on to that, can I say that it has won national recognition for the benefits. It does change lives, and it needs to continue to be supported.

**Mr Kyburz:** The story relates to a student who was a refugee; she came from Africa. Going back to her time in Africa, she had to move from where she was. She was split up from her family. She ended up in a refugee camp. To get to that refugee camp, she went through a whole range of survival issues, including crossing a crocodile-infested river and surviving rebels who went through a whole range of experiences with the group that she was with. Survival was her prime goal.

She ended up at CCCares. She has got two children. When she arrived at the school, she had difficulty with her English proficiency. She had difficulty just doing the day-to-day services of going to a bank, doing her shopping and relating to the environment in which she lives. Last year she graduated from that program. Her two children were also prepared for preschool, to the point where they wear shoes and socks. That sounds really basic, but from the story around her background that was a significant

improvement. The college had worked on the students' language proficiency. I do not have details about employment, but she has got a year 12 certificate, her students are school ready, and she now is fitting in with society. She feels that the school not only prepared her really well but also prepared her children.

**DR BOURKE:** So part of what CCCares is about is not just preparing these young men and women for education or employment but their children?

**Mr Kyburz:** That is right.

**DR BOURKE:** So there is a childcare component in CCCares?

**Mr Kyburz:** There is. Another story is of a young lady who has three young children, and they are caring for those children while she studies at the school. And they are preparing her children also for their future in schooling. She is also really grateful for the services and facilities that the college has and how they not only engage with her but how they have connected to the world of work and the world of schooling but also her children. It is sort of a dual service not only for the individual but also for the children that they have as well.

**Ms Burch:** And there is early education there but there is also wrap-around with the maternal health nurse and other support services as well, because a number of these predominantly young mums—but occasionally a young dad will take advantage of it as well—lack good life skills and parenting skills. And so it is about making that difference. Education will make a difference. But it is also that social change around being a responsible adult, good parenting skills, and that will change and benefit themselves and their children, the next generation.

**DR BOURKE:** And as I recollect, one of the budget announcements was for a mobile dental van in Health and CCCares was going to be a benefactor of that?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**DR BOURKE:** They are the kinds of additional services. What sorts of other additional services are provided?

**Mr Kyburz:** As well as the dental and the childcare?

**DR BOURKE:** Childcare.

**Mr Kyburz:** Medical as well and certainly financial services to those young mothers and pregnant persons to ensure that they really are able to function as anybody else would in our society. There is financial literacy, the medical support. There is a nurse that also attends the school and they have the opportunity to have that ability to ask questions around how they function and how they look after themselves. Some of the services are also around how they look after their children, how the children get themselves school ready. So there are a whole range of wrap-around services to actually meet the needs that they currently have.

But also bear in mind that many of them come to CCCares without having been in a

school for several years. So it is about that social adjustment as well as, I suppose, that mental adjustment to build their self-confidence and build their self-esteem.

**Ms Burch:** When I visited there about a month or so ago, I was very impressed by the collegiate atmosphere amongst the young women. And yes, there is childcare, and it is certainly supervised, but there is certainly a pitch-in. If a young mum needed to go off, whether it was to do some VET training or to do some study, other mums would step in and make sure that the little one had a familiar face and everything was comfortable.

**DR BOURKE:** And what has been the response of the students to the announcement about the new facility?

**Ms Burch:** In short, “Yee-ha!” They are very impressed about it. They can see the benefit for themselves, but I think they are quite excited about being on campus in Woden. It is connected through the bus station and through the town centre there. And to be part of a broader peer group campus is really quite exciting for them.

**DR BOURKE:** So that will provide them with more opportunities?

**Ms Burch:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr Kyburz:** Especially accessing a broader range of curriculum offerings. They have still got access to them now, but it will overcome some of the distance issues of being located in the Stirling area and they will be located at the Woden campus. So it will not only help those students access the broader range but it may also offer some of the other aspects around some of the vocational areas of school-based new apprenticeships and so on to try to link them into, as your previous question was about, a pathway to employment or further training beyond school.

**Ms Stewart:** Dr Bourke, if I may answer your question about post-school outcomes for those students?

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**Ms Stewart:** We run a survey that asks all our school leavers what they are doing six months after they have left school, and those students from CCC are included in that survey. However, we do not analyse or disaggregate the data for those particular students. We provide the data for each school and for each college, but not for subgroups of students within those schools. So the students are included but not separately analysed or reported on.

**DR BOURKE:** Is that for privacy reasons?

**Ms Stewart:** Yes, it is.

**DR BOURKE:** Because a small group—

**Ms Stewart:** It is quite a small group of students.

**DR BOURKE:** They would be identifiable.

**Mr Kyburz:** That is right.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, budget paper 4, page 303, shows a line there for works in progress for rectification and upgrade of Taylor Primary School. Can you bring us up to date with the works going on there?

**Ms Burch:** It is my understanding that it is progressing really well and we are still on track for an opening in readiness for next academic year, next year. But the detail, yes.

**Mr Bray:** Yes, the project is going really well. We will be completing the work before the end of this calendar year so that the school will be able to shift back in during the Christmas break and be ready to start the new school year for 2014. The school probably will be ready to occupy before then, but we have already spoken to the principal—and he has liaised with the school board and the community—and the feeling is that they would rather not shift back in and get back in a few weeks before the end of the 2013 year. So the feeling is that they would rather plan to move back in and restart the school at the beginning of 2014.

All of the asbestos was removed earlier in the year. That was a very successful process, and we worked closely with a number of ACT agencies in coordinating both notices to the public about what we were doing and making the process efficient in terms of getting progressive approvals by various agencies to allow the works to keep moving quickly. So all of the asbestos has been removed from the site and the majority of the structural work has already been completed. We are really focusing more on what we call the finishing stages of the work.

**Ms Burch:** One of the additional benefits of this rework is that we have effectively doubled or more than doubled the size of the early education centre there.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That upgrade part of it?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**Mr Bray:** Yes, we have actually upgraded and expanded. Previously the preschool and the childcare service were in a building referred to as the preschool building. We have now moved what was the preschool component into the main building, leaving the building previously called the preschool building now to be expanded to become purely a childcare facility, increasing the number of places to 65 childcare places from, I think it was, about 30 before that.

**Mr Whybrow:** Just touching on that, it is probably important to note that this was an opportunity, when you are doing a major refurbishment or rectification of the site, not to simply replace what was there with the same. There was significant consultation and there was great leadership shown at the school. Also, the school board and the head of the P&C engaged with the community, also the childcare provider on that site, to develop a new plan that better meets the needs of that school going forward.

**Ms Burch:** Just on that, I might ask Steve Gwilliam to make some comments. As network leader, you would have been in the midst of that discussion with teachers and

family.

**Mr Gwilliam:** Indeed, yes. I have engaged with the school. I can advise that, on school capital works, the school community through the school leadership—Simon Smith is principal there—have been involved in numerous conversations. They have regular field updates in which they do visits to site as well. And my understanding is that the school community is really looking forward to a return to their former school setting. It provides a wonderful new opportunity.

I will give you an example of some of the conversation around the pre-planning, I suppose, in relocating back to a former site. Many of the elements of school culture can be determined. And not very often do we get a chance in education to be able to determine what we might build in terms of a school culture from scratch unless we start at a new school. The school has engaged in planning and preparing for what they want in terms of the community aspirations for the Taylor site, and part of that has been accommodation and conversations about school capital works in some of the redesign for the facility area.

In a recent site visit that I conducted about three weeks ago, everything seemed to appear on track. The school principal and the school leadership team had the opportunity to be on site and to witness the advanced progress of the facility. And in the ensuing conversation after we came back, the principal at the school has engaged with families further about plans for the relocation in preparation for next year. So all things going well—and the hope is that it remains relatively dry, in my understanding, in the construction arena—we hope to see that school community relocated back to the original site.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** And with the redesign, will we still see that iconic feature of Taylor primary, the—

**Ms Burch:** The externals?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** The externals, I think, remain fundamentally the same, but it is a new inner completely.

**Mr Bray:** By “externally” you mean the building? We have obviously removed the asbestos material and we have replaced it with an alternative material. The material will be painted. It has got not a single colour, it has a combination of colours. What was distinctive in the past was what we called the parapet walls. The external walls go above the roof line and you do not actually see the roofline. We have actually removed those, because we have found over time that they can cause leakage of water from the gutters behind the parapet walls. So we have actually removed the majority of the parapet walls.

In doing that, we have also extended the roof sheeting out to create eaves. The designers have incorporated that into shading the building to reduce heat load on the building. In many ways, this is a great example of how we are going to take what was probably a 25, 30-year-old building and turn it into a 21st century facility

incorporating all the environmental objectives that we try to do these days in new buildings with energy saving and water consumption.

The building, whilst its external shape will not change, internally has changed. We have dismantled the stage in the hall, and that has opened up the hall now to be used for many more activities like gymnasium activities, sporting facilities, whereas before it was a traditional assembly hall and a stage production. And the reality is that today's schools do not have that many stage productions. They are used more for doing exercise and activities. We have a mobile stage that can be set up but when it is not needed for that purpose, they can pack it away.

The colours will be much brighter on the outside. We have put more windows in so that there is a lot more natural light coming into the building, and we have taken away some of the external walls that tended to sort of crowd the building. When the staff go back in, they will actually look, internally, at the quite outstanding view going south to Tuggeranong. That is now quite a big feature if you stand inside. It is a magnificent view looking down the valley from inside the building, whereas before it was basically covered.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Just finally, how have you been able to support the students from Taylor during this process?

**Ms Burch:** They have been managed through Namadgi school. We had the advantage of having Namadgi as a relatively new school with limited numbers because it was always planned to grow that school year by year as the enrolments came in. They have been there for the last 12 months. I think they have taken over a little patch of Namadgi school. We have provided some play area space for them. Perhaps Mr Gwilliam can talk about that.

**Mr Gwilliam:** Certainly. The relocation required that Taylor school entirely relocate to the Namadgi school site. The facilities that are currently occupied by the school are generally the spaces that we have been able to do some very minor refurbishment on and allow the young school to sit. The school playgrounds, I believe, have also recently this year been upgraded to accommodate the additional students on the school site. That has been most welcome.

The co-principalship arrangement of Namadgi and Taylor primary has really worked well. They have worked closely together during their time at the school to resolve differences of the school cultures and also to engender, I guess, a sense that there is a collaborative working environment. That has worked extremely well. My understanding is that there is still a transportation arrangement for students that live in the proximity of the Taylor school site. Every day that is offered to those students and families to facilitate their movement from the Taylor school site down to Namadgi and return at the end of every day.

**Ms Burch:** I actually asked the question, because I live down that way and noticed the school speed limit still applied to Taylor, and it was to accommodate that transport from Taylor school over to Namadgi.



**Mr Gwilliam:** Yes, children do catch the bus that is put on back and forth from the school every day, hence the reason for the school flags and the speed zones still around that site.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Excellent. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, the Labor Party promised \$1 million over four years for primary school libraries. Where would one find that in this year's budget?

**Ms Burch:** We remain committed to our election commitments and understand the need to deliver over the four-year term on exactly what we committed to the community.

**MR SMYTH:** It was meant to commence in 2013-14, so I would like to know where the official funding is.

**Ms Garrison:** Regarding the budget election commitment around primary school libraries, we have had a successful rollout for our school libraries of the Oliver system. That has been really well received over the last two years. The commitment to provide support for primary school libraries will be back into that Oliver system where we will be helping primary school libraries to access e-books, which is much easier. Our young people are really more engaged in accessing some different ways of reading and e-books will complement the books that are already in our libraries. The Oliver system, which supports libraries in borrowing and students accessing those books, will help with the e-books and the work that we will be doing around getting a new agreement so that we, not individual schools, can actually purchase the books. We are going to be doing something that crosses over the whole system for access to e-books.

**MR SMYTH:** So there is no additional money in this year's budget?

**Ms Garrison:** The additional money is through the ability to provide access to a broader range of e-books to all of our primary school libraries.

**MR SMYTH:** So from the \$1 million commitment how much new money is there in this year's budget for primary school libraries?

**Ms Burch:** The other thing that is it is worth noting is that not every bit of investment is identified as a new budget line. We have got a global budget of close on \$900 million, or over \$500 million, within our government system. So some of this work will progress.

**MS SMYTH:** So the money is not there. The additional \$1 million that was to commence in 2013-14 and be spread out over four years—where is it in this year's budget?

**Ms Garrison:** I think we said earlier that we will be investing the election commitments in the work that we are already doing and are planning to do. Some of the moneys that we have identified for investment around information knowledge

services will incorporate the rollout of specific programs to primary school libraries.

**THE CHAIR:** Going to Mr Smyth's point: if it was already planned then it is not new money as per the election commitment. The point is very specific. Money has been promised which would be additional to what was already programmed or planned. Where is this additional money?

**Ms Garrison:** I will let Mark answer.

**Mr Whybrow:** If I turn you to BP3, page 210, the capital initiatives—my understanding is there is a component. The new money we are talking about—Ms Garrison has talked about ICT work—there is an additional \$10.1 million provided through the capital initiative information and communication technology, sustaining smart schools. That provides for the replacement of IT equipment in schools and modernising parts of our infrastructure. I believe that links to work in school library environments as well.

**MR SMYTH:** As was stated, that work is already underway. It was underway before the election.

**Ms Garrison:** No, I am sorry, I meant the Oliver system was. The access of further resources around e-books is not part of the Oliver system. The Oliver system was in before.

**MR SMYTH:** Of the ICT money, over the four years, how much is being devoted to primary school libraries?

**Ms Burch:** We can take that on notice if we do not have it readily to hand.

**MR SMYTH:** You do not have it?

**Mr Huxley:** Just to expand on the points made already by Ms Garrison on the actual components of libraries in terms of the e-book distribution, it is actually an additional module to our current older systems, so that would be a new capability that we need to invest in to enable the e-book distribution. It also means that e-book readers will be available to our primary schools over the coming financial year, which is also new money available to schools. Those e-book readers, combined with the access to the e-book module, we believe will be meeting that new money commitment.

**MR SMYTH:** And you will provide a breakdown of the money?

**Ms Burch:** We will provide what we can about how that money is rolling out. If you also look at budget paper 3, on page 158 there are a number of agency-funded initiatives. Again, as I say, we are committed to our commitments, but every agency, as it is right to do, will go through its services and programs and offerings that it has and re-profile as necessary and prioritise where necessary.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. So you have pointed us to page—

**Ms Burch:** I pointed you to page 158, for example. If you are talking about election

commitments, canteen grants are in there.

**MR SMYTH:** So I will find libraries on 158, will I?

**Ms Burch:** No. But I am making the point, Mr Smyth, that every agency is re-profiling and finding those for some level of implementation this year. We have got a commitment, and we will deliver over the four years.

**THE CHAIR:** Just to pick up on that, if I may, Mr Smyth. You said “reprioritising”. So that means that, in order to incorporate this new promise, they are going to be cutting elsewhere? That is what reprioritising normally means.

**Ms Burch:** I think we have had this discussion across other areas; certainly I have had it with CSD. Every agency will have programs that were at the right time and at the right place but, as we move forward, whether it is a decade past or years past, it is about how you provide the most contemporary, best use of your resources. That is what I mean by that.

**THE CHAIR:** Putting that into plain English, they have got to find cuts to fund this.

**Ms Burch:** No, it is around prioritising what is the best use of your dollar. I use the example for CSD of youth connections. Whilst not ETD, it is a very good example of a program that was in place for over a decade and it was right to change.

**THE CHAIR:** So in order to fund this \$1 million in new spending for libraries, what reprioritisation or funding cuts or cuts elsewhere is going to occur?

**Ms Burch:** We are working through that. We have got four years of government and we will work through that, Mr Hanson.

**Mr Whybrow:** I think it is also important—

**THE CHAIR:** That was not mentioned in the election commitment, was it—that this is going to be resulting in \$1 million worth of cuts somewhere else? Why was that not mentioned?

**Mr Whybrow:** If I can refer you back to the additional \$10.1 million in ICT. In the additional money in this budget, there is a component of this that we are talking about as being ICT. This is the upgrade of our systems. Ms Garrisson has talked about an element of a business-as-usual component—a funding source for upgrade of our ICT. There is an additional \$10.1 million provided by that budget initiative that I have pointed out to you in relation to ICT.

**MR SMYTH:** Can I just go back to what you are saying. We are saying the additional money is for e-books and e-book readers?

**Ms Garrisson:** One aspect of what we are hearing from schools and teachers and principals around libraries is the changing need within the library sector. One of the elements that they have identified to us is that access to e-books will support and help their work—and tablets. It is changing the medium. So that is the sort of response that

we believe we need to have and be agile around the changing needs to do that with our libraries. That is a component of our ICT funding that we have and it will be identified around the primary school libraries.

**MR SMYTH:** I appreciate the value of e-books and the answers that you have given. The problem for you, minister, is that your election promise was the form of grants to schools and conditional on the retention of a teacher librarian. So where is the money for the teacher librarians and the grant funding in this budget? If you go to the initiatives, and I refer you now to your page 158, there is nothing there in the initiatives for teacher librarians.

**Mr Gniel:** Mr Smyth, if I can talk about the broader changes to the way in which the directorate is funded through the commonwealth and also how—

**MR SMYTH:** That is kind, and perhaps we will get to that. I want to know where the money is for the teacher librarians.

**Mr Gniel:** I am going to get to that. I just wanted to paint the picture of how we get there. There is a fundamental shift in the way in which we are looking at funding in this budget and then also the commonwealth budget. Where we were seeing program-specific payments through national partnerships that we have been through in the previous conversation, and I not seeking to return there—

**Ms Burch:** Please don't go there again.

**MR SMYTH:** I am happy to go back. I still have a few questions.

**Mr Gniel:** But I do want to talk about the national partnership changes. We are seeing those switching off at different times, and that is to do with where work at the national level is happening and also in Canberra and other jurisdictions. My point to your question around where is the money for teacher librarians—that money for teacher librarians is within the funding increases to schools and their choice in employing a teacher librarian in consultation and working with their community if they see that is the best way to meet student needs and to achieve those student outcomes, which we have agreed across the nation through the national education reform agreement.

I guess, Mr Smyth, my point about bringing us back to that element was that we signed up to Gonski through a national education reform agreement. After election commitments were made, we are now charged with how we build them into the budget and how the government are meeting those commitments. But it is also about the fact that if things change, the government and more broadly, I would expect, the ACT taxpayer want to see the best use of their funds. That is down to us about how we do that. Through the national partnerships we were seeing program-specific money: you have to spend this money on X. What we are now seeing is an empowered school leadership which says, "Principals, you know your schools best. You know your kids. You know the needs that those kids have."

**MR SMYTH:** All fine.

**Mr Gniel:** All of that funding goes to the school. They make the decision about

whether a teacher librarian is the appropriate source of that information.

**MR SMYTH:** This is a political question—and I appreciate your endeavours to explain the minister’s position—but, minister, to you: where is the money for the teacher librarians? How many teacher librarians will be employed each year as an outcome of this funding commitment?

**Ms Burch:** I think, as Mr Gniel has said, that we have moved very clearly, through the national reforms, to school empowerment. These are where local decisions around what is best for the school community are made by the school leadership on site. If they choose that their school has a particular mix of teaching, whether it is junior teachers or more experienced teachers, whether the focus is on school librarians or other opportunities for their school, they are the right ones to make those decisions.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, where is it on page 158 or 160, the new initiative?

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, I think Mr Smyth has actually mischaracterised the election commitment. That specifically mentioned e-books. It specifically mentioned IT support. It talked about placing those through the primary school library system.

**THE CHAIR:** We will take that as a statement, thanks, Dr Bourke. The time has expired. We are due for a break, which you have all earned this morning.

**Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 1.31 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** We are moving on to output 1.3, public secondary college education and then to disability education.

**Ms Burch:** I did not realise we had done any outputs until now.

**THE CHAIR:** If you wait for me to finish, I do note that we did not go through a number of matters relating to public high school education. So if you are agreeable, minister, if members want to go through previous outputs in the time available, I think that would be appropriate.

**Ms Burch:** That sounds like a plan.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, I have a question on Gonski funding. That is my joke for this afternoon, Mr Whybrow! Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Delivery is everything, chair. Minister, now that the Teacher Quality Institute has been bedded down, what is its current work program?

**Ms Burch:** With the Teacher Quality Institute, we will hear from Anne Ellis, but I will say at the start that, for a new organisation, they have done extraordinarily well in bedding down their own internal structures and governance and in starting up a new institution. Certainly from a statutory point of view they did the teacher registration extraordinarily well, not just for government but across the sectors as well. I might ask Anne to talk about what she has been doing and what she will be doing next.

**Ms Ellis:** A couple of key priorities that we are focusing on now are working with employers and universities around teacher education accreditation. We have a key role in supporting and encouraging professional learning of teachers. A key focus of our work with this is working across all sectors to ensure that the professional focus, practice-led professional learning, is the priority.

A key enabler of our work is in data collection. I have just come from a national reference group about the national teacher workforce dataset collection. You will be pleased to know that the ACT is going to be a case study because of the work that TQI has been doing in terms of cross-sectoral data collection, which is enabling employers in the three sectors—Catholic, independent and public schools—to be aware of teacher workforce data needs and a whole range of not only regulatory but professional learning and engagement functions.

Part of our work now is ensuring that the regulatory responsibilities we have continue to be implemented so that it is a professional focus. It is encouraging ongoing teacher quality, and we are looking at a very strong partnership engagement with all of our schools.

**DR BOURKE:** Teachers are now registering; presumably there is a registration fee. At what level is that?

**Ms Ellis:** There is a \$100 tax-deductible registration fee. That is in parity with New South Wales. As the minister said, this year we had the first renewal of our registration where all teachers paid for their registration renewal. It has gone extremely smoothly. We have had about 18 people who wanted to talk to us about why they should be paying a registration fee, which, out of over 7,000 teachers, is pretty good.

**DR BOURKE:** Indeed it is. Minister, have any stakeholders commented about the registration fee, such as the ANU?

**Ms Burch:** About the fee, no. Everyone, I think, accepts a fair fee for a professional registration. I am a nurse by background and we have been paying a registration fee for—I will not admit to how many decades. But that has been in place. What I have heard back across the government schools and, I think encouragingly, the Catholics and the independents, is the work that the TQI did to make sure that everyone got that information, the partnership approach about going into this and the information exchange from TQI updating the principals about their staff who appeared to be registered or those in a pending pattern, given funds clearance. That worked exceptionally well, and I think every teacher was registered. There was no need for any teacher to be taken off the classroom floor. I think that is a telling success regarding the collaboration that they have.

Recently I attended a cross-sector principal forum. There was an opportunity for principals to put forward the work of the TQI. Again there was very positive feedback across the sectors, which I think is really important for a jurisdiction of our size.

**DR BOURKE:** How will the \$26 million that has been allocated for the University of Canberra for teacher quality interact with the system? It looks like a great opportunity

and investment.

**Ms Burch:** It is a great opportunity for quality teaching and learning. That will be an agreement between the commonwealth and the University of Canberra. As that is finalised, that is when we will go in and have that conversation about those connections. Ms Ellis made the point that there is the statutory function of the TQI and it is also around teacher quality and standards. With those various institutions, programs or offerings within this jurisdiction, it is about how we get those best placed to do the best piece of work together. The TQI will always have a role in that direction and in the accreditation of standards of teacher professional development.

**DR BOURKE:** Speaking about teacher education, Ms Ellis mentioned working with universities to include extra aspects within teacher education. Perhaps I could hear some more about that.

**Ms Ellis:** A key part of our work is not only in the teacher education accreditation, which is looking at the formal approval process of teacher education courses; a particular interest in the new work around school improvement plans is about the ongoing quality assurance. We are involved heavily in data collection about things to do with the universities, elements to do with quality practicum, how the professional standards go across the whole career progression from a teacher starting their professional studies in the university to going on as an experienced teacher.

Part of our liaison is not only with the University of Canberra but with the Canberra campus of the Australian Catholic University. Again you will be pleased to note that in some of our other work we have been leading the nation as well, in the use of the same reporting format on professional standards by both our Australian Catholic University and the University of Canberra. We are in the unique situation at the moment where all the ACT schools, whether they have a pre-service teacher from either of those universities, have the same reporting framework and student support framework.

The ACT has been able to show not only in a cross-sectoral engagement between the three sectors of schooling but a cross-sectoral engagement between regulator, employer and the universities, that we can really focus on quality matters. For our role, in terms of building the professional standing of ACT teachers, all elements to do with professional learning, including whatever happens with the University of Canberra, are a key link and partnership for us, because we are about raising the profile of teachers and looking at a profession. That extends beyond the role of the employer who looks at a teacher as an employee; we are able to look across all sectors and look at a teacher as a member of an ongoing profession, and a very important profession.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, could I bring you to page 294 in budget paper 4, and the accountability indicators for public school education. I notice that those indicators will be changing, but in the ones shown in the first several of the indicators, they are well above the targets for 2012-13. Can you tell us how that was achieved and give us some comparisons to other jurisdictions?

**Ms Burch:** Before I go to Ms Stewart, who is the absolute guru on these types of things, it is well known that ACT outperforms most other jurisdictions and we rank

across international standards as well, outside other jurisdictions. We do have a fantastic system here and it goes to the work that happens across the directorate and the fabulous support we offer to our teachers. Ms Stewart can go to the indicators.

**Ms Stewart:** I should point out, Mr Gentleman, that we are retaining the indicators. We have moved them to strategic indicators because we believe that they are more outcome focused and indicative of the outcomes that are being achieved for our students.

As Minister Burch said, we do perform very highly. We are the top-ranked jurisdiction in the NAPLAN assessments—equal top with New South Wales and Victoria, which is a great achievement. We have had some recent international testing come out at the end of last year that showed by international standards we rank very highly. In fact if the ACT were a country, in a range of international assessments, we would be ranked fifth in the world as a country. So we performed very well. On those international assessments, we were actually the top-ranked jurisdiction in a number of areas alone across Australia. So the performance was very good in that respect as well.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Excellent. While we are on public school education, could you tell me what you have got proposed for the new Coombs primary school?

**Ms Burch:** We are finalising the design for that work. We anticipate that, in readiness for that growing area, our expectation is that this will be ready by 2016 to accommodate the growth in that area. We have invested in additional capacity at Duffy school, to pick up the early growth in that Weston Creek and Molonglo area. Mr Bray will have some more information on that.

**Mr Bray:** We have just recommenced the design phase for the Coombs primary school project. We are now completing what is called final sketch plans, which will take about another two to three months to complete, and then we move into detailed design documentation, with the focus on calling tenders early next year. As the minister indicated, our target for completion is to have the school ready for occupation for the start of 2016.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, if we go to page 158 of budget paper 3, the investing in our teachers initiative, you have promised \$1 million each year for four years, but for reasons unknown you have only got \$500,000 in the first year. Why is that?

**Ms Burch:** It is a half-year effect.

**MR SMYTH:** Why would you have a half-year effect?

**Ms Burch:** It is recognising that this budget will be completed in this year and it is around getting that work done and ready for academic start next year.

**MR SMYTH:** You have had six months to get ready for the half-year effect?

**Ms Burch:** We have given you an answer, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** All I am asking for—



**Ms Burch:** You can choose not to like it but we have given you the answer.

**MR SMYTH:** Why didn't you honour your election commitment? Why didn't you have a half-year effect in your election commitment?

**Ms Burch:** We have got four years to deliver on our election commitments. I think this is an extremely good crack at it and I think a half-year effect is fair and reasonable.

**MR SMYTH:** The issue of disability in schools: where are we up to with support for students with a disability in both government and non-government schools?

**Ms Burch:** What is the question?

**MR SMYTH:** What additional funding is there in the budget for kids with disability in schools?

**Mr Whybrow:** On that page that you are talking about, within the government sector there is \$1.25 million in 2013-14, which contributes to funding provided by the ACT government in meeting its new arrangements under the Gonski funding. If I go through that funding, as Mr Gniel identified earlier, that is a key component of targeted funding around student need. Also, if you have a look through supporting non-government schools, of that \$2.7 million that is identified in 2013-14 and indexed in the outyears, approximately \$2 million of that is to be added to the existing SCAN arrangement, so that funding takes place from 1 July and will be provided to the non-government schools.

**MR SMYTH:** So you have actually got a full-year effect for that initiative?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**MR SMYTH:** That is good.

**Mr Whybrow:** And that is the two places where there is additional funding provided in relation to students with disabilities.

**MR SMYTH:** Why, in the support for students with disabilities, is there only funding for 2013-14?

**Ms Burch:** Can you answer that, Mark?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes, certainly. This relates to the overall contribution to Gonski funding. While there is growth, and you would have seen the initiative above, there is extra money provided by the ACT government that goes into the school resource standard. The ACT's contribution meets the school resource standard but also goes to targeted elements of funding, one of which is students with disabilities.

**MR SMYTH:** But again, why only one year?

**Mr Gniel:** If I can pick up from there, in relation to the work around the new funding model from the commonwealth, you would be aware that the Prime Minister extended the more support for students with a disability national partnership until the end of the 2014 school year, in line with when the new arrangements for funding for the loading for students with a disability will be settled.

In the national education reform agreement, there is further work happening at the moment, which will continue for the next 18 months, to collect nationally consistent data, which is the basis on which that loading will happen. At the moment, it is differing in every jurisdiction in terms of which students are funded under what definition. The work at the national level so that we have that needs-based funding that is consistent across the country needs to start with a consistent approach to the information we collect about those students.

Once that is in place, we will be moving to the needs-based loading that is talked about in both the commonwealth funding and also our moving towards that more consistent model. But I would say, and I think I mentioned this before, that our own methodology of delivering to the need for students with a disability is far more specific at the moment in the ACT than the commonwealth's model. The half-year effect of ours is to move into that new funding system. So it goes back to what I talked about before around—

**MR SMYTH:** So the support for students with disabilities is a half-year—

**Mr Gniel:** The NP or the ACT government model?

**MR SMYTH:** Both.

**Mr Gniel:** The initiative on page 158, support for students with disabilities, is for that full year.

**MR SMYTH:** That is a full year, yes.

**Mr Gniel:** It is a full year as in it is there. Where that is then rolled out, though, is probably more in the 2014 school year. We are also waiting on some information from the minister's task force on learning difficulties to give us some advice around the best way to spend some of that money. That will then all go into the new funding arrangements that we have with the commonwealth, if that makes sense.

**MR SMYTH:** That is fine. Why do we have four years of funding for the non-government school students with a disability but we only have one year of funding—

**Mr Gniel:** Mark might be able to answer more of this. That funding for the non-government sector will also have the same methodology to it.

**MR SMYTH:** From the feds?

**Mr Gniel:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** And again, that is what makes the question even more pointed.

**Mr Gniel:** Sure.

**MR SMYTH:** You are funded for one year for one and four years for the other.

**Mr Gniel:** Yes. Then, if we go back to the full amounts and the increase over the outyears of the total package—does that make sense?

**MR SMYTH:** It makes sense; can you point to where it is?

**Mr Whybrow:** From a funding component, there are two lines of funding for students with disabilities. Essentially, for government schools there is an amount that is identified here in 2013-14, but when we get into the new arrangements under a Gonski funding arrangement, that money has been reflected in the ACT government's share. I refer you back to the pages here that talk about total increases, that extra \$30 million, with 21.4 going to the government sector and 8.6 going to the non-government sector. It is complicated as we move into a new arrangement and funding is being provided through multiple line items.

**MR SMYTH:** If you go a bit further up, there is special needs transport.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** It also is only one year. Why is it just one year?

**Mr Whybrow:** Consistent with what has happened with this in the past, the provision of funding there is for only one year. The issue in relation to special needs transport is that, while it will continue to be delivered on the current arrangement, we have the added complexity of a national disability insurance scheme. We are one of the few jurisdictions where the special needs transport provision is provided by the education department rather than a transport department. But in the new arrangement of providing funding directly to people with disabilities, that is tied up in that arrangement. From a funding sense, there is one year only provided to the directorate for that special education, because there is that uncertainty for the future.

**Ms Burch:** But there is existing funding along those lines. That is in base funding.

**MR SMYTH:** This is on top of the existing?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** How much is the existing?

**Mr Whybrow:** Sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** This is additional to the existing funding?

**Ms Burch:** For transport, yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. In total, it is \$5.5 million.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is currently \$4 million, and we have put \$1.5 million on top?

**Ms Burch:** No. I think it is five.

**Mr Whybrow:** It is \$5.5 million in total, and this adds it, so it is approximately \$4 million in the base funding. That is correct.

**MR SMYTH:** Why is this limited only to kids going to ACT government schools?

**Mr Whybrow:** The application of entitlement? I suspect there is someone better placed than me to answer that.

**Mr Gniel:** The current arrangements are that it is to be delivered to ACT public schools.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, why was it not extended to non-government schools? You have identified and acknowledged the need in the non-government sector by putting an additional \$2.7 million in. Why was that courtesy not extended to the kids attending non-government schools?

**Ms Burch:** That is our existing longstanding policy; these arrangements have been in place since self-government, as I understand it—maybe not that far back, but certainly a very long time.

**MR SMYTH:** Again, why not take the opportunity? Why not have a once in a lifetime opportunity to extend disability transport to kids going to non-government schools?

**Mr Gniel:** It is probably around the same answer as the one around the NDIS. Those arrangements are still being determined.

**MR SMYTH:** Will not the NDIS affect kids at non-government schools?

**Mr Gniel:** That is what I am saying. That arrangement around the support services for people with a disability outside education—that is still being refined and worked through.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Mr Gniel:** So I am not sure what the impact will be on all students.

**Ms Burch:** And under Gonski, the independents and Catholic schools are given a student resource to determine the supports and what is best for their local community.

**Mr Gniel:** Yes. So again this is the changed arrangements around loadings.

**Mr Whybrow:** This element of the total \$5.5 million does not relate to Gonski funding, because across the nation, as I said earlier, we are one of the few jurisdictions where it is in education. So from the calculations that we have been

doing around Gonski funding, that is excluded.

**DR BOURKE:** What about the student-centred assessment of need? Isn't that relevant to this decision about who gets disability transport to school or not? And where are the vast bulk of those kids who are in need of that transport being educated?

**Mr Gniel:** My understanding is that the majority of those students with the high-end needs that you are referring to are educated in the public system.

**MR SMYTH:** What is the split?

**Mr Gniel:** I do not have that on hand.

**MR SMYTH:** We have a likely contender with that information. Feel free to join us.

**Ms Mitchell:** Sorry, can you just repeat that question, because I did not quite hear it?

**MR SMYTH:** How many children in our system are classified as having a disability, and what percentage are in government and what percentage in non-government?

**Ms Mitchell:** In public education, 2,035 students are funded for disability education and 490 students are transported. Another point that we might bring up is that the government schools have the only specialist education schools. We have five—Black Mountain, Woden School, Cranleigh, Malkara and the Turner School. Often the students with the highest levels of needs are in the specialist schools—but not always. Is that the information you are looking for?

**MR SMYTH:** That is the government sector. In the non-government sector, how many children have a disability?

**Ms Mitchell:** In the non-government sector—I do not have that information.

**Ms Burch:** Ms Stewart has just found it.

**Ms Stewart:** In total, we have 2,449 students in ACT schools—sorry, let me go to the 2013 numbers; that was for 2012. In 2012, we had 2,449. In 2013 we have 2,690 students classified as special needs students. Of those, 2,035—that would be about three-quarters—are in public schools, and the remaining 655 students are in non-government schools. As Ms Mitchell said, all students in special schools are in the public system. There are no specialist school facilities.

**MR SMYTH:** The five special schools that you mentioned all used to have a bus with a ramp. Do they still have government-provided buses with ramps?

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** How many at each school?

**Ms Mitchell:** In terms of how many buses go to each school or whatever, it is not that simple. But we have two providers.

**MR SMYTH:** No. Do the schools now own a bus?

**Ms Mitchell:** The schools do own buses, yes. But then outside providers provide transport, as in ACTION and—

**MR SMYTH:** No, just concentrate on the—

**Ms Mitchell:** Okay, the schools.

**MR SMYTH:** Each of the schools has one bus or two or more?

**Ms Mitchell:** In terms of the number of buses at each of the special schools, I do not have that information. I could find that out, I think, to take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Could you take that on notice and also tell me when was the last time they were upgraded or replaced?

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** We will take it on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Just to finish on disability, Mr Doszpot, who is unfortunately away but sends his regards, has had a long and abiding interest in the nursing services at the special schools. Where are we at with that?

**Mr Gniel:** I might finish the other point as well, which is that the transport is to specialist settings, which incorporate the special schools, but there are also specialist settings within the government sector. Those do not exist in non-government schools either. As to autism support units, I think you are aware of the number of them. That is just for clarity. Sorry, was there a question about nurses?

**MR SMYTH:** The employment of nurses at the special schools. Mr Doszpot has had a very long interest in ensuring that we have got adequate medical provision. In each of the special units, how many nurses are available at each of those schools?

**Ms Mitchell:** Each of the four special schools has a nurse. Woden has a nurse. Black Mountain, Cranleigh and Malkara have.

**MR SMYTH:** And Turner does not rate for a nurse?

**Ms Mitchell:** Turner is a combined school. If it is appropriate, there is nurse-led care. But they do not have a nurse based at Turner primary.

**Mr Whybrow:** Technically it is classified as a primary school.

**Ms Mitchell:** Sorry, it is called Turner School. It has got a primary school and a large specialist component.

**Mr Gniel:** The basis on which nurses are at special schools is a health-based decision.

We work very closely—and I have mentioned to a number of people before around this—with our colleagues in Health around this, as health professionals are in the best position to make the assessment of needs for health services, including nurses. In terms of making sure that those students have access to the curriculum, that is what our focus is. As I am sure you are aware, for some of our most needy students, that does involve a nurse. And that is catered for in those schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Wall, do you have any supplementaries or new questions, indeed?

**MR WALL:** On a new question, if that is all right.

**THE CHAIR:** A new question, that is fine.

**MR WALL:** Minister, I just want to ask a few questions about individual learning plans for students with a disability. I was wondering how many individual learning plans are currently in place.

**Ms Mitchell:** I can answer that question. One hundred per cent of all students with a disability have an individual learning plan.

**MR WALL:** How many is that?

**Ms Mitchell:** That is 2,035 if you go on the current number of students with a disability. But if a new student is enrolling as we speak, they would not have one yet.

**MR WALL:** How long does the process normally take for one to be developed?

**Ms Mitchell:** You could guarantee it would be done within the term, as you involve the family, you involve the parents and then the teachers who need to get to know the student. You need to work with them over at least a term. But then it would be in place.

**MR WALL:** The process over the term is identifying where the needs are or is that—

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes, identifying what levels of adjustment need to be made, where the student currently is at, the aspirations of the student and the family, staff and the school.

**Mr Gniel:** If I can add to that, “how long does this take” is very specific to the needs of each of those individual students. The spectrum of disability, as you would be aware, is large. It could be more appropriate to talk about these as documents that need to be updated on the most available information. Some of the students have heavy medical involvement around their disabilities, and as we get that information we need to update their adjustment plans that Ms Mitchell was talking about. There is also, with some of our most complex students with needs, the involvement of those health professionals. At times therapists will be involved in those discussions about how to best meet the needs of those young people.

The term is sort of best practice. That is what we would expect. Sometimes it is quicker because they are handed a document that might have come from a previous

school, for example. At other times that can be very complex, a student moving from interstate who is also moving with a whole range of other complex needs.

**MR WALL:** And how often would a review be undertaken of the individual plans?

**Ms Mitchell:** The reviews are usually done every semester, yes, and there are meetings with the family every semester.

**MR WALL:** So usually every semester?

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes, and I can double-check that if you want.

**MR WALL:** Okay. And are all of them being reviewed every semester or are there some that do not get seen to?

**Ms Mitchell:** No, there is a cycle of review of every student and teacher at a SCAN meeting. Appraisal happens and the student's progress is discussed regularly.

**Mr Gniel:** It is, I think, the same, again depending on what changes too. So it is a bit like, if I can relate it to, some kind of business planning. You have to shift. You do not have a plan and then you stick to it. If the outside information changes, you have got to change it. Although, again, there is a cycle of review, if a parent was to have some more information that needed to be involved in that plan, then they would talk to the teachers and the coordinators within the school to make those updates. I think the main thing there is making sure, through those plans, that you get all the people in the room who know that young person the best and work out what the adjustments are that will help them meet their education outcomes that we all want.

**THE CHAIR:** Just for the interest of the committee, I can advise that the Gonski bill has passed the Senate unamended. There are other things happening on the hill that may be of interest to members as well.

**Ms Burch:** No, actually, because I saw—

**THE CHAIR:** They would not be directly relevant to this committee.

**Ms Burch:** I saw on Twitter that Gonski had got through but I had not had formal notification. Thank you for that. So it is now enshrined in law.

**THE CHAIR:** It is.

**Ms Burch:** There will be many a student and teacher happy about that.

**THE CHAIR:** Maybe. The committee has moved now to disability education. We are across a few—

**DR BOURKE:** I have a few more questions.

**THE CHAIR:** We have. Wait for me to finish. But I am happy if we continue with either secondary education or so on. Dr Bourke, you have some questions?



**DR BOURKE:** I do indeed. Minister, the indicators at budget paper 4, pages 287 and 288 show the NAPLAN results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They show a shortfall against the target for the most recent year. What is the government doing to improve these results?

**Ms Burch:** There is significant investment in not only NAPLAN but a whole range of outcomes for our Indigenous students. We are very clear in our aspirations through closing the gap and our strategy for our Indigenous students. Perhaps Beth Mitchell can talk to a range of those strategies, from particular officers embedded in schools to a whole range of other supports.

**Ms Mitchell:** In terms of equitable outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and work we are doing around closing the gap, I guess the most important thing is that all our students are at the centre of everything. We personalise learning. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have discussions about their learning strategies, the types of learning they prefer. They have mentors. They have tutors if requested.

There is a significant budget in high schools and colleges for tutoring, and schools can apply to put that into place to meet their own students' needs. There are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and education officers in primary and high schools. As we talked about earlier, there is the aspirations program which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are achieving above the benchmark to go on to university, and that is a targeted support program right from year 5. There are family and school liaison officers and people who work closely with community and with families.

Then we also work with the consultative group and meet regularly with the consultative group and listen to their advice and their opinions on how we could better connect with community and better connect with their wishes for the students in their community.

All schools also have a range of student-centred equity processes. All schools have pastoral care coordinators, all schools have student wellbeing focus, all schools look at creating engaging school climates. And that is a climate that engages everybody. That is looking at positive school culture and connecting to community and connecting to teacher, student voice, student leadership opportunities. And we certainly have our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students involved in those things as well.

**DR BOURKE:** Can you just explain the difference between the education workers and the education officers?

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes. I always mix it up, so I will look at my sheet. Education workers—I think it is seven—are in high schools. Education officers are in primary schools. I will double-check my notes to make sure that is right. Did I say it the wrong way round? Education officers are in high schools; education workers are in primary schools. The officers based in the high schools—I can tell you that is Calwell, Wanniasa, Melrose, Stromlo, Telopea, Lyneham and Melba Copland—work with

staff and with students. They work on attendance, on literacy, on numeracy, and they also work with families. The workers in primary schools—Richardson, Wanniasa, Ngunnawal and Gilmore—provide specifically more support to the students and classroom support in the primary classroom. Does that explain? Is that enough information?

**DR BOURKE:** It does, thank you. I understand there was a recent public education award for Indigenous education? Could you tell me about that please?

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes. I am quite pleased to talk about that award, because I know about it very well. This year, the public education award went to Mark Bishop at Dickson College. That was recognising work he has done over probably the last five to six years, which was instrumental in setting up the inner north community partnership. There is a cluster of schools in the inner north that meet every year and look at the students in the inner north and their transition pathways. We celebrate our partnership. We have come up with a transition document, and Mark has led that.

That is now being used as a model of best practice right across the networks. It came from the North/Gungahlin network. We worked closely also with Ngunnawal primary staff in developing that. There is also a partnership with Dickson, Lyneham and Campbell that came out of the Stronger Smarter Institute work with Chris Sarra. Those teachers travelled to Queensland. They have come back and put a lot of stronger smarter initiatives into place in the network. They are also working with Jervis Bay and are soon to be partnering with a school in South Australia, in Port Augusta. So there is that kind of work.

There is a proven track record of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the inner north being on the front page of the *Canberra Times*, getting eight highs and going on to the University of Melbourne, ANU, ANU Secondary College et cetera. So there is that sort of commitment in that group of schools. That was reflected in the award that Mark got in leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education this year. Last year that award went to Jervis Bay principal Bob Pastor, who also does absolutely amazing stuff in this area.

**DR BOURKE:** Earlier you talked about supporting high-performance Indigenous students. Why is that important?

**Ms Mitchell:** That is important to do for all students—absolutely to do as much as we can with high-performance and developing young leaders. To develop young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders will only make Australia a much better place. We do that because it is something we really believe in.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** With regard to the strategic indicators on page 287 and onwards, you talk about the NAPLAN testing. How is that going in the schools? Generally speaking, are results improving or deteriorating? Or are they are static? And where are the pressure areas? I appreciate that there are a range of testing marks across different age groups.

**Ms Stewart:** The testing is going quite well. The process has been well embedded and is now a smooth process in ACT schools. We are working with ACARA to look at some improvements for the NAPLAN testing. It is envisaged at this stage that it will move to an online platform in 2016, which will bring with it some advantages around the assessment program. But at the moment we are seeing a very strong performance from the ACT. As I mentioned earlier, we are the leading jurisdiction when it comes to NAPLAN across all year levels, and we have been since NAPLAN was introduced in 2008. The ACT is particularly strong in reading. We have been the leading jurisdiction in reading in every year level every year since NAPLAN has run. We have also performed very strongly in grammar and punctuation. But be that as it may, we are strong across the board. We are generally the highest performing jurisdiction in all year levels and in all the assessments.

We are seeing the scores of students increasing since NAPLAN was introduced in 2008 and also seeing higher proportions of students achieving at and above the national minimum standard. Generally, when we calculate those changes, we would calculate some degree of confidence around that change. So whether in fact that is significant change outside the levels of confidence is something that we are still analysing. We are still waiting for a longer time series. But certainly in raw scores, the scores are improving and the percentage of students performing at that minimum standard is improving in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that because schools are preparing their students better for the test or is it because literacy standards are improving? Do you get the delineation between the two?

**Ms Stewart:** I cannot comment on that directly, but I can say that this is something that we are seeing across the nation and across all schools in the ACT, and we are seeing improvement in all areas of testing, literacy and numeracy. As a statistician, my response would be that I believe that is systemic, and not a reflection of what individual schools might be doing around a particular preparation for the test. I believe, myself, that it is more systemic than that.

**THE CHAIR:** So you believe that NAPLAN is encouraging schools perhaps to focus more on the literacy and numeracy performance of their students, and that is resulting in that improvement we are seeing?

**Ms Stewart:** I do not have any evidence that would indicate one way or the other. I do not have data to be able to answer that question.

**Ms Burch:** With the NAPLAN results, as a system there has been concerted effort across the education system around quality teaching and learning, focus on numeracy and literacy and those foundation skills. That is why we expect to see those improvements if there are efforts in numeracy and literacy.

**DR BOURKE:** What about the PISA results?

**THE CHAIR:** Can we finish on NAPLAN before we move on.

**DR BOURKE:** Sorry.

**THE CHAIR:** I have had some constituents allege that students with learning difficulties have been encouraged not to go to school on days when NAPLAN testing is occurring. Have you had any incidents about that come to your attention?

**Ms Stewart:** There is a process where students with a disability or with difficulties can get assistance in the NAPLAN process. They can be exempted from NAPLAN if they have an identified disability; there is a process that the school initiates for exempting them from the test so that they do not have to sit it. If they have some degree of difficulty but can still sit the test, there are various adjustments and assistance that can be provided to allow them to sit the test. If their parents feel that there is some reason why they may not be able to sit the test, the parent can choose to withdraw them from the NAPLAN assessment. My view is that those three measures are quite widely used where children have difficulties or need assistance with the NAPLAN assessment process.

**Ms Burch:** There is often some rhetoric about NAPLAN testing, but some advice I have been given is that there are fewer kids away from school on a NAPLAN day than any other day. Testing is part and parcel of a school environment. Assessment and testing start from very early years and go through to the end, and there will always be kids away from school. I have asked that question; the advice I have got is that there are fewer kids away on a NAPLAN day than on other days of the week.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you got a supplementary, Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Yes, thank you. Can you tell us about the PISA results please?

**Ms Burch:** The PISA results are very good, and I am sure Ms Stewart will be able to talk to that. I like the titles PIMS, PERLs and PISAs; I think they have got a nice ring to them. But either way it ranks the ACT in the top five. Australia is certainly not in the top five as a nation, but when you unpack the jurisdictions we do extremely well.

**Ms Stewart:** Yes. I should say that PISA is the program for international student assessment; it assesses students in reading, mathematics and science. The last results that came out were in respect of the 2009 testing; they showed, again, that the ACT performs very highly, and in fact better than most other jurisdictions. We were equal highest in most areas with Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. The next round of testing was done at the end of last year; we are waiting for those results to come out at the end of this year but we are expecting, based on other international assessments, that the ACT will continue to perform very strongly on that international platform.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am looking for my question.

**THE CHAIR:** We might move to Mr Smyth and then come back to Mr Gentleman.

**MR SMYTH:** I will defer to Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Before I ask a substantive, I have a quick follow-up on the NAPLAN numbers. I was curious to see whether you were able to provide the figures as to how many students were excluded in the last round of NAPLAN testing and how many were parental withdrawals?

**Ms Burch:** Do you have that?

**Ms Stewart:** Yes.

**MR WALL:** Otherwise you can take it on notice.

**Ms Stewart:** I cannot actually give you the numbers for 2013, which was the most recent year of testing, this year, because we are still compiling those at the moment. It is quite an extensive process to compile all the NAPLAN results and the data that comes out of it. We are putting that together at the moment. But I can tell you what it was for 2012. I just give a reminder that we do not actually exclude students. Students with a disability are given an exemption from testing and they do not have to sit the test. They can, though; if their parent wishes, still elect to sit. But they are given an exemption.

**MR WALL:** “Exclusion” is the word that you used previously; so there is a change in terminology.

**Ms Stewart:** I do apologise.

**MR WALL:** “Exempted” is fine.

**Ms Stewart:** So they are exempted. In the ACT, in 2012, for example, in year 3 reading, 1.7 per cent of year 3 students were exempted from the testing as opposed to four per cent of students who were withdrawn by their parents from the testing. We had 93 per cent of students in the ACT who sat the test. In year 9 in 2012, 1.3 per cent of students were exempted and 2.2 per cent of students were withdrawn by their parents; 92 per cent of students sat the assessment.

**MR WALL:** Is there a breakdown as to how many of those were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?

**Ms Stewart:** There is data available, and it is available on the ACARA website. I could get that data on participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**MR WALL:** If you could take that on notice, Ms Stewart, that would be great. I have a follow-up on that as well. Whilst the NAPLAN results are still trailing the targets in most areas for all students, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are trailing even further behind. I am just wondering why that is continuing to be the trend and what is being done to address that issue specifically?

**Ms Stewart:** Ms Mitchell spoke earlier about some of the strategies we have got in place to improve results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**MR WALL:** My apologies if it has already been covered off.

**Ms Burch:** Ms Wright can go to some of that work.

**Ms Stewart:** I will just say, before Ms Wright gives a response about the strategies, that the targets we have set in NAPLAN are very ambitious. We developed a methodology in 2009 to make sure that we did set very ambitious targets, that we would push ourselves to improve literacy and numeracy as much as we were able to do. And that was even more the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: the commitment was to set the targets at the same rate as for all other students, but also to set an additional target that would help us close the gap, and close the gap by 50 per cent by 2013, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They are very ambitious targets, and there is progress being made towards reaching those targets.

**Ms Burch:** Ms Wright, do you want to add to that?

**Ms Wright:** With reference to specific strategies employed to target literacy and numeracy improvement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, within the learning and teaching branch we provide targeted extra resources to schools who have a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to further support additional literacy and numeracy interventions. Schools employ case management approaches, so we have very much individualised progress monitoring of students. So we look at individual progress. Given the numbers of students in the ACT, when we go to percentages, it can mask individual progress to a certain extent and sometimes the figures do not tell the true story of individual success in improvement and growth.

In the Tuggeranong region in 2012 there was a specific targeted program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, which was conducted in the five high schools, aimed at improving literacy and numeracy results for the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within that specific network. With respect to the outcomes of that program for the students participating in the interventions, they included individualised explicit instruction within their school settings, the establishment of some culturally inclusive environments for those students from which to receive their targeted support and also a range of activities to engage families to improve attendance for those students to ensure that they are at school and accessing the support that is in place for them.

We had results which indicated that there were gains for all of those students participating. The growth for those students was in reading and spelling in particular, less in writing, but that is similar to our other results across the board with writing. But the results from that intervention did show significant growth for those students involved.

From those targeted strategies that we use, the directorate set about sharing that good practice. We have literacy and numeracy coordinators in all of our government public schools, high schools and primary schools. Those specialist teachers get together on a regular basis to receive professional learning that is targeted at sharing that best practice and those strategies that have proven to be successful. There were a number of presentations to the literacy and numeracy field officers specifically targeting the embedding of those strategies that have been identified as successful for Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander students.

As soon as next week we will be participating in the symposium which is focused on mathematics outcomes for Indigenous learners on which the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers has put out a blueprint paper. So the ACT has engaged early with that process. That project will identify strategies that are specifically targeted and are shown to produce better outcomes in numeracy for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. So whilst we focus on improving outcomes for every student, we are exercising some very specific strategies geared towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**MR WALL:** My real concern is that these Indigenous students are sitting in exactly the same classrooms as mainstream students, they are being taught by the same teachers, yet the outcomes are significantly worse over the sample. The gap always seems to exist. Why is that occurring? Obviously, there is a multitude of programs in there, but year after year, going through the data, there always seems to be a similar-sized gap between all students in the measured bracket and those from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

**Ms Stewart:** In terms of student achievement, the data suggests it is a very large component. There is some different research but often a figure of around 50 per cent is quoted. In terms of student achievement, a component of 50 per cent of the ability of the student to achieve—not the ability but the outcome—is actually driven by that student's background. What we find with a number of our groups of students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, is that when they come to school they are starting behind other students because of factors related to their background. It is a challenge for the schooling system. We set goals and put strategies in place to overcome the fact that they are starting behind when they come to school.

The work that we do is in an effort to close that gap between when they come to school and where they are starting from and as they move through school. The ACT data in the NAPLAN results show that, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students move through the schooling system, by the time they get to year 9 NAPLAN testing, in fact, the gap has closed. It has not closed entirely but it has improved and the gap is smaller in year 9 than when they start school and when it is measured in NAPLAN in year 3. So it is certainly a big issue and we know that a large component of student achievement is overcoming the student background factors that influence their start at school.

**Ms Burch:** I think you are right, Mr Wall; I do not think there is anyone in this room that would not say that we have to do all we can to close that gap. And there is a difference; there is no doubt about it. That is what drives all those programs and bits and pieces that we invest in, to make sure that if there is an inherent disadvantage in some of these families we do all we can to make the difference. I might ask Mr Gniel to go to that reaffirmation about what we need to do.

**Mr Gniel:** Mr Wall, with the national agenda, our signing up to the national plan for school improvement is that commitment around closing the gap that you referred to. I spoke earlier around the different loadings that exist. I do not think you were here but I spoke in terms of the loadings that are coming through the commonwealth schooling

resource standard. So we have the base, and one of the loadings is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

If I can pick up on Ms Stewart's point, around the different factors that can lead to that disadvantage, one of the things that have been talked about a lot at the national level is that a student receives all of those loadings. So an Aboriginal student who comes from a low SES background would get the low SES loading. If they are in a small school size, they will get a small school size loading on top. If they are in a remote location, there will be another loading on top of it. If they have limited English proficiency, there is another loading. If they have a disability, there is another one. Also, by being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, they will receive another loading. So in terms of Ms Stewart's answer as well, at a national level, and, indeed, with respect to what we do in the ACT, it is about taking into account the specific circumstances of students and about minimising that disadvantage that the minister talked about around a high quality education for every student in every school. That is why the loadings will be consistent across any school as well.

**MR WALL:** I understand that coming from a disadvantaged background has an outcome in proficiency in school, but I understand that, of the total Indigenous population that is enrolled in the ACT, almost 60 per cent of them are in non-government schools at a primary age. Am I mistaken in that figure?

**Mr Gniel:** I believe you are but I will—

**Ms Burch:** We will defer to Guru Stewart.

**MR WALL:** I am happy to be corrected.

**Ms Stewart:** In 2013 the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in public schools was 79 per cent.

**MR WALL:** So that is 70 per cent in ACT government schools?

**Ms Stewart:** Twenty-one per cent in non-government schools.

**Ms Burch:** So that is 79 to 21—almost an 80-20 split.

**Ms Stewart:** Yes. That is in all schools.

**MR WALL:** That is in all schools?

**Ms Stewart:** That is primary and secondary.

**MR WALL:** What about at primary age?

**Ms Stewart:** I will calculate that if you give me a second. I can give you the numbers. 882 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were in public primary schools; 184 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were in non-government primary schools.



**Ms Burch:** A rough 80-20 split again. Again I do not think anyone in this room would say there is not more work that we need to do. There is a publication that we put together every year around the outcomes and the results of our Indigenous students. That shows there is improvement but there is still work to do, which is why we continue to invest in those different programs that the officials have spoken about.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My question goes to budget paper 4, page 296. I know we talked a little bit about this yesterday. There are some very good results there for students receiving a voc ed qualification. You have a target of 60; it has gone to 64 per cent in that line item. Can you tell us what that means for those students?

**Ms Burch:** From my reading of this, it shows that more in year 12 are going through vocational education and training. Again if we look to where our students are, which is a publication we do every 12 months, there is certainly a very high percentage that are either at university or within the VET sector and continue in that engagement of life-long learning for employment thereafter.

**Ms Strauch:** One of the great advantages of our senior secondary system in the ACT is the broad range of offerings available to students, including in the vocational education and training area. Those offerings are available not only within their own college but also with outside providers, including the CIT, which are providing a number of courses. Students can count all of these towards their year 12 certificates. So that encourages them to take advantage of those offerings, and I think the results were really pleasing. What we are noticing—and it is not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students—is that increasing numbers seem to be accessing the offerings outside their college as well as inside their college.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Do you think that helps retain students past year 10, into college?

**Ms Strauch:** I would certainly expect so. The board do not deliver the education, but from the figures we see, I would say that those broad range of offerings certainly help address the pathways that students are interested in following and keeping them in school and engaged.

**MR SMYTH:** Just going back to Gonski for a moment, what happens with Gonski in relation to NAPLAN testing, particularly for science?

**Mr Gniel:** I can answer that, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Nobody else wants to!

**Mr Gniel:** I am very happy to.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Stewart does. She put her hand up too.

**Mr Gniel:** Again, with signing up to the national plan for school improvement, one of the new reforms within the national plan is to include science. As Ms Stewart talked about earlier, there is also a commitment to moving towards an online assessment platform. That will make expanding the national assessment program easier in some

ways. There is also a commitment to connect that more to the Australian curriculum as that is rolled out. That probably goes back to one of Mr Hanson's points around what we are seeing in terms of the broad range of indicators. We will start to see some of those indicators come through as well, as we have that national testing. I will defer to Ms Stewart as the guru, as I think we are now referring to her, but the quality and the validity of those tests are things that we can rely on. That is why we see them in our strategic indicators. I hope, Mr Smyth, that that answers your question, because it is in the national plan for school improvement to move to science.

**MR SMYTH:** What will that cost the ACT?

**Ms Stewart:** I might mention that there is actually already a national science assessment program. It runs once every three years. The assessment for that was actually conducted last year and the results are due out in the next few months. Traditionally, the ACT performs very strongly in science.

**MR SMYTH:** But under Gonski, science will be tested every year?

**Ms Stewart:** That is my understanding. That is still to be discussed but that is my understanding.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. What is that likely to cost the ACT?

**Mr Gniel:** That is still being determined at the national level around that implication. As you can imagine, all states and territories are interested in how we will fund any expansion to that system. I think we are all hoping that the move to online may reduce some of the costs of the full range. As Ms Stewart has alluded to, I think one of those cyclical assessments around civics and citizenship—if I remember rightly—is currently being piloted online; so we will have more information on that.

The wording that we have signed up to in the national plan is to enhance and expand the national assessment program by the addition of annual, full cohort testing of science, with cohorts to be agreed by SCSEEC. There is still some conversation about whether that would be every kid in every school of every year—that is one extreme—or whether it is a sample assessment and whether it is only, say, year 9 or whether it is 3, 5, 7 and 9, like literacy and numeracy. They are all things that within the national plan are still to be determined.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay. In Gonski there was also a focus on Asian languages. What has that meant for the ACT?

**Mr Gniel:** The commitment to Asian languages has not changed, I do not believe, around access to those Asian languages within our schools. We have a very strong language program in the ACT, as I am sure you are aware. There are challenges within that, particularly for other states where distance is involved and in remote locations, in having access to all of those languages that are talked about.

Again, I go back to that initial quote I gave through the national education agreement which talked about “specific to the context of each jurisdiction”. The Asian language one is obviously that because in the ACT we are well placed around the Asian

languages, whereas some of the other states and territories start from a different point.

**MR SMYTH:** Will we have to do more? For instance, does that involve hiring more teachers?

**Mr Gniel:** No, I do not believe so.

**MR SMYTH:** We already meet that standard?

**Ms Burch:** We might go to Ms Wright, who can talk about our language program.

**Ms Wright:** In the ACT we have a language education policy that provides access to language learning from years 3 to 8 in all of our schools and then on an ongoing basis for those students who elect to continue with a language pathway into the senior years of secondary education. Since 2008, when that policy was implemented, we have seen growth from around 11,000 students studying a language in the ACT to, in 2013, a total of 23,625 of our students studying language programs, of which currently 13,390 of our students are studying an Asian language in 2013.

Some of the work that ACARA is doing in developing language curriculum for all jurisdictions involves the development of curriculum in four European languages and four Asian languages. The Asian languages are Mandarin Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. The Chinese Mandarin language curriculum and, from one of the European languages, the Italian curriculum will be released later this year as part of the phase 2 release of ACARA curriculum subjects.

In terms of delivery of language education in our government school system in the ACT, we continue to explore options for ensuring and maximising access to quality teaching and learning. As we move forward into the future we are exploring the options around some online delivery. We have also piloted a program in the Melrose cluster of schools to include some video conferencing. An expert teacher in Indonesian, based at the high school site, is video-conferencing through to primary school and other schools within that cluster of schools. That initiative provided the video conferencing outlets in each of those schools to maximise that.

As we look at some of the challenges around access to qualified, quality teachers in our classrooms, we also explore the possibilities of technology and other mechanisms to ensure the access and pathways. The other thing we do in language education is get schools together in clusters to ensure that there is a pathway through for students. If they study a particular language in a primary school we try to ensure that the pathway is very clear for them through high school years and into college years so that those students wishing to really maintain focus on learning a second language, or a third language in some cases, through our public school system have access through those appropriate pathways.

**MR SMYTH:** So we will not require more language teachers?

**Mr Gniel:** The wording is around providing significant exposure to Asia and the studies of Asia. I am working towards the provision of continuous access to a priority Asian language. Mr Smyth, I assume you are alluding to making sure that we have

those expert teachers available to provide those languages. Again, I would say we are well placed, but it is a challenge that we accept across the country as well as around making sure—

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, because there is a shortage of language teachers.

**Mr Gniel:** I would have to get further advice around that part of it. I think what you are suggesting is that, as we have this as a priority, we will need those teachers. My only comment was around the additional teachers. I think it is additional language teachers within the cohort of teachers that we have that can work with students on all areas of the curriculum.

**Ms Burch:** We might ask Ms McAlister, who heads HR, to talk about that.

**Ms McAlister:** Recruiting qualified language teachers is a target area. We have a number of target areas. We are moving from a centralised annual recruitment round and embedding empowered school leadership, which is enabling the local area selection of teachers.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is the principals making—

**Ms McAllister:** Principals making the decision about advertising positions and doing that when the need is there, rather than waiting for it to happen on an annual basis. Our early fields are suggesting that we are getting good sized fields for specialist teachers, including language teachers, and that we are drawing those teachers not only from within the system but from other areas, interstate as well. It is still early days so I cannot provide you with data that demonstrates a significant trend, but we are seeing that the empowered local leadership is offering some solutions to a tension point that we had experienced in the past.

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a requirement in the reforms for additional hours of learning, and what grades do students have to get to meet the requirements?

**Ms Burch:** Through the national curriculum?

**MR SMYTH:** Through what is being insisted upon by Gonski.

**Mr Gniel:** I am sorry, Mr Smyth, are there hours?

**MR SMYTH:** Will the students have to do more hours of study in language to meet Gonski?

**Mr Gniel:** No. As I said, I was reading from the national plan, which is the national education reform agreement, which is providing significant exposure to the studies of Asia and works towards the provision of continuous access to learning a language. There is no mention of the number of hours at the national level.

**Ms Burch:** But the standards and requirement would be held in the curriculum assessment and standards.

**MR SMYTH:** You mentioned Mandarin, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. What consideration was given to Indian, or is it just assumed that there is enough English in India that it is not required?

**Ms Wright:** Is that Hindi?

**MR SMYTH:** Hindi.

**Ms Wright:** There has been some discussion that the current Asian languages that ACARA have identified have not included Hindi at this stage, although it is referenced in the Asian century paper. In the ACT we have a language program at Narrabundah College that includes Hindi, for those students wishing to access that particular language. At this point in time it is unclear whether ACARA will take steps to include further Australian curriculum languages broader than the four that have currently been identified. As the ACT is working with implementation of the Australian curriculum, the languages that we are working for are the eight identified—those four Asian ones, along with the four European languages of French, German, Italian and Spanish.

**Mr Gniel:** The other thing, Mr Smyth, is that there is nothing to stop a school delivering a language that is raised by their community as a language that they would like to see happen in their schools as well. I guess there is just that difference between what is available and what the curriculum is being written about, but there is the opportunity to respond to local need.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving on to a slightly different issue, behaviour management in schools, do you have an accountability indicator at all, or how do you map how that is progressing in terms of the number of bullying incidents that are reported, the number of suspensions, attacks or incidents like that? Do you track that?

**Mr Gniel:** We have internal mechanisms, particularly within schools, Mr Hanson. They would be looking at the general outcomes around that. The most important thing for me around that is: what are the outcomes from those students all the way through? I guess behaviour can impact on education attainment for those students. The indicators are about that attainment, the NAPLAN results, as you have seen. We have also got indicators in there around attendance, which is a good indicator as well—that level of engagement within the school. If I remember rightly, it is one of our accountability indicators.

**THE CHAIR:** Attendance?

**Mr Gniel:** Attendance.

**Ms Stewart:** The other indicator that we would use in terms of engagement is a student satisfaction indicator, which we have in our strategic indicators at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** But in terms of incidents requiring discipline, be it bullying or be it students bringing weapons to school and so on, do you measure that? I am just trying

to get a sense of where—

**Ms Burch:** I think there is a lot of internal work. If there are incidents or exclusions from schools, that is all managed internally. One, it is about a learning process and, two, it is about how we manage our students at an individual level or make sure that they continue to get access to education. But I am not quite sure there is an indicator.

**Mr Gniel:** There is not an indicator as such that I think you are referring to. We would look at other indicators, and Ms Stewart has talked about satisfaction. Bullying was one of the ones you mentioned as well?

**THE CHAIR:** Bullying, yes.

**Mr Gniel:** Within the satisfaction surveys I think we do ask that question as well. It is not an indicator but it is within the information that we get back to the system. The other point I was making there, Mr Hanson, was around the fact that the school sites themselves would look at their data very carefully around those things and set up things that are most particular to their context.

When I talk about that, it is about them tracking what it is looking like for their kids. From my perspective, say suspensions are one indicator. Suspension is only one way in which we look at the outcome of inappropriate behaviour. We would not just want to focus on suspensions, I guess, is what I am saying. For younger children in particular you would be talking to the teacher about how often they have to exclude kids from that activity because of their behaviour.

There is a spectrum of responses to the behaviour that includes the age of the child and their ability to respond. It is also about communicating to the broader school community, including other students but also parents and the teachers, the significance of some behaviour. That is when we do use things like suspension to make sure that that is very clearly communicated when behaviour is inappropriate.

**THE CHAIR:** What role do school counsellors play as part of this?

**Mr Gniel:** I might ask Ms Mitchell to tell me if I am on the wrong track. If kids are suspended, particularly a number of times, there is an expectation that they will work with the school counsellor around what are the issues that are leading towards that. As you are saying, they actually want to get to the bottom of why that behaviour is coming out as something that is—

**THE CHAIR:** Not just for kids who are suspended, but for other kids with behaviour management issues as well.

**Mr Gniel:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** How many school counsellors are in schools at the moment?

**Ms Mitchell:** I will go back to the first part first, if that is all right. You were asking about the role of the school counsellor.

**THE CHAIR:** In the behaviour management role.

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And how many we have got?

**Ms Mitchell:** First of all, if we come back one step further, we have got four networks. Every network has a network student engagement team. That is a multidisciplinary team of professionals—social worker, senior counsellor, disability support and behaviour support. They have a deputy principal that works very closely with each school network leader, and they provide a service discretely to a network of, say, 20 schools. Then, within the network student engagement team, there is a targeted support team specifically working with students who have suspensions. They work closely with the family, the student and the school to make sure the student can come back to school and is successful in understanding the ramifications of what they have done and how they can change. The school counsellor will work within the school. They will work closely, as well, with the victim, if you like, rather than the perpetrator of the bullying, if we are talking about a bullying incident. But both have the capacity to work with both. So there is a network, targeted support and the school counsellor, school psychologist, in every school.

You wanted to know the current number of school counsellors. I have got it on one of my sheets, and I can tell you that. Do you want me to expand on anything else while I am looking for that?

**THE CHAIR:** No; that is fine. I just want to know what number of school counsellors we have got. Is it one per school?

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there one in every school, primary and secondary?

**Mr Gniel:** Yes; there is access to a counsellor in every school.

**Ms Mitchell:** There is access to a counsellor.

**Ms Burch:** It depends on the numbers.

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** It is the FTE.

**Ms Mitchell:** If you want to know the staffing situation in week 8, term 1 of 2013, it was as follows. There were 37.95 full-time equivalent counsellors, and we can go up to 41.7 full-time equivalent counsellors. As you know, there are 86 schools. Every school has access to a counsellor. Some counsellors work two days in one school, three days in another school et cetera. If a counsellor is on leave or away, they have access to a psychologist and a counsellor through their network student engagement team and through their network leaders. So there is always access to a counsellor.

**MR SMYTH:** Just on that, did we not call serious events “sentinel events”?

**Ms Mitchell:** Sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** Did we keep a register of the very serious events that occurred? Were they called “sentinel events”?

**Ms Mitchell:** Are you talking about critical incidents? Is that what you are saying?

**MR SMYTH:** Perhaps it is critical incidents.

**Ms Mitchell:** You mean do we keep records of critical incidents and suspensions?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Ms Mitchell:** Yes, we do.

**MR SMYTH:** Where are they published?

**Ms Mitchell:** Where are they published?

**MR SMYTH:** If one was to follow the trend in critical incidents, where would one find that data?

**Ms Stewart:** We do keep internal records on suspensions, and we are doing some work on improving that data at the moment. It is a dataset that is not as reliable as I would like it to be; we are seeking some improvements before we could consider at all publishing that data. In terms of critical incidents, we tend to monitor those on a case-by-case basis. There are a very small number. They are managed through the Office for Schools; the school network leaders report particular incidents. Because we have such small numbers, we do, as I said, track those individually; we do not report aggregate data on critical incidents.

**MR SMYTH:** What is a critical incident?

**Ms Cover:** I can answer that, Mr Smyth, if you would like. As in previous years, critical incidents can be a number of different issues in schools. They can be anything as broad as significant disruptions to our schools’ normal processes. It could include a school lockdown, an evacuation or a school closure for a number of reasons; police notification and involvement in the school; or a threat to a student or staff. But it is important to point out that those critical incidents that we do monitor and keep records of, as Ms Stewart mentioned, can occur off school sites. They can involve traffic incidents that occur around the school areas. They could involve injury to a staff member or a student on a school site or off a school site. And, of course, they could involve out of hours incidents in that sort of broad definition.

**DR BOURKE:** Do you record that data for non-government schools?

**Ms Cover:** No.



**MR SMYTH:** In the 2012-13 financial year, how many critical incidents have there been to date?

**Ms Cover:** In the first quarter of this year, there have been three reported critical incidents in our schools, which is a decline from 16 during the same period last year. Obviously, we are still in the next quarter at this stage.

**MR SMYTH:** So in the first quarter of 2012 there were 16?

**Ms Cover:** In 2012 we saw a decline in the number of critical incidents reported from the previous years, but in the first quarter of 2013 there have been three reported critical incidents.

**MR SMYTH:** In 2011, how many critical incidents were there for the full year?

**Ms Cover:** Sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** You do it on a calendar year because of school year?

**Ms Cover:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** In 2011, how many critical incidents were there?

**Ms Cover:** I do not have that data with me today.

**MR SMYTH:** In 2012 it was 16?

**Ms Cover:** In 2012, for the first quarter—I do not have that breakdown.

**MR SMYTH:** But for the full year.

**Ms Cover:** For the full year, 34.

**MR SMYTH:** So in 2012 it was 34. And in the year to date for 2013?

**Ms Cover:** Three for the first quarter. The other point I should have made is, just to give some context, a reminder that, as people have mentioned today, across 86 schools with over 40,000 students obviously issues do happen but those numbers are fairly low.

**MR SMYTH:** The three in the first quarter this year—what were they?

**Ms Cover:** I do not have that information at hand.

**MR SMYTH:** Could we have the critical incidents for 2011-12 and 2013—as much data as you have got?

**Ms Burch:** As in type and numbers?

**MR SMYTH:** And a breakdown.

**Ms Burch:** Yes. As Ms Cover said, whilst it is defined as a critical incident, there is quite a range within there about what it is.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, could I just go back to Mr Hanson's original question on this line. That was about bullying. There have been a lot of technological changes in the last decade or so. Do you log into incidents of cyber bullying at school?

**Ms Burch:** There is certainly a lot of work around cyber bullying; Ms Mitchell can talk about that. It is just around giving the young folk the skills to manage it. As we all know, so many young folk are on social media these days that it is important that we work with them.

**Ms Mitchell:** As Minister Burch said, we do significant work with students in all schools about cyber bullying—what is cyber bullying and what you can do about cyber bullying—in the same way we do work with our students around all aspects of bullying. Students know who to talk to, where to get help. It is openly discussed in pastoral care situations, at school events. We have close relationships with the police; the police can talk about cyber bullying and why it is illegal. We have run forums on cyber bullying. It is something that we talk about regularly in schools.

**Ms Burch:** There are two components of this. It is working with the young folk around education and awareness, but there is also the mechanical side of things, which the chief information officer will give you some information on.

**Mr Huxley:** We also have internet filtering across all of our schools as part of the central IT services that we provide. That will prevent access to inappropriate material or kids stumbling across information. That also can be tailored to meet the schools' needs. In our colleges, obviously, principals can relax those a bit in terms of greater access to internet-based resources. But there is monitoring in place. All of our students have to identify themselves, and if they go to the internet we can prevent them from accessing any inappropriate content through the application of those filters.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It just allows them to still operate with their own mobile phones, though, or portable devices?

**Mr Huxley:** There is the use of mobile phones in schools in terms of their own portable devices. We do have wireless networks in our schools. It is a school-based decision as to whether they enable their students to use their own personal devices. Many of our students do have personal devices, and many of them are beginning to bring them to our schools. But they go through the same filters whether they are on their own device or ours. We still, though, cannot prevent them accessing or using their own 3G networks that are paid for by their parents in those circumstances.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, moving along to things happening in my electorate, what work is underway to expand Macgregor Primary School and why is it needed?

**Ms Burch:** We might have someone from capital works come back up and give you that. And while he is here, we may go to Belconnen High School as well.

**Mr Bray:** I am just flicking over to my latest notes on Macgregor.

**Mr Whybrow:** While he does that, maybe I can identify that it was a priority budget initiative that provided total funding for the Macgregor Primary School of \$5.65 million. Works are well underway, with the estimated expenditure to 30 June in the order of \$2.65 million.

**Ms Burch:** That statement clearly reflects the growth in the area, but Mr Bray can go to the detail.

**Mr Bray:** What the minister has said is obviously correct; that region, that area of the ACT, is growing quite rapidly. That was shown in the demographic projections produced by the planning and performance branch, which resulted in our putting in a budget bid to gain the funds that Mr Whybrow has just referred to.

Essentially we are increasing the school from three classes in each year cohort to four classes in the cohort. That will give a total capacity of around 588 students from kindergarten to year 6. There is currently only one other school which has four streams; that is Red Hill Primary School. When we finish the work at Macgregor, and also at Majura, they will also be four-stream schools. In total, we are giving them an additional eight teaching spaces as part of the work. But, of course, you need to do a lot of other support spaces to accommodate the additional teaching staff in the school in those spaces. The works are being done in four stages. Stage 1 has been completed and stage 2 is well advanced. All stages will be completed in late September, which is obviously well in advance of the start of next year.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you tell me more, minister, about the demographic projections that your directorate does in deciding how and where to provide additional facilities?

**Ms Burch:** Sorry, what was the second part of that question?

**DR BOURKE:** About how and where to provide additional school facilities.

**Ms Burch:** We do keep track of the population growth. Molonglo will clearly have school requirements. As new suburbs come online in developments such as west Macgregor, we respond to that. But there is a deliberate forward plan that will put us, in many ways, in good stead, not only for Molonglo but for suburbs around the northern end of Gungahlin as well.

**Ms Stewart:** Yes, and also continuing growth in west Belconnen. I am sure everybody is aware that there are a number of developments underway and also planned for west Belconnen. Our projections model goes out quite a number of years. Obviously, with any projections, those closer to the current time are more reliable, but we do actually project out up to 30 years. We use a range of demographic information, including birth rates. We use market share information to understand the impact on our public schools. We work very closely with our colleagues across the ACT government to take into account the land release program and the timing of those land releases. We also look at the capacities and issues around nearby schools to determine what the demand might be for either expanding the school or, particularly in greenfield areas, where we might have a need for a new school.

**DR BOURKE:** Let us move on to Belconnen.

**Ms Burch:** Yes. We certainly made a substantive commitment to Belconnen. It is reflected in stage 1 by \$2 million in this budget. That is to provide some immediate work. Mr Bray can talk about what that is. When you are doing such investment in the school, it is important to work with the school community about what it looks like, what the broader picture is and how you invest \$28 million to get the best result for that school community. But there is \$2 million in this budget and that has an immediate effect. Work can start quite quickly.

**Mr Bray:** Following on from the minister, the allocation of the \$2 million in 2013-14 will give us an opportunity to do the master planning work for what we see as a staged development at the school. We are in the process now of engaging a consultant to help us prepare what we call a functional design brief, which will then be the document which describes the nature of how we want to do the master planning process. We believe we will have the master plan work finished, hopefully, by the end of this calendar year. From that master plan we will then agree and define the stage 1 works, which will be essentially funded by the \$2 million in the budget. We would be hoping to have that work, if not completed, substantially advanced by the end of next calendar year, the end of 2014.

We have met with the school principal already. We had discussions about what he sees as being the important issues. He is representing the school community. He has obviously had discussions with the school board. We have taken that on board. The initial focus, we believe, will be around improving the administration frontage areas and possibly some work associated with the library. We will look at some infrastructure work, particularly around ICT, to help the school bridge some of the deficiencies in supporting the students with effective ICT infrastructure.

That is where the focus will be in the initial phase of the work. More importantly, we will certainly work through developing a comprehensive master plan that gives the school confidence about how we will do that development.

**DR BOURKE:** I am glad you raised the issue of ICT because as schools rely more and more on ICT technology and devices, and they have a range of equipment, students have at least one if not multiple devices which they want to log on to and connect with wifi. What technical support do you have to put in place to resolve the problems that are reported from time to time?

**Ms Burch:** We might wait for the chief information officer to come forward. With the next generation of devices, we probably will not even know their capacity yet, but it is about doing that early policy work about how we manage our own devices within the school environment and how we continue our own upgrades with our ICT systems.

**Mr Huxley:** The ACT currently has a very enviable position in terms of the amount of infrastructure and devices we have out now in our public schools. We are moving through a significant change process in the way that ICT is managed in our schools. The history of ICT is that the student networks have been managed by the schools themselves. That basically required the school to manage their own network, their

own servers, their own infrastructure and devices. We are moving to centralise those services because of the high-speed fibre we have to all of our schools. Those skills and abilities to manage the network can now be provided centrally by our partner, Shared Services ICT. We began to bring schools on to that new network at the start of this year.

**DR BOURKE:** Schoolsnet?

**Mr Gniel:** Schoolsnet; that is correct. Schoolsnet currently has 45 schools on. We will have 55 by the end of this financial year, and all schools on to the network by the end of this calendar year. So it is progressing very well. It is removing the burden of ICT technical management from our schools and providing central support and expertise from Shared Services ICT.

**DR BOURKE:** That is certainly something that the AEU mentioned when they were in here two weeks ago—those issues around provision of ICT technical support. I am glad to hear that something has been done about it.

**Ms Burch:** It is one of those school empowerment notions about what is best done from a central system. So the schools are making those education decisions locally. I think that schoolsnet and having that centralised ICT support and expertise is a smart way of doing it.

**THE ACTING CHAIR (Dr Bourke):** If we do not have any more supplementaries or questions in that area, we might move on to non-government education.

**MR SMYTH:** I have a final question on Gonski and then we can go to non-government. Minister, on behalf of the opposition, Steve Doszpot wrote to you on 30 May seeking a briefing on the Gonski reforms, which he is yet to receive. When will the opposition be given a briefing on Gonski by your officials?

**Ms Burch:** I have approached that by providing some detailed written information back to Mr Doszpot. Once he returns from leave and he has gone through that, we can provide a briefing. So at least that detailed information gives a good starting point.

**MR SMYTH:** There is less detail in your letter than there is in the budget, and your letter actually concludes with, “Please contact my officers if you require further information.” Will he be provided with a briefing or not?

**Ms Burch:** So you read Mr Doszpot’s letters, do you?

**MR SMYTH:** I have had it forwarded to me so that I could ask you this question, minister.

**Ms Burch:** And your question is?

**MR SMYTH:** Will he be given a briefing as he requested in his initial letter?

**Ms Burch:** I am quite happy to give him a briefing, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** It does not actually say that in your response.

**Ms Burch:** And?

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, the minister has already said she will give the man a briefing. I think we can move along.

**MR SMYTH:** You would have thought, Mr Acting Chair, that if somebody had written you a letter asking for a briefing you might actually say, “Yes, I would be happy to provide a briefing.” But you will give that briefing when he returns? Thank you very much.

**Ms Burch:** I am quite happy to make contact with his office and offer him a briefing.

**MR SMYTH:** That is very decent, minister.

**Ms Burch:** I thought so.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Smyth. We will move on to some questions about non-government education. Minister, the budget provides \$1.3 million per year to support non-government preschools. How will this funding be used and have you had discussions with the non-government sector about the distribution of that funding?

**Ms Burch:** Yes, we have had discussions with the non-government sector about that. That is around supporting non-government preschools, clearly, as the line says. It is my understanding—Mr Whybrow can probably go through the detail—it will be administered through the board of grants, the grants system. The first shovel-ready project is at St Jude’s; that is my understanding.

**Mr Whybrow:** St Jude’s, Holder; that is correct. The \$1.3 million per annum provided in the budget is to support non-government schools with expanding access to preschools within their setting. That will provide capital infrastructure grants to the schools to either improve existing locations or the expansion of new. We have had, in developing the implementation of that, discussions with key representatives of the sector as to how we do that, to get things up and running. Of that \$1.3 million, \$500,000 has been approved for the shovel-ready project that the minister has identified at St Jude’s, Holder. The development of the key criteria is happening in conjunction with the block grant authority, who provides the administration of commonwealth capital grants programs. So rather than create a new administrative burden we have had some discussions with them. We will work on the exact detail with them and also the key non-government stakeholders for the remainder of the year. We will go into stage 2 grants next year and then further annual grants each year after that.

**Ms Burch:** I think they were very welcoming of the additional investment in their schools.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, in budget paper 4, page 293 shows an extra \$12 million from the commonwealth government for non-government schools. Can

you tell us how that will assist that sector?

**Mr Whybrow:** I touched on this earlier in response to Gonski funding. To be specific, I only mentioned in response to Mr Smyth's question the special education component. Of that \$2.7 million annually, in the outyears that contributes to the ACT government's response to the new Gonski funding. In the first year there is additional funding through existing mechanisms. I should make that clear in relation to Gonski funding. The way that you ensure schools are not worse off over time is to have a transition to a new model, and this transition period for us is over a six-year period to get to the new model. There is additional funding of the \$2 million which I mentioned through the SCAN allocation to the non-government schools, so that like-with-like component of how it is handed out within the government schools.

The remaining \$700,000 is additional targeted funding to be provided to schools under a student equity fund. That is to be provided for the extra targeted component. Mr Gniel has gone through those sorts of things—indigeneity, low socioeconomic background and English proficiency. They are examples. So it is actually getting up and running on that from 1 July.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** There is also \$2.5 million for ICT in non-government schools in budget paper 3, page 141. How will that assist that sector?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct. That relates to a government response to an election commitment. Again, consulting with the non-government sector is the best way to provide those funds to schools. We sought their input into that. We will be providing an amount per school—a base amount of \$5,000 per school and then the remainder handed out based on the per capita enrolments at that school under the existing needs-based model that the ACT government uses. So that provides an amount to enable all non-government schools to keep their ICT maintained and also the concept of that election commitment, which was access to broadband.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Do they report back to you on what they have spent those funds on?

**Mr Whybrow:** Under our existing arrangements, the ACT government has MOUs with each of the non-government schools. Specifically under that MOU it identifies the funds and their purpose, and there is an annual acquittal of those positions.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Good, thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** The output class on page 292 of budget paper 4 shows total costs dropping by a million dollars. Why is that?

**Mr Whybrow:** I knew you would see that, with your eagle eyes. That relates to—let me just confirm—293?

**MR SMYTH:** No, 292.

**MR SMYTH:** We will get to 293 in a minute.

**Mr Whybrow:** If you are looking at the non-government school output class, you are talking about an estimated outcome of \$4.791 million reducing for this budget to \$3.762 million. Is that what you are talking about?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** We have been through, I guess ad nauseum, a number of national partnerships that are coming to an end. This actually relates to the teacher quality national partnership and differentials in the funding between the years.

**MR SMYTH:** How many staff does that mean are lost?

**Mr Whybrow:** Maybe I should hand you over to Michael Bateman who can give you some background about exactly what that teacher quality national partnership is and how the funds are used.

**Mr Bateman:** Could you repeat the question?

**MR SMYTH:** There is a million dollar reduction in the GPO and the total costs. Why? And does it involve staff losses?

**Ms Burch:** We will not be a moment.

**Mr Bateman:** Yes, just getting our head around it.

**MR SMYTH:** I am sure a fulsome answer is coming.

**Mr Bateman:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** Mr Whybrow.

**Mr Whybrow:** It relates to the NP funds. That is a grant. Forty per cent is paid to the non-government sector and it is being paid out of that output class. Confirming that information for myself, if I take you back to an estimated outcome component, there is a grants line, which is unusual for a non-government operative, that shows grants payments in our estimated outcome. So it is not staff, it is grants payments to non-government schools.

**MR SMYTH:** How many staff are involved in output 2.1?

**Ms Burch:** That is grants to non-government schools.

**Mr Whybrow:** It is grants to non-government schools.

**MR SMYTH:** The whole of the class?

**Mr Whybrow:** No, sorry. There is an element of attribution. If I take you to page 315, it says employee expenses of \$1.7 million. This relates to a share of central services. The most significant of those relates to the BSSS. The Board of Senior Secondary Studies provides services to both the government and non-government sectors. While



there are operations, their staffing levels are being reported, and approximately 11 staff within their area have been allocated to the non-government sector in providing those services to the non-government sector. That operating statement, which talks about funding recurrent in the order of \$3 million, is talking about those sorts of things, central directorate functions that provide services that are allocated to the non-government sector.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is 11 staff, and there is no staff reduction in the coming year?

**Mr Whybrow:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** Staying on page 315 then, there is the minus 20 per cent in total revenue. That is the drop in the payments, the drop in the grants?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Could we have a breakdown of the increase, back on page 293, in the commonwealth money and the ACT government money please?

**Mr Whybrow:** Sorry, 293, a breakdown of the?

**MR SMYTH:** Grants paid to non-government schools.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Commonwealth increases from 152 to 164.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Could we have a detailed breakdown of—

**Mr Whybrow:** By school?

**MR SMYTH:** If you can do it by school, please do so.

**Mr Whybrow:** Because that is the nature of how it is. That funding in total is a by-school allocation

**MR SMYTH:** If we can have that by school, that would be sensational.

**Mr Whybrow:** My difficulty is that we have an MOU with the individual schools where we do not provide their details publicly.

**Ms Burch:** Yes. We will provide what we can, mindful of the arrangements that we have in place.

**THE CHAIR:** What does that mean?

**Ms Burch:** It just means that, if, as Mr Whybrow has indicated, there is an MOU, the level of detail of the school name is not put out. We will go through those, reflect on

those and bring back to you what we can. We cannot breach any existing agreement with individual schools.

**MR SMYTH:** Whatever you can provide.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** We will start with a breakdown of that \$221 million, is that what we are talking about?

**MR SMYTH:** Can we have a breakdown of what the ACT government funding is as well, what the increase from 51 to 56 means?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Or is that individually by school as well?

**Mr Whybrow:** I am trying to understand the question. It is actually by individual programs, not by schools. I was talking earlier about SCAN allocations versus—

**MR SMYTH:** Provide both, if we may; whatever you can provide.

**Ms Burch:** Yes, we will give you what we can.

**MR SMYTH:** In the commonwealth grants, did any school's funding go down?

**Mr Whybrow:** I am sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** In the commonwealth grants, did any school's funding go down, decrease?

**Mr Whybrow:** The commitment in the new arrangement talks about no reduction in per capita grants. So under a new Gonski model if there is a reduction in number of students, there would be a reduction in grants to schools but there would not be a reduction in per capita amounts to schools.

**Ms Burch:** That is the principle.

**Mr Whybrow:** That is the principle of the new funding arrangement.

**MR SMYTH:** If a school's grant from the commonwealth went down, it is a consequence of the school numbers going down?

**Mr Whybrow:** That would be the case.

**MR SMYTH:** Whatever breakdown you could give, that would be gratefully received.

**Mr Whybrow:** A breakdown, yes, I can most definitely.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, before I move on, I wonder whether you would be prepared

to indicate your support for the contest that is going on federally.

**Ms Burch:** If you want to go into politics, I can go into politics but it may not end up pretty.

**DR BOURKE:** Is that the Victorians versus the commonwealth on Gonski?

**Ms Burch:** Gonski is in law now, and I think that is a very good thing. So I ask you a political question: will you be standing up and making sure it stays in law or will you seek to have it repealed?

**THE CHAIR:** Fortunately I get to ask the questions. You get to answer them. What we will do is take a break one minute early and we will reconvene at 3.45.

**Sitting suspended from 3.26 to 3.47 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Members and minister, I note that we are moving to output class 2.2, children's services, but I think there are still remaining questions for non-government schools. If everyone is agreeable we might continue with that before we move on. Mr Whybrow might be the best person to answer this. I am trying to understand the funding model for non-government schools. My understanding is that it is based on SES levels and for the systemic Catholics schools at the national level it has been agreed that is 101 or 111. Is that right—whatever that means?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is probably a question for Mr Peffer.

**THE CHAIR:** There are different ratings of SES. My understanding is that the Catholic schools have been set at a certain level, but that is not the case for independent schools. I am just trying to understand what it all means really.

**Mr Peffer:** SES scores are used to define funding sources. The SES model provides an allocation of funding to a school given the number of students and those student characteristics. If that is an independent Catholic or government school with exactly the same characteristics, those funding amounts will be exactly the same. However, for the non-government sector there is then an SES capacity to contribute factor which is introduced. The higher the SES rating the higher the fees the model deems that parents are able to pay for students attending that school. That will then influence the level of public funding. In a sense, it substitutes between the two.

Within the ACT we have a situation where often SES scores can mask disadvantage. The reason we have that is that in a region that has quite high SES where a school may be located, and hence the model says that parents should have a capacity to pay, which is quite high, we could have patches of significant disadvantage. In the Catholic school system, we have observed that the students attending schools in that system are from a much wider range of backgrounds and their parents are facing different circumstances to those in the independent sector. That does not apply to every parent, obviously, but on average that is what we have observed. The model uses a national average for Catholic schools which, I think, is 101, as you said, Mr Hanson. It does not do that for independent schools. The reason is—

**THE CHAIR:** What does that 101 mean in dollar terms? That is the SES level. Does each SES level have a dollar figure attached to it per capita? So if you are 101 that equals X thousand dollars per capita, does it?

**Mr Peffer:** It is not that straightforward. It relates back to a ratio which is used to determine the split of funding between public or private sources. As that number incrementally increases, the ratio of contributions that would be sought from the parents likewise increases.

**THE CHAIR:** That 101 figure, you said, is the same one used in the public school system as well, is it?

**Mr Peffer:** No. There is no capacity to contribute factored into the government side. It is just all assumed to be public funding.

**THE CHAIR:** So that is the systemic Catholic school system. You have then got the independent schools. How is it calculated for them—individually per school or is there an ACT figure? How does that work?

**Mr Peffer:** No, it is calculated on a per school basis.

**THE CHAIR:** Per school.

**Mr Peffer:** My understanding is that when this was discussed between the federal government and the Catholic system, because they are a system, they are allocated a sum of funding. Like the government sector, they can devise their own funding model, which is based on the Gonski principles, to reallocate between their different schools. The change in the SES allows them to do that, whereas with an independent school there is no reallocation that can actually take place because there is no overseeing body. The funding goes direct to individual schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Who makes that decision about what SES a school is? There are a number of them—Blue Gum, Brindabella Christian College or Canberra grammar. There are a lot of different schools there, a lot of different characteristics. How is the decision made about what SES those schools are?

**Mr Peffer:** When you say, “How is the decision made” do you mean—

**THE CHAIR:** Who makes the decision and how is it made? You are saying that the Catholic system is 101, but let us take Brindabella Christian College. What is the SES attributed to that school?

**Ms Burch:** You are talking about the negotiations between the commonwealth and the independent schools?

**THE CHAIR:** You just said that each school in the independent school system has their own SES attributed to them. How is that done?

**Mr Peffer:** That is a statistical measure. I might have to take that on notice. My understanding is that it would be based on some sort of ABS-type measurement.

**THE CHAIR:** Based on the geographic location of the school?

**Mr Pepper:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** My understanding was that we had moved away from that in the ACT because of the flaws in looking at things based on their geographical location, because demographics, as you said, can be very misleading.

**Mr Pepper:** That is right.

**THE CHAIR:** You might get an independent school located somewhere—the Islamic school is a good example. There is one Islamic school that is located in Weston but that would not reflect the SES of the people going there because they are drawn from all over Canberra. If you took the SES for the Weston area you would end up with something like 118. I do not know what it would be; I am guessing. But the people they are drawing from are coming from Charnwood and Gordon and places with a much lower SES. So how does that work?

**Mr Pepper:** I cannot really respond to that. The way this model was put together by the commonwealth had two different situations prevailing. One relates to systems where you can use averages. The other, for individual schools, is a situation where you cannot. The commonwealth themselves have accepted that the SES approach to capacity to contribute is not ideal. They have flagged that as an area that they are going to revisit. Mark might have some further advice on this, but this is an area that they will be revisiting under this model to try and improve.

**THE CHAIR:** If you are not able to answer it now, I think it is an important area to follow up on. There is uncertainty, I guess, for a number of these schools, particularly if this funding is being fixed. There are funding guarantees. If they are looking down the track of an SES that says that they are going to be provided far less if they are in Weston than they would be if they were in Gordon, all of a sudden these different schools are going to move to lower SES areas.

**Ms Burch:** We will provide what we can, but it certainly is my understanding through the directorate that we are working through that. Correspondence is going to each and every school about what the expectation for their forward years of costs will be. We will certainly be informing each and every school, independents, individually and through the Catholic system, about what this allocation means for them and the school. I think Mr Pepper has indicated he will get some information back to the committee.

**Mr Pepper:** I might also just point out to the committee that in the national education reform agreement, which is up on the better schools website, clauses 108 and 109 in that agreement talk about the future review that will be undertaken into the SES measure. It will be reviewed and put to the education ministers standing council for consideration by parties from 1 January 2015. So there is an expectation that they will devise an improved measure going forward.

**THE CHAIR:** The review is going to happen then, but the funding will not be until 2015-16 at best; maybe 2016-17. It would appear that a couple of these schools are

going to be hit quite hard, be it Blue Gum, Brindabella Christian College or the Islamic school.

**Ms Burch:** When you say “hit quite hard”, there is no school getting less funding under this.

**Mr Pepper:** No, that is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** If you can take that on notice and if you can provide me any—

**Ms Burch:** We will send through that we can.

**THE CHAIR:** Any more questions on non-government schools before we move on?

**DR BOURKE:** Indeed, chair. Minister, are you able to give me a breakdown of what percentage of secondary school students go to non-governments across the border and also for the government schools as well?

**Ms Burch:** Tracy Stewart will be able to give you that information.

**Ms Stewart:** Dr Bourke, I do not have the information with me. There are two components to students who attend school in the ACT from across the border, regardless of whether they are public schools or non-government schools. It is certainly the case, more so in non-government schools, that some students actually provide their address as being a New South Wales address. So we are able to report quite easily that in fact they are students who are going to school in the ACT who reside in New South Wales.

We are aware anecdotally that there may be some cases of students who are attending school in the ACT who are from New South Wales but, in fact, for one reason or another, have recorded an ACT address. For example, they may live part of the time with one parent and part of the time with another parent, and other similar circumstances. We suspect that the actual number of cross-border students is somewhat undercounted. The data is more reliable for non-government schools, and we do have some information on the number of students from New South Wales who are attending ACT non-government schools. I can provide that to you.

**Ms Burch:** Also, the school census has a clear breakdown across independent, Catholic and public schools across primary, high and college years as well.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you very much. Whilst we are on non-government schools, could you tell me, minister, how you measure your accountability indicator d. on page 297—satisfaction with the processes of the non-government school sector?

**Ms Stewart:** That satisfaction process is a survey. We survey a number of stakeholders involved with our non-government education processes. We send out that survey each year and ask them about their satisfaction. For our last financial year, 2011-12, we actually had 35 respondents to that particular survey. They are asked whether they are satisfied or very satisfied with the processes involved in non-government education. Those stakeholders could include, for example, principals,

proprietors of non-government schools. The Catholic Education Office is obviously a major stakeholder, as are some of the peak bodies, including the Association of Independent Schools. We also involve, for example, the ACT Home Educators Network in that survey.

**DR BOURKE:** This is an indicator which measures the satisfaction of the non-government education section in ET.

**Ms Stewart:** That is correct.

**DR BOURKE:** That is why you only got 35 respondents, because if it was parents that would be a really small number.

**Ms Stewart:** That was for the last financial year. I understand there are more this financial year. We are always trying to get feedback from our stakeholders. That is correct; that is the process as you outlined.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you very much.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Can I just go back, a supplementary to Dr Bourke's earlier question about the cross-border attendances, and ask: how do you plan that for the future of schools in the ACT? I am just looking at some of the new developments that are going to occur down south, especially near my electorate. Googong is planned for 16,000 new homes and I understand Tralee is going to be pretty big as well.

**Ms Burch:** It is within border, but it is certainly the new development of Riverview and all of that. Just looking at the growth across Murrumbateman and that area as well, it all needs to be factored in.

**Ms Stewart:** Under the memorandum of understanding that the ACT government and the Chief Minister have signed with the New South Wales government, we have greater collaboration around cross-border services, particularly in the priority areas of health and education. As a result, my area is working very closely with the New South Wales education department around students from New South Wales attending ACT schools and vice versa. As part of that greater collaboration, we are in constant contact with the department about their projections and their land development around surrounding areas of the ACT. We talk to them about what is happening in terms of population growth and new land releases and we take that into account in terms of how that might impact on ACT schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Anything further on non-government schools? We will move to output class 2, children's services. There has been some movement around a transfer between different directorates and different responsibilities. It might be useful for the committee if you could explain what is in this output class now so that we have a full understanding of what the responsibilities are.

**Ms Burch:** This unit, around child care and early education, has moved from CSD into ETD. But ETD always had government preschools. Mark can explain the administrative arrangements.

**Mr Whybrow:** In a financial sense, I refer you to where they are identified in this budget documentation. If you look at page 299, there is the transfer of resources from CSD to Education and Training. It is a technical adjustment. It is about six down the page. It talks about a transfer of funding from CSD across to ETD for the services of the childcare policy regulation unit. Their operation is probably best explained by someone else, but that is the financial component that is included in these budget papers, which talks about an ongoing amount of approximately \$1.5 million for the operations of that.

**THE CHAIR:** Are the accountability indicators somewhere else as well?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes, they are.

**THE CHAIR:** So they are under CSD? Or where?

**Mr Whybrow:** My understanding is that there is a part-year effect for the outcome this year, because they are reported in CSD for when they had operation and they are reported in ETD for our period of time where they have operated there. The only way to get a whole-year picture is to do them both. Sorry; I am jumping into other people's space.

**Ms Johnston:** On page 295, the accountability indicators are about halfway down, education and care services. The accountability indicators, those same ones, also appear on page 331 under CSD. The service moved over on 10 November last year. For accountability indicator a., the number of visits to approved education and care services, the target for 2013-14 is 504. The estimated outcome, our target, is 324; the other 180 actually sits over on page 331.

**Ms Burch:** Which is CSD.

**Ms Johnston:** Which is CSD. So 170 visits were conducted in the period from 1 July to 9 November with CSD. We are now tracking; we will actually meet and exceed the target for the number of visits once the unit came over to us.

**Ms Burch:** What used to be child care within CSD is now part of this.

**THE CHAIR:** The idea, I assume, is that there is a continuum in terms of child care and—

**Ms Burch:** And early education, yes. The whole framework—the early years, our learning framework—captures from the get-go, from as soon as a child enters an early education and care environment, which is considered child care. But we have certainly moved on from that with the national quality framework.

**THE CHAIR:** Where does this end and ETD start? Preschool—is that the last?

**Ms Burch:** Early education and care includes preschool.

**THE CHAIR:** Includes preschool?



**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**Ms Johnston:** Yes, it does.

**THE CHAIR:** So preschool, and then from—

**Ms Burch:** From kindergarten, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** From kindergarten up is—

**Ms Burch:** Yes, primary.

**THE CHAIR:** We had the preschool association appear before us last Friday week. Did you listen to their evidence?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** They made a budget submission for a number of people to support them; you would have heard the evidence. They seemed to get a bit of what they wanted, but they are not particularly satisfied. Is there any reason why you have not agreed with their budget submission? Could you give an explanation, having heard the evidence?

**Ms Burch:** There were a number of budget submissions, not just from the preschool association but from a range of organisations. I might ask Mark Whybrow to unpack some of the submissions and also the support that—

**THE CHAIR:** Theirs was particularly about coordinators, I think.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. I do not like to put my perspective on other people's views, but my understanding is that in their submission they were talking about the establishment of a special school network leader for preschools. The concept is that, from an ETD position, we have school network leaders who cover preschools at the moment. They provide support to primary schools, high schools, colleges and preschools. Part of the submission was talking about employing additional school network leaders which would only focus on the area of preschool. That was something that they identified. They had meetings with us. When they talked about that, we said, "That does not actually sit within our framework of how we operate. It is an important part. We have integration between our preschools right through to year 12, not separating that off."

There is, in here, in relation to an election commitment, funding around preschool matters. That program is in the budget papers, again on that page we keep referring back to in BP3, that funding. We will work with the preschool association. I think even in their evidence they talked about providing support to 27 government preschools at the moment. There are 77 government preschools at the moment. There are other key stakeholders, the P&C association. You would have seen that earlier when we talked about a 1.3 annual component to provide capital funding for the expansion of access into non-government schools.

In relation to the preschool funding of, I think in the order of \$350,000 over the four

years, that funding will be provided for the purpose of engaging with the parents, but it is not only through one organisation. Yes, we will continue to work with them, but there is a broader group who have interest in that.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, could you update the committee on works underway to expand and upgrade our childcare centres?

**Ms Burch:** We most certainly can. There is some capital funding in here to support expansion of early educational services—child care, as it is most commonly referred to. This builds on budgets in earlier years as well. We have made a significant effort over the last number of years to invest in increasing, expanding and upgrading children's services across the ACT, because it is about providing choice and opportunity for Canberra families.

The \$2 million in this will go to increase areas of need across Canberra. Earlier work had a focus on the under-2s. Recently I was out at Charnwood, where they had just had some works completed. They were able to expand the number of places on offer for their local families but also improve the amenity around the education area and their staff amenity. They were very happy with the work that they had done there. I might ask Mr Bray to talk about what we have done and what we hope to do with this \$2 million.

**Mr Bray:** In relation to the funding of \$9 million that was allocated in 2011 and 2012, that was to undertake upgrade and expansion works at nine early childhood care centres. Let me give an update on those. The status is that the work has been completed at Black Mountain and Cooida, which is at Charnwood. We are expecting to complete the works at Campbell cottage and Greenway childcare centres by the end of June; in the next week, we will have those two sites finished.

Works are also underway at Narrabundah cottage; they are programmed to be completed by August. As soon as that is completed, in order to allow the work to be done at Nimbin child care, we need to move the children back over to Narrabundah. So Nimbin child care will commence immediately following Narrabundah. We are also about to call tenders, in July, for the work to be undertaken at Forrest and Fyshwick childcare centres. That totals eight. The last one remaining after that is at Totom house in Kaleen. We are just about to engage a consultant to look at two options as to whether we look at upgrading and expanding the existing facility or we look at another location, to relocate that facility to a more appropriate building if that is an option. That accounts for the nine that were funded in 2011-12.

As the minister referred to, we have been allocated \$2 million in 2013-14. We have not yet scoped those works. That is mainly because we are still getting our heads around the 33 childcare centres that were transferred over. My team is yet to scope what works at what centres. But we believe that those funds should, in total, give us up to an additional 40 new childcare spaces. That is the sort of target we will be trying to achieve in scoping those works.

**Ms Burch:** Part of what Mr Bray was saying is that administratively it happened in

November, but this capital infrastructure, these properties, have more recently been transferred across. They have moved. It is a work in progress. Some decided to stay within CSD to be finished; others have moved across to ETD.

**Mr Bray:** Yes; that is correct.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, I understand work is also completed at the Franklin Early Childhood School. Could you tell us how that progressed and how it is budgeted?

**Ms Burch:** That is an absolutely wonderful school. I had the pleasure of being out there on the first day of school. The kids were happy; the parents were anxious. That would be a way of describing the first day of very early schools. That was a very successful project—that response to needs in that area. I might ask Mr Whybrow or Mr Bray to make comment on that. It is a fabulous school and they had a really great outcome, but through that—and Bonner, which is another new school in the area—we have delivered first-class facilities and have come in under budget.

**Mr Whybrow:** I point members to page 302, talking about funding. Under various technical adjustments, I will get you to look down at “Revised funding profile—Franklin Early Childhood School”. It talks about an estimated outcome for 2012-13 of minus \$3 million and then another estimate. Normally when you have profile adjustments you are moving money between years. This is identifying the 2013-14 year, which is the final year. As the minister says, we have delivered that project on time. Those two amounts there identify that we have also delivered it \$14 million under budget. A similar position has been identified for the Bonner primary school, with a \$7.5 million reduction in funding required in 2012-13, and 6.5. So again it is \$14 million under budget. I will hand over to Rodney to talk about the detail of those schools, but in simple terms it is saying, “On time, under budget.”

**Ms Burch:** It is smart contracting and smart work by the directorate.

**Mr Bray:** In relation to Franklin Early Childhood School, it is the first greenfield early childhood school that we have constructed in the ACT. The first four were refurbishments of existing primary schools located at Isabella Plains, Lyons, Narrabundah and Southern Cross, which is in Scullin.

With the design for the Franklin project, we used the lessons learnt from those four sites where we refurbished. We then obviously enhanced those lessons learnt with a whole new design. We think the design is quite innovative. It particularly focuses on community involvement in the form of parents being very much part of the facility’s operation. There are facilities there for parents to stay after they have dropped their children off and meet with teachers and interact with the kids. We have formed an area—we refer to it as a plaza—which is an internal space protected from the weather in terms of strong winds and high heat. The idea is that the parents feel very comfortable to stay and be part of the care and the learning program. That is something we particularly picked up from the Southern Cross early childhood site, where that sort of close parental involvement has been very successful. We were very keen to reproduce that at the Franklin project.

The success of the budget is a combination of a number of factors. One main one was

the very competitive construction market over the last 12 or 18 months. We also moved to a lump sum form of contracting, which we felt was a big influence on it. And the nature of that contract was a very collaborative or working relationship as distinct from the adversarial sort of role that can be part of some other contracts.

**DR BOURKE:** You talked about lessons learnt. Apart from the desire of parents to stay on after they have dropped off their children, what else did you learn from those other projects?

**Mr Bray:** One of the big ones is the integration of the childcare provider. Anglicare are the provider at Franklin. We engaged with them quite early on the design and how they wanted to operate within the facility. They were very much a part of the consultation process, whereas with the previous four sites they were very much after the event. They were engaged through a tendering process but they arrived after we had finished the project.

Anglicare were part of the delivery of the project. They shifted into the facility and commissioned their activities very smoothly. They were the first service in, in early January. They began operation before the school year. We had to work around that need for them. We did not have any complaints. We had a very good working relationship. The service started up smoothly, and I think between them and the principal of the school there was a very good working relationship. So I think it was a very smooth start-up for that service.

In terms of other areas we learnt from, we think the playground areas are particularly innovative. There is obviously the usual separation of play within the different age groups, to manage the different activities they do and also the interaction between different age groups, which can be challenging. With the landscaping equipment, the play equipment and the environment, it is very much about kids interacting with the materials, different play activities—in essence, encouraging kids to interact with each other and learn social skills. So it is about both formal care, introducing the learning aspects, and also the social development of the kids through the play areas and the spaces within the school.

**DR BOURKE:** With the physical design of the school, it was a greenfield development, as you say. What lessons have you learnt from your previous efforts in refurbishing the other four that you have already done that you brought to the design elements of Franklin? I should imagine that with smaller people, you do not need such heavy-duty lawns, for instance?

**Mr Bray:** No. The environment is very much a soft appearance, lots of bright colours, different colours. The furniture is done to a scale where the kids feel very comfortable to move around in the buildings. There is a lot of natural light and ventilation through the buildings. So the kids have a sense of connection with the outside. There are large doors going from the classrooms directly into the courtyard play areas.

The other benefit of the courtyard is that the younger kids can actually see the older children playing in the adjoining play spaces. So they see a natural progression in moving through the facility as they get older, and they see the next space that they will shift into. So there is very much a sense that they are part of a school community,

and the kids learn from their older peers as they move through the facility.

One of the strengths is that parents have a strong physical presence in the school. They access the school through informal entry points. There is not only the main entry; they can enter the school from various points. There is a close point for parents to enter and they can feel they are part of whichever service they are accessing, whether it be childcare, preschool or the older years. There are also spaces provided for the local community to use for community activities. There has been an effort to link the school with the adjoining neighbours and residents. We have had feedback during the construction phase that the adjoining residents have been very happy with the way the building has been constructed and the sense that it is part of their neighbourhood.

**Ms Burch:** And you had an open day too, for the general community.

**Mr Bray:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** Whilst, obviously, the students and families are involved in it, not everyone in the neighbourhood has a young one there. I spoke to a number of local residents that saw this building being constructed and the fencing around it. They really welcomed the opportunity to go in and have a look at the new school in their patch. Also, because of facilities such as the hall, which is opened up for community use, they could get a sense of what they could possibly do there and participate in the school.

**DR BOURKE:** You mentioned facilities for parents after they have dropped their children off. What sorts of facilities are you talking about?

**Mr Bray:** When you enter through the main entry foyer or main entry doors, you enter the administration area. There is very much an open space. There are soft furnishings, lounge chairs, and it is integrated with the library area. There are beverage-making facilities there. There is actually a little meeting room so that parents who would like to meet as a group can choose to meet informally in that space. If they have something they want to discuss privately, they have a meeting room immediately adjacent to that open area. They can shift into that space.

Being part of the library means that kids are coming and going, getting books, moving around. The parents are very much in the students' actual school space. The idea is that they are welcome to stay and feel part of the school. Depending on how much involvement they want, they can choose to go deeper into the school, either into the internal plaza or down to the canteen, if they want to be part of the canteen activity. Also, the hall is just to the right of that area, so they can be part of any exercise or recreational activities that the students might be doing in the hall.

**DR BOURKE:** You also mentioned multiple entry points for parents. How does that impact on security, which must be an issue when you have got such small children?

**Mr Bray:** The entry points are controlled by time, basically. The access to the childcare entry, for instance, can only occur after Anglicare have opened the service, because they are fixed opening hours. But parents who are accessing that service

know that they can park in a separate car parking area and they can quickly enter through one door and enter that zone. Alternatively, if they go to preschool, they just drive up that same road a bit further and there is another entry point there, and that only opens when the staff arrive at the school. Again, it is determined by the principal of the school. The principal has options to lock down or open up, depending on how she wants to operate those areas of the school. It is up to the principal and her deputy principal to work through those issues. We made the facility flexible for them to allow that to happen, basically.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, you mentioned satisfaction from parents and neighbours before. Does the directorate undertake any formal assessment of satisfaction about this particular school and whether there are some lessons that you can learn? Obviously you are going to be building more schools in the future.

**Ms Burch:** There is a general satisfaction survey that we look to, and certainly build on any of the information that comes from there. Being a new school, certainly the local school community, whether it is through the board or the P&C, will be very in tune to what the local community think. The new school is certainly developing its culture and it is very early days, but from what Mr Bray has spoken about, it is certainly a culture of a very engaged, included community. Perhaps Ms Stewart can go to the school satisfaction survey.

**Ms Stewart:** We do run satisfaction surveys every year. We run surveys of parents and carers of the students and also of the school staff. We provide results for each of our public schools. Franklin Early Childhood School and the parents and carers will be participating in the satisfaction surveys that we will run a little later this year, towards the end of August, early September. The school will get feedback about the satisfaction of the parents and carers with their school.

**DR BOURKE:** What sort of work was needed in the lead-up to setting up this school? I presume the principal was appointed last year. How did the enrolments go?

**Ms Burch:** I think the enrolments were quite positive. There was a strong interest because that area has been growing at a fairly rapid rate. I am a southerner and every time I go north it looks like a different town. There was a very strong response to Franklin. But the strategy with Bonner, which is not too far away, is also to grow that school over time.

**Ms Stewart:** If I can respond with the enrolments, both schools have probably slightly stronger than expected enrolments. In February, Franklin Early Childhood School had enrolments of 85 students, which is quite strong for an opening year. We were also surprised by the number of enrolments at Neville Bonner Primary School. They have currently got 216 students in the school in their first year of opening, which again is a very strong enrolment.

**DR BOURKE:** Are they all in the same year or are they right through the year groups?

**Ms Stewart:** No, they are right through the year groups. Franklin, as an early childhood school, enrolls from preschool through to year 2. There are only a handful

of students in years 1 and 2. Most of the students are in preschool and kindergarten. Neville Bonner, across preschool to year 6, has reasonable numbers across all year levels, although slightly lower in year 4 and year 6—only a handful of students in both those years. Again, there are very strong enrolments. For example, 89 students enrolled in preschool in Neville Bonner school this year.

**Ms Burch:** As to how you prepare the executive and the principals, we might go to Ms McAlister to talk about that.

**Ms McAlister:** Dr Bourke, you talked about the setting up of the school. The principal used local selection techniques to fill the required number of positions which related to the student enrolment numbers. We had large fields in that selection and we had the principal fully involved in choosing the staff mix that she felt could best deliver the service on that site. We had a mix of early educators and more experienced educators that took positions at that school. Their positions are for the agreed five-year placement period and then the principal will be having ongoing annual professional discussions with each member of teaching staff to develop individual careers and to manage teacher turnover according to that site's needs.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, during the answer to Dr Bourke's question, Mr Bray mentioned Isabella Plains Early Childhood School. Can you go through some of the successes you have seen at that school and the benefits that have been achieved for families whose children attend IPECS?

**Ms Burch:** It was one of the very first early childhood schools. Certainly there was a concerted effort about how to provide this new model that was on offer for choice for families. It is in our neck of the woods and I have watched it grow over time. There was a little bit of a wait and see, I think, for the very early years. I think the enrolment numbers probably were not what we were hoping for, but over time they have certainly built up to really solid numbers.

The feedback that I get from local families is whether it can now be stretched to year 4, which defeats the purpose in many ways of an early focus school, but it is certainly very positive feedback. I think it is because you have childcare, that very early education, connected through to preschool and those early years. That is what families want and they see the benefit of that focus from the early learning framework right through. I think that has been the strength of it. Mr Gwilliam could probably talk about some of that as well.

**Mr Gwilliam:** In terms of Isabella Plains Early Childhood School, the school is actually one of the strong examples of how an early childhood school structure in relation to, in its current format, schools as communities can work together on one site, in terms of a really interesting wrap-around process for families.

I have been down at the school in the last couple of weeks—in fact, I was there last week—and I spoke with the current principal, Liz Wallace, about the intentions of the school, the school capacity, the kinds of programs that have been offered and so on. I am rather impressed by the response that they encountered at the school with their family fair. They had one that was open to the entire community. They had family members from across the Tuggeranong region attend. They had a number of

brokerage agencies that provide support for families around Tuggeranong as a specific network. I only received very positive and favourable comments by community members in relation to the kinds of offering in terms of education and also examples that were provided on that day.

I think it is actually strong. The students leave Isabella Plains Early Childhood School and go to approximately 10 various schools across Tuggeranong valley and outside the Tuggeranong network. The follow-up is exemplary by the principal and their senior staff at the school in pursuing the students and identifying the settling-in into their prospective schools. They work very closely over the following year with the transition to support the families that they have come to know and support through their school process. I think it is a good, shining light in terms of a model that is showing best practice.

**Ms Burch:** Reflecting on those community providers that have a partnership there, Communities@Work is a strong community provider there with partnerships. They have such a broad range of other offerings outside that school environment for families that need that additional support. It is another entrance and referral point to a much broader suite of support programs. I am not quite sure if it is still there, but they were painting the back courtyard area for road readiness. At one point I was watching the little kiddies being very road aware and road safety aware. It was good to see.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** They have got a fantastic way of communicating with their families, by a Facebook page. I notice that they put up their menus for under-fives and what is on this week. But one thing on the page also is the story time sessions that are held at Tuggeranong and Erindale—I am not sure whether that is in your area or Libraries ACT—for younger children, three to five-year olds.

**Mr Gwilliam:** If I take the example at Erindale College, it is a joint community facility with the library service attached to that. There is actually what they classify as a story time offer during the week, and that is actually run through the facility. I guess the direction that you are pointing to here in relation to their communication strategy around the use of Facebook, to share that with their community, is actually a really positive one. And a number of families across the school, from that school and also other schools around, would access that facility at the two government colleges that we have that have a shared facility around library use. Yes, they are well attended. My daughters attend them.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, the chair asked you earlier who you would be backing in a Labor leadership spill federally. It has just been announced there will be such a spill at 7 pm.

**Ms Burch:** It has also been announced that Mr Hockey is going to decimate 12,000 families in Canberra.

**MR SMYTH:** You might have to make a decision.

**Ms Burch:** So what do you think about that?



**MR SMYTH:** So you do not think it is happening? To go back to education and care services, I note the explanation of the numbers 324 and 504. What is a visit to an approved education and care service and what do we get from them?

**Ms Burch:** Jayne Johnston can go to the details of those.

**Ms Johnston:** I will just find my list so that I get all the right terminology. A visit can be a range of things from the children's policy and regulation unit. Within our unit we have people who are court-authorised officers, the officers who can carry out the assessment and rating. A care service may get a visit or a number of visits. That is part of the assessment and rating process. That is a 20-week process actually. They get notification in week one that an assessment and rating visit will be occurring. The visit occurs in week 12. That may involve a number of visits. And then they get their report, their final report, by week 20.

The CPRU also do monitoring visits. They may visit a care service not for the purposes of assessment but to monitor their compliance with the national standards. They also have a support role. So they could also be visiting for support.

**MR SMYTH:** So what is a service? Is it a preschool? Is it family day care? Is it a school?

**Ms Johnston:** It could be all of those things.

**Ms Burch:** On early education and care, what I may do, if I can, Ms Johnston, is go to Susan Sullivan who was the CPRU within CSD and therefore has lived and breathed this for a number of years now.

**Ms Johnston:** Please, yes.

**Ms Sullivan:** The visits are to all education and care services within scope of the national law and also those that are still licensed under the Children and Young People Act, those that are out of scope of the national quality framework. The range of services are family day care schemes, long day care, school aged care, independent preschools and government preschools.

**MR SMYTH:** In terms of family day care, you would actually go to a home or do you go to the service provider?

**Ms Sullivan:** Generally our role is to monitor how the scheme is running, the operation, and how they are monitoring the carers and carers' homes. But we do also visit individual educator's homes. We always go with someone from the scheme office, but we go out to see what the coordinators of the scheme might be looking at when they go out to visit the educators, to make sure that they are covering the range of things that we need them to cover.

**MR SMYTH:** The 504 visits could be to the same institution on a number of occasions?

**Ms Sullivan:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** And you have discontinued c., the cost per visit to licensed education and care services. How do we determine that a visit costs almost \$3,000?

**Ms Stewart:** I might speak to this indicator. That is a very good question. When the CPRU services came over to the Education and Training Directorate, those were the sorts of questions that we asked in terms of how it fits with our accountability indicators, what it was measuring, the quality of the data that was being provided. There are a very wide range of variations within this indicator in terms of what sort of visit was being conducted to what sort of service and what was being covered.

Therefore this particular average dollar amount was not really telling us anything about the visits that the CPRU and the authorised officers were making to licensed education and care services. And that is why we have recommended that we discontinue it, because the average was not really useful in saying, “What is actually happening in those visits? What is the range of business that is being undertaken in those visits?” And the cost was not very useful in indicating that.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that just the cost of \$3,000 times 500 visits, \$1.5 million? Is it just simple arithmetic or has someone actually worked out the average cost is \$2,900?

**Ms Stewart:** I would have to take that question on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** All right.

**Ms Burch:** I think it was a fairly blunt mathematical instrument, from memory.

**MR SMYTH:** Indicator b. is the satisfaction with the assessment and monitoring functions, at 85 per cent. What was the unhappiness within the 15 per cent?

**Ms Burch:** Ms Sullivan, do you want to answer? It does go to some of the functions that they are doing. If you are going into a service and assessing them and perhaps making comment that there is area for enhancement, some services may agree or disagree, to varying levels. I would say some of that could sit in the 15 per cent. But Ms Sullivan might talk from some experience.

**Ms Sullivan:** I think in the role of a regulatory authority, you are never going to be pleasing everybody. Often we are there to investigate a complaint or a non-compliance with a regulation or with the national law. So it is fairly obvious that some people are not going to be happy with that.

**Ms Stewart:** And we did, in fact, question again the usefulness of this indicator. Some might argue that if you are getting a response rate of 100 per cent and keeping everybody happy, is that really what you want to be achieving? So these are the sorts of discussions that we have. For the moment we have left it in but we will continue to pursue whether there might be other indicators that are providing better measures of the work that the units do.

**MR SMYTH:** But given you have got the indicator, is there a message or a theme in

the items on which people were dissatisfied? Is it just that they got a negative rating or is it the way the guys turn up? Is it too hard to understand? Is it the paperwork?

**Ms Stewart:** I do not know whether Susan can answer. I cannot answer because this survey was previously conducted within Community Services.

**Ms Sullivan:** Yes. The 85 per cent was set as a target. I am unsure as well as to why it was set at that level. I think that the survey results from last year. We have not yet looked at the survey results from this current year but from last year, services were not fully engaged in the assessment and rating process. It was not about the assessment and rating then. I guess it is more that they did not feel that they had accessibility to us when they thought they needed it. They may have not been able to contact their adviser specifically and may have had to talk to someone else. I just cannot think of what the examples were. Yes, things like that.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, 85 per cent was the target in 2011-12. In 2012-13, it was 85 per cent.

**Ms Burch:** Yes, but as Ms Stewart has said, it is about reviewing those indicators so that they are meaningful, and it is something that EDD will look to.

**THE CHAIR:** That is it for you for a while, Mr Smyth, Dr Bourke?

**MR SMYTH:** I am happy to keep going.

**DR BOURKE:** I have asked all my questions, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am fully educated on what the department has been doing.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not want you all looking at Mr Smyth as the one that keeps you here after school because you have been naughty. Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** I do not feel pressured at all. I have got another 15 minutes. But we have a private meeting to discuss other matters. So I will put the rest of my questions on notice.

**Ms Burch:** Fantastic.

**THE CHAIR:** Very good. Thank you very much, minister and officials, for attending.

**Ms Burch:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I believe that in the school system if students do well they get an early mark. I am not sure whether that is consistent with this or not but I will let you be the judge of that. I have got a cheat sheet I have got to read here. Excuse the speed reading. All questions on notice must be lodged with the committee support office within three business days of receipt of the uncorrected proof of transcript, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. Answers to questions

on notice must be lodged with the committee support office within five business days of the receipt of receiving the question, with day one being the first business day after the question is received. Answers to questions taken on notice must be provided within five business days of the hearing at which questions were taken and so on.

**Ms Burch:** Thank you. We have got that. And thanks to everyone who has answered all your questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, minister. Do we see you again?

**Ms Burch:** Friday sometime, Arts, Women, Multicultural Affairs.

**THE CHAIR:** Very good, I look forward to it.

**Ms Burch:** Thanks.

**The committee adjourned at 4.43 pm.**