



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2014-2015

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2014-2015 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2014-2015](#))

Members:

MR B SMYTH (Chair)
MS M PORTER (Deputy Chair)
MRS G JONES
MS Y BERRY

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 23 JUNE 2014

Secretary to the committee:
Dr B Lloyd (Ph: 620 50137)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.31 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

Education and Training Directorate

Joseph, Ms Diane, Director-General
Bray, Mr Rodney, Director, Infrastructure and Capital Works
Gwilliam, Mr Stephen, School Network Leader, Tuggeranong
Huard, Ms Anne, School Network Leader, Belconnen
Stewart, Ms Tracy, Director, Planning and Performance
McAlister, Ms Coralie, Director, People and Performance
Gniel, Mr Stephen, Executive Director, Education Strategy
Mitchell, Ms Beth, Director, Student Engagement
Wright, Ms Leanne, Director, Learning and Teaching
Garrisson, Ms Joanne, Director, Governance and Assurance
Sharma, Mrs Sushila, Chief Financial Officer
Ellis, Ms Anne, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Teacher Quality Institute
Stenhouse, Mr John, Executive Officer, Office of Board of Senior Secondary Studies

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Whybrow, Mr Mark, Acting Chief Finance Officer

Economic Development Directorate

Dawes, Mr David, Director-General

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

Jones, Mr Greg, Chief Executive

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to day eight of the estimates. I know how much you all love it! For most of the day we will be looking at Education and Training, and then late this afternoon, just for a bit of a change, we will look at gaming and racing.

The proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed, as well as being broadcast. After the hearings, proof transcripts will be circulated to witnesses to allow for correction. Witnesses are asked to familiarise themselves with the privilege statement, which is on a beautiful pink card on the table. Could those at the table acknowledge that they have read the privilege statement and understand its protections and obligations? Thank you very much.

With questions taken on notice, it would be useful if witnesses could use words like “I will take that question on notice”. That will help us to track them in the *Hansard*. We have a five-day time frame set by the government, five business days, in which to answer questions taken on notice. Questions without notice can be put on the paper from three days after the arrival of the transcript.

Minister, would you like to make a short opening statement?

Ms Burch: Yes, thank you, chair. The government wants all young people to be equipped with the education and skills required to lead rewarding lives. For this reason we as a government have always invested in education, and to ensure we deliver the best possible outcomes for all students in the ACT we remain committed to this.

This budget invests \$943.2 million in the ACT education system, an increase of 5.2 per cent from the previous year. This investment will continue to improve our schools and learning environment, support our educators and increase access to technology for our students. Ensuring we have high quality teachers in our schools is essential for quality education.

Above all, the community expects our teachers to have high levels of literacy and numeracy. That is why I have implemented, from the recruitment process for next year for all new public teachers, a policy that will include a literacy and numeracy test, and we will employ teachers that sit in the top 30 per cent of that. We are currently working with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership on an assessment tool to implement this.

Starting from next year, I also expect to see English being mandatory for year 12 in our schools. I have also asked the Board of Senior Secondary Studies to advise me on whether maths should be mandatory. I want to see families being in a genuine partnership with their schools and put families in a position to support the education of their children.

I recently announced that the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth has been engaged to conduct a piece of work on parental engagement, including in public, Catholic and independent schools. I have also launched the preschool matters initiative, which supports parental engagement and communication to preschool families.

The budget includes capital funding of \$81 million to improve the physical infrastructure as well as ICT. The government continues to support non-government schools with \$59 million allocated to the sector.

The budget allocates \$47 million over four years to continue to work on the new Coombs Primary School, which is scheduled to open in 2016. We have allocated a further \$1.4 million over two years for the refurbishment upgrades of childcare centres at Bunyarra and Salem. We are investing \$500,000 over two years to extend the early childhood scholarships program to assist educators to meet the requirements of the national quality framework.

To ensure that our schools are equipped with the best technology, we have invested in ICT across our schools. Despite the commonwealth's refusal to honour the signed commitments under the national education reform agreement, the directorate will be using all available measures to identify areas of underachievement and turn them around, while also extending support to those who are performing well. We will be

directing funds to where they are needed most to continue to provide what I believe is the best education system in Australia.

On that note, in closing, I want to thank all the officials that are here, the officials that are in our various agencies and our many teachers that provide a quality service across our city for our children and for their families.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Given its topicality in the media and with the public at the moment, there was a report that some asbestos was found at Birrigai back in May. What is the effect of that on schools holding camps there? Indeed has there been a system-wide survey of all buildings as to the prevalence of asbestos in ACT government schools?

Ms Burch: I will go to Mr Bray to answer that question in detail, but in short a number of schools choose to continue to go to Birrigai for their excursions and learning activities there. Certainly, there is a presence of asbestos. I understand that it is quarantined and cordoned off. As for our asbestos program for schools, we have a very comprehensive program of identification of that and also of removal and remediation.

Mr Bray: Yes. With regard to asbestos generally, we have hazardous material reports prepared for all of our schools, and we are in the process of preparing the same reports for the 33 childcare centres that have come under our management over the last 12 months. Without carrying out destructive investigation, we have a good knowledge of where asbestos-containing materials are located within all of our schools, and we will have the information on the childcare centres over the next six to 12 months as well.

With regard to Birrigai specifically, Birrigai is obviously under the management of Territory and Municipal Services now, but it was a facility that was managed by the education directorate. We obviously have a strong interest in the site because of the students that visit the site.

There have been investigations carried out to define the scope of it. It appears that there is quite extensive soil contamination by asbestos materials. I personally, and my team, do not know why it is what it is. We can only assume that it is historical. We just do not understand why there is such an extensive amount of asbestos-contaminated soil on the site.

The difficulty with the site is that it is so extensive that normal remediation work, where you would dig it up and take it off to a certified disposal site, would be prohibitively expensive. The treatment at the moment is identification, isolation, and, in cases where it is appropriate, they cap it in its current location.

Those are the sorts of strategies. Territory and Municipal Services have a management plan that details all of that. We obviously work with them, with any of our students that go to that site. We make students, staff and parents aware of that hazard or risk when they visit the school.

THE CHAIR: When you say it is quite extensive, is it in the buildings, is it in the ground, is it—

Mr Bray: It is only in the grounds around it, surrounding the buildings. Even in areas well away from the buildings, there is contaminated ground. It is hard to know exactly how far it goes; you just have to keep taking samples when it is identified. Usually after rainfall is a typical time when you will see a fragment of asbestos-containing material, like AC cement. They do what is called an “emu-bob” pick-up. Every six months or 12 months they literally go and pick up any fragments that have come to the surface, generally as a result of storm events.

THE CHAIR: So the area is square metres up to a hectare, or bigger than a hectare?

Mr Bray: I could not tell you exactly but it is significant. It is not small square metres; it is hundreds of square metres, I believe.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary. So how can you be sure that you are not exposing people to asbestos, given that it seems to be across the ground and it pops up after the rain? It does not seem that safe. How can you be sure, if school classes are coming, that asbestos that people have missed has not popped up on the ground?

Mr Bray: Asbestos, in the form that it has been found in out there, is usually asbestos cement-sheeting fragments, which implies that it is probably building materials that were buried from some building activity. Whether it was on the site, we do not know; whether it was taken to the site, we do not know.

AC materials are generally safe unless they are drilled, sandpapered, broken or handled. So in a form as a fragment on the ground, unless a child was to pick it up, rub it in their hands and then breathe or ingest it, it is a very low-risk material. Basically that is why the methodology is that you identify the areas where it has been found, and they are known to the teachers and the management of the site—

MRS JONES: Are they cordoned off?

Mr Bray: Yes, and then every six months or 12 months—I cannot remember which it is but it is quite regularly—they go through and do a scan and they pick up any fragments that come to the surface; they are double-bagged and they are taken off to a site. That is a pretty standard procedure for that sort of situation.

Ms Burch: The schools are well aware and notice is given out as well as managing—

MRS JONES: It just seems like a prime candidate for concreting the whole lot.

Mr Bray: The site is just too extensive.

Ms Burch: We will take that on as an idea, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: If there are new sites popping up over the ground or new bits popping up then clearly it is not completely dealt with. The Italians would concrete it!

Ms Burch: They would indeed.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Bray, I note that Birrigai was part of an ETD hazardous material survey and a management plan undertaken for ETD in 2010. As I understand it they found no evidence of asbestos in 2010, is that correct?

Mr Bray: I am not too sure of the report you are referring to. You might be referring to the buildings. The buildings are new. They were new buildings. They were constructed after the bushfires in 2005, so I am assuming that the report you are referring to was an assessment on the buildings, which are all new. So there is no asbestos in those, of course. So the asbestos we are talking about is soil-contaminated asbestos.

MR DOSZPOT: But would not the hazardous materials survey that was conducted have included both?

Mr Bray: It would if the assessors were pointed to the fact that there was that risk. Basically, whenever somebody first finds any asbestos on a site, in this case in fragments in the soil, as soon as that is identified, the assessor would have done a grid analysis of that area where it was found, and he would work outwards, literally and physically, from that spot till he reached a boundary where he found no more. But again, you find a pocket here and then another pocket comes up somewhere else. When that is first seen they go on to try and define that area when that location is identified. Usually, as I said, it is after a storm event when it washes up to the surface.

MR DOSZPOT: Who actually initiated the hazardous materials survey? Was it education?

Mr Bray: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Or was it TAMS?

Mr Bray: It was my branch. My branch organises those. We do asbestos reviews every 12 months. There is a hazardous materials plan that captures all hazardous materials—PCBs, lead-based paint, mineral fibres—but with asbestos we have that updated every 12 months at every site. So that is a role of my branch that does that.

MR DOSZPOT: I note that TAMS operates Birrigai. What sort of contact is there between ETD and TAMS?

Mr Bray: When we hand over a site to any new manager we always hand over a copy of, in this case, the hazardous materials report we would have had, along with other information. But that is a standard procedure for transferring of property ownership to another agency. They would have received the advice that you have referred to about the buildings. Again, I do not know whether we had information that related to the soil contamination, but I know that when TAMS became aware of that problem they came back to us and asked whether we knew anything about the history of that. To the best of my knowledge, we do not know the history of how that soil became contaminated.

It may have been partly contaminated by the bushfires and the original buildings that were on the site. But my staff tell me it is just too extensive to be limited to that one cause. There were not enough buildings prior to the fires to explain the extent of the asbestos soil contamination that has been discovered there, which tends to imply that it must have been imported, but we do not know.

MR DOSZPOT: It is a pretty serious issue—we have got asbestos in the ground. I am not sure whether I understand from you that there was an understanding where the asbestos was. If there was or if there was not, what sort of management plan was included to make sure that all traces of asbestos were identified and a management plan put in place? I would like to know who is actively pursuing that, what sort of report was there in 2010 and what are the conclusions as to why asbestos had been found in there?

Mr Bray: If you do not already have it, we can give you a copy of the 2010 report. That will define the scope of the investigation at that stage. In terms of what has been found now, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate has had a management plan prepared by a certified laboratory assessor, which is, again, standard practice once you identify these sorts of issues. They have a management plan, and that plan then requires action to be undertaken by the manager of the site. That includes awareness information, signage, area definition and, as I said, then that process of picking up any fragments on a routine basis. Normally the management plan would also say that would be done after any extreme storm events, which, again, brings the fragments to the surface. We can get a copy of that management plan. Essentially that is the practice—

MR DOSZPOT: Well, it is not so much for my information; I would like to make sure that the department is fully aware of what is where and what actions are being taken—

Mr Bray: Yes, we are.

MR DOSZPOT: If you could let us know the answer to the question I asked before as to why the asbestos was not identified in 2010 or what has caused it to be identified since then and what management action plans are in place. That is what I am asking for.

Mr Bray: I will take that question on notice.

THE CHAIR: You will take that on notice and provide the committee with a copy of the report?

Mr Bray: Sure.

MR DOSZPOT: I have one more supplementary.

Ms Burch: If I can—it may go to your supplementary; I am not quite sure—there was a question around how we manage the children going out to visit Birrigai, because it is a great asset. I will ask Mr Gwilliam to talk through how that happens.

Mr Gwilliam: Birrigai is one of the areas of a school in a special circumstance as we identified. We have it as a school where a lot of outdoor activity occurs—a range of different field activity—but also a range of different cultural groups and so on access the site. Currently this is what it looks like out on site—areas are flagged and zoned off. There are very clear induction processes on site for when visitors attend the site as to the areas that they are to avoid. The school principal out there, Karen de Gans, has worked very closely with any inquiries from school groups that are interested in attending the site or have booked in.

All staff on site, whether they are TAMS staff or ACT ETD staff, are all inducted and understand the context of the area site. As my colleague Mr Bray had described, after rain events, very isolated areas, which are known in this current asbestos management plan that TAMS have sought to put in place, are routinely checked according to the asbestos management plan.

It would appear that the context is around bonded asbestos, which is very stable in its form. The area currently is being rehabilitated in certain parts of the actual site, particularly those areas around any places students or hirers would be accessing. So part of that could be revegetation. Some of it would be removed, but all are clearly identified as zones in a field which are clearly marked for participants, students and staff. That is the context of where we sit at the moment. Operations are normal and it is business as usual.

MRS JONES: Can the committee be given a map of where those zones are on the ground?

Mr Gwilliam: Certainly.

MR DOSZPOT: My supplementary goes on a little bit further than that. Mr Gwilliam, Birrigai is run by TAMS yet obviously a lot of schools go there. It is a fantastic facility; I am aware of it and a lot of good work is happening there. But are you satisfied that the interaction between ETD and TAMS is appropriate under the current circumstances where there are issues? Are you comfortable with the management plan TAMS has adopted?

Mr Gwilliam: Indeed. I believe the cooperation between both of our directorates is very seamless. We have cooperation at all levels—on the ground in terms of the general manager, also on site between me and my counterparts and also with our executive director as well. The context is that it has been a joint collaboration. It is a one-government approach simply because it is a very unique circumstance in which two directorates take and occupy a space. The facility is managed by TAMS and education run the education programs. In this situation it really is our TAMS colleagues that take the lead and we work with them.

MR DOSZPOT: One final question in this supplementary section: I understand the management structure has changed at Birrigai since 2010. Is that correct?

Mr Gwilliam: The structure still maintains a principal, an acting principal currently, Karen de Gans. It also occupies 3.5 full-time staff, which is EDT commitments to that. That is correct.

MR DOSZPOT: But are the same management staff in place now as in 2010?

Mr Gwilliam: We do not have a school leader C currently in place because that position has been identified as being not necessary in the current environment. We have a principal and we have our three staff and we also have casual staff that occupy that site from the Education and Training side. TAMS have full-time administrative staff and technical staff that work on the site.

MR DOSZPOT: Would you reconsider the management that is there now considering the information that has come to hand?

Mr Gwilliam: I do not think that that would add any significant value in terms of an assessment. Currently we believe the asbestos management plan that is in place will deal with whatever is necessary there. The principal is engaged currently with meeting inquiries for users of facility on site, and I think that is appropriate. We can certainly review and look at that as part of a review around this.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: I want to go to page 116 of budget paper 3. It mentions modernisation of Belconnen regional high schools. How is this decision for funding going specifically to the Belconnen region?

Ms Burch: Certainly there is a commitment to revamp or to modernise the Belconnen school. There was \$2 million in last year's budget and further funding in this year's budget. I will go to Mr Bray, but it is in the staged process and we will be working with Belconnen High School but also other schools in the region about—

MS PORTER: So, schools plural?

Mr Bray: I apologise, Ms Porter, I did not get the first part of the question.

MS PORTER: Page 116 of budget paper 3, it mentions the modernisation of Belconnen regional schools—plural—and I am wondering how the decision had been made to fund this program specifically for Belconnen schools.

Mr Bray: Obviously the project flows from the election commitment of the Labor Party back in 2012. Initially, with the work being proposed at Belconnen High School, we obviously want to maintain the school operating as fully operational, so we have to carry out the works in stages. The funding that has been allocated to date, which totals \$2,250,000, is what we refer to as stage 1. Essentially it is setting up the groundwork for the future stages of work. At the moment we have commenced the master planning work for the school and identified some initial works we need to do to get the site ready for further works. The master plan talks about the design, and that obviously reflects the current and forecast enrolment for the school.

In terms of the initial works to be carried out, there is quite an old building which we refer to as being at the end of its operational life at the back of the building. We will be looking to demolish that at the end of this year during the Christmas holiday break.

That will remove a large structure from the building, from the school site. We will also be removing asbestos from that building as well and probably taking some asbestos out of other areas of the school where will be doing some refurbishment work in stage 1. We do all our asbestos removal work when there are no students or staff on the site, which means after hours, on weekends or during school holidays. So with demolition will be asbestos removal at the end of this year. We also hope to do some refurbishment work in the administration and front entry area of the school to, again, set it up for future developments in subsequent stages.

With regard to the reference to other schools, we are still working out within the project how we can look at enhancing the enrolment for Belconnen High School by encouraging or enhancing the pathways from other schools to Belconnen High School. We are still looking at our options, but it might involve doing some work with what we call feeder primary schools that may enhance those enrolments flying on to Belconnen High School.

Ms Joseph: The major thing that has happened in the last 12 months is earlier this year the commonwealth government funded the Belconnen regional trade skills centre, so with the initial \$2 million given to Belconnen High School for modernisation we have had a new injection of funds there. I think it was to the tune of about \$8 million. The Belconnen regional trade skills centre takes a networked approach to program delivery. It is designed to increase access for all students living in the area through different pathways. The schools involved in the Belconnen regional trade skills centre are Kingsford Smith School, Melba Copland college and high school, University of Canberra High School Kaleen, Canberra High School, Belconnen High School—obviously—University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra and Hawker College.

That significant program is a networked approach to how the schools relate to each other, what are the pathways through the schools and in investing funds into Belconnen High School how we enhance the education offerings for the whole local area. To just look at Belconnen High School and the \$2.25 million invested there, you cannot do that in isolation without looking at the other schools, particularly with the new initiative with the Belconnen regional trade skills centre occurring at the same time.

MR DOSZPOT: A supplementary? Minister, I address the question to you. The modernisation of the Belconnen region schools highlights the fact that we have got some schools in the inner south and inner north that are operating very well as schools but are tired; there is a lot of modernisation required to be done. Is there a modernisation plan that you can refer us to regarding those areas?

Ms Burch: It is the constant work that we do in our capital program. Again I will defer to Mr Bray. I think you should just stay there for a bit, Mr Bray. We have significant capital funds. That is just part and parcel of it. You can refer to it as modernisation or capital upgrades to make sure that our schools continue to provide—

MR DOSZPOT: Infrastructure modernisation is what I am talking about.

Ms Burch: Yes, to make sure that they continue to provide a learning environment.

This is new money on top of the capital works that go in. We have schools that are around 12 months old, schools like Telopea, which I think is 90 years old, and schools that are anywhere in between. So absolutely. We are fully aware of making sure those older schools are indeed given the treatment they need to make sure that they continue to offer.

MR DOSZPOT: What I am asking is: is there a plan that I can see about when these modernisation plans will be coming into place for the inner south and inner north?

Mr Bray: It is obviously part of our strategic planning that we try and forecast where we will be investing money over the coming years. There is a document issued each year by the government, which is the infrastructure plan, which covers all of its agencies' assets. We provide our forecast works within that document, which is a publicly available document. So you can look at the document as a reference point about where we see our major investments going in the future. That is at a sort of higher level.

When we talk about what we do in the medium term—we have just started preparing what we are calling some regional planning documents, which we just started this year. That is starting to look at service provision between the schools in particular regions and trying to define what the nature of those educational services is and will be over the foreseeable 10 to 15-year horizon. That information, as it is developed, will flow into preparing site-by-site master plans for schools. That will form a strategic asset management plan that will detail it site by site.

In some schools we have already progressed the master planning exercises. For instance, in one case we have looked at potential expansion of Forrest Primary School to a four-stream school. That design was required because there was a change in the land ownership around the school. We had to do an exercise to look at how much land we would require to expand Forrest Primary School to a four-stream school—that is, four classes in each year. That defined potential growth of Forrest Primary School is an example of that, and is fairly likely given the urban intensification planning that is going on as part of government policy.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Bray, I would like to just focus nearer today's time frame rather than 10 or 15 years out. My question is regarding a number of very good schools I have in my school visitation program. Ms Joseph and minister, thank you very much; it is going very well. But I do get feedback from schools as to the fact that when you see the infrastructure in place, it is getting tired. So what I am asking is this. In the next three to five years, what sort of time frame is there for actual modernisation plans for some of these other schools, the same as is happening in Belconnen, which I believe is required? I am asking: is there anything planned for the next three to five-year period, and what sort of budget is allocated for that sort of work?

Mr Bray: We work to the budget we are allocated. We typically have allocated in the order of about \$13 million to \$14 million a year, so we have to prioritise our work based around that budget.

With the work that we have identified in terms of modernisation, as an example, we have done what we call older school upgrades. We completed Hughes Primary School

and Yarralumla Primary School older school upgrades in the last financial year or last calendar year. They were finished in December 2013 for the start of 2014. A school that we will be moving to in this budget is Curtin Primary School; that is the older school upgrade we will be doing.

At the moment the budget limitations determine how many we can do like that. We have got some other pressures of work that we need to do, such as some roof replacement works, which are quite expensive. We will be doing that at Canberra High School in the 2014-15 financial year.

It is a case where we have to look at our priorities in terms of where the need is greatest in terms of the condition of the infrastructure. We are very aware of some schools that are in poorer condition than others, but we do specific works. For instance, as an example, Campbell High School have asked for an art room to be refurbished. It is a big curriculum focus for Campbell High School. Prior to the 2014-15 financial year, the principal asked to have that space upgraded; we have agreed to do that.

MR DOSZPOT: But as I understand, there is no budget allocation along the lines of the \$18 million dollars that has been made to Belconnen.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps the easy way for this is if Mr Bray could provide a list of what was done last year, what is involved in the current financial year, and any knowledge that you have in the outyears. Okay? That might answer the need there.

Mr Bray: I can quickly take you through the—

THE CHAIR: She did the other day, Mr Bray; it took 10 minutes. You are very good at—

Ms Burch: That was very important information.

THE CHAIR: It might be easier just to have it all on a summary, if that is okay.

Mr Bray: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Take it on notice?

Mr Bray: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Ms Porter has another supplementary, as does Ms Berry.

MS PORTER: I think yours is on the actual building site and mine is another question about something you mentioned as you were answering my question. If it is all right with you, chair, I will allow Ms Berry to ask her supplementary first and then we can come back to me.

MS BERRY: This is regarding Belconnen high. You mentioned that a master plan is being developed. How far away from completion is that master plan?

Mr Bray: We think we will have it ready by about September this year.

MS BERRY: Have you got an estimated cost for the full modernisation of that school?

Mr Bray: We have a sense of what we think it would cost. I hesitate to say a number; I suppose it is in the order of \$15 million or \$16 million, but that is very rough numbers at the moment. Again, it will flesh itself out with the master plan; then, as we do further investigation and look at the amount of actual work that flows from the master plan, we will get certainty around that number. But that is the sort of number we are looking at at this stage.

MS BERRY: Is it the government's intention to complete that work at Belconnen high within the next couple of years?

Mr Bray: It has always been our understanding that the government will fulfill its commitments within its current term; that is how we have been progressed and that is how the minister has asked to progress the project. So at this stage, that master plan is that first stage; from that, we will submit further budget business cases for the government to consider funding that work.

MS BERRY: Regarding the feeder schools, I think it might have been you, Ms Joseph, who mentioned some work that you needed to do on the feeder schools. What are the feeder schools for Belconnen, and what work are you talking about?

Ms Joseph: The schools I was referring to were around the trade skills centres, particularly the high schools in the area.

MS BERRY: Okay.

Ms Joseph: But there are obviously a number of primary schools that feed through our high schools. I was talking about the partnerships that schools have around the trade skills pathways.

Ms Huard: The feeder primary schools that feed into Belconnen high are Hawker primary, Weetangera primary and Florey primary. They all work together in a partnership group with Belconnen high to look at the transitions, to look at the educational pathways for students from preschool through into Belconnen high and then on to Hawker College. The work that they are doing at the moment is looking at their gifted and talented policies and procedures, so that there are clear pathways for students through those areas, and at programs such as music and their languages programs, to make sure that there is alignment through those areas.

The primary schools in that area—Southern Cross primary is also part of that partnership group—are experiencing increases in enrolments, and those enrolments are expected to flow through into the high school.

MS BERRY: I know you said you are doing work on gifted and talented. What about the kids that have additional or special learning needs?

Ms Huard: Special needs? All of our schools are working through the procedures for students with special needs. There is a disability education officer in all of our schools, and making sure that those transitions for those students are smooth, and that they are actually timely, is a priority for schools right across the ACT and within that area.

Ms Burch: You will recall that we did a piece of work on learning difficulties as well, and that has set out a clear policy response for supporting parents and professional development across our schools.

Ms Huard: And the schools right across Belconnen are looking at how they support one another in terms of expertise and in terms of the procedures that they are implementing and how they work with each other so that the information around students is passed on in a timely fashion.

MS BERRY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Do you want a question?

MS PORTER: Yes, just quickly. Mr Bray, in your evidence before, you talked about enrolments. I was not quite sure what you said. Did you say that there is an issue with enrolments at Belconnen High School? I just wondered how those enrolments were going. That is another person's question, I guess. And how are enrolments going generally at public schools in the ACT?

I notice that on page 2, table 1, it talks about staffing levels. On the radio this morning, I heard about a drop in young people, graduates, wanting to enter university and undertake teaching. I know that you have a commitment to quality teaching in the ACT. The figure for 2012-13 is 5,027; the figure estimated for the outcome for 2013-14 is only 4,736. I do not know whether we think there may be an issue, but I am concerned about that enrolment and having enough quality teachers to cope with the enrolment. But I am not quite sure, from what Mr Bray said, whether there is an issue with enrolment as well.

Ms Burch: I might go to Tracy Stewart, but, in short, the last school census showed a continued trend, a positive trend, in enrolments in public education. There has now been about six years with a positive trend of parents choosing public education. Tracy Stewart can go to some of that detail.

Ms Stewart: As the minister has said, we have had strong growth in public school enrolments over a number of years now, but particularly we have had very strong growth in enrolments this year. In public schools, we had an increase of over 1,300 students this year, up 3.3 per cent. That surpassed our projections for what we were expecting this year. So it is very strong growth. Overall we had an increase of 2.5 per cent in students, so having an increase in public schools of 3.3 per cent shows that families are choosing public schools in particular. We now have over 42,000 students in public schools and over 70,000 students across schools in the ACT. So there is very strong growth. There is particularly strong growth in primary schools in the ACT.

A lot of the growth was in the Gungahlin region. We are also expecting stronger

growth over the next few years in the Belconnen region. There are a number of new developments in that area, especially in west Macgregor. We have got a number of new housing developments coming through in the next few years, so we are expecting to see increasing growth in the Belconnen region moving forward. Already some of our schools, such as Macgregor Primary School, are becoming really full because of the demand in that area.

MS PORTER: Could you tell me if these figures on page 2 in table 1 mean that we have a challenge as far as staffing is concerned?

Ms Stewart: No.

MS PORTER: It is just that the figures for 2012-13 say 5,027 and the figure for—

THE CHAIR: It is a mistake.

MS PORTER: It is a mistake, is it?

THE CHAIR: Yes, it was a mistake; they corrected it.

MS PORTER: I did not read the small print. Never mind, I can find out about enrolments.

Mr Whybrow: And I guess the key element here, as we reflect year to year, is that we have got a workforce that has a high number of casual staff employed. The audited outcome figure is based on the 26th pay, which is at the end of June. So during that time we have a number of casuals. At other times during the year, during school holidays, we do not have any casuals employed. It is also a high period for the number of absences due to the flu season, those sorts of things. So it is a higher pay for us, and the FTE numbers are averages over the year, the ones in the budget paper. That is why you will see that big difference in numbers.

MS PORTER: But we need to obviously continue to attract good teachers if what was reported in the media this morning about attracting young people into teacher education is true?

Ms Burch: Having only a very quick glance at the report this morning, what I may do is ask Ms McAlister to talk about how we recruit, our own internal recruitment, and then also defer to Anne Ellis around professional standards and maintenance of our teaching staff within the ACT.

Ms McAlister: I think the answer is two pronged. It is about the quality of the system that we are attracting teachers to, and in the ACT we have a very attractive system for teachers to come to. We pay our teachers well in the ACT and they also have excellent conditions. They have a generous superannuation scheme. We have teaching hours in both the primary and the secondary sectors which are amongst the lowest in the country. We also have student-teacher ratios which are, again, amongst the lowest in the country.

We have 197 teaching days in the school year, which is the second lowest in the

country, and we also have a small boutique system which is attractive for young teachers to enter. If I am a young teacher coming into the ACT system, I have access to a range of schooling structures and settings. I come into a system that works very closely with regional networks, and there are opportunities for me to go across those networks.

We have a deliberate support program for our teachers in their first three years, including a reduced face-to-face teaching load in their first year. And we also have a strong mentoring program that is in place within our schools. We also have very strong, because of the size of our system, cross-sectoral work as well. So all of these conditions I suppose go together to make the ACT system a very attractive one for teachers to enter.

But I might hand over to Anne Ellis, who is the CEO of the Teacher Quality Institute, because I think that is the second part of the answer.

Ms Ellis: I think there has been a really important statement made by the ACT government in the establishment of the Teacher Quality Institute, because what it has said is that as well as the good work that was happening with all employers of teachers—the Catholic Education Office, 17 independent schools and the directorate—it wanted to ensure that there was an independent body who was raising the profile and the professional standard of ACT teachers. What has happened in the ACT is actually quite unique because we have been able to integrate professional standards and quality frameworks into law. For all ACT teachers there is a comprehensive career progression and career growth approach.

So with the cross-sectoral work that we do, we are looking at all the elements of a quality teacher, and a quality teacher begins from the moment they come into a university. A quality teacher has to have engagement in professional experience as they learn to be a teacher. The minister has now commissioned us to do some work looking at the professional experience frameworks in the ACT so that we can ensure that quality assurance is across the board. What we are doing also is, in a way that is quite unique across Australia, making sure that standards are integrated into everything a teacher is doing.

Our teachers now look at professional standards when they reflect on or plan for professional learning. Our teachers look at professional standards when they supervise beginning teachers or pre-service teachers. And we have got also a very strong process in the ACT where quality teachers can go through certification to be recognised as high-level teachers.

This, in a way, has led the country, because we have developed it to integrate quality frameworks into what teachers are doing. You are not going to get quality teachers, you are not going to get quality learning environments, unless there is motivation and understanding and practical things that are happening. So I think that within the ACT, working with the directorate as a teacher employer and the other teacher employers, we have had a unique opportunity to get to the heart of what quality teaching really is.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, and then a new question from Ms Berry.

MR DOSZPOT: Further on the Teacher Quality Institute, what dollar amount is allocated in the 2014-15 budget for teacher professional development? I am not sure if I should be asking the department or you.

Ms Burch: Professional development across the directorate?

MR DOSZPOT: Correct.

Ms Burch: We do not have that number.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Whybrow knows.

Ms Burch: Mr Whybrow does not have that number.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whybrow does not know?

Mr Whybrow: Mrs Sharma has that number.

THE CHAIR: Thank God for that.

MRS JONES: Someone always has the number. We need a much bigger table, I think.

Mrs Sharma: The professional development funds for teachers is \$1.25 million on an annual basis.

MRS JONES: I cannot hear you properly.

Mrs Sharma: Sorry. The professional development funds for teachers is around \$1.25 million on an annual basis.

MR DOSZPOT: And how do casual teachers access professional development?

Ms McAlister: Our casual teachers are able to access professional development at the system level through offerings that are put on centrally. They are also a really important part of our workforce and will often access professional learning opportunities at the school level as well.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that, but that is only if they are allocated to a school. What if there are casual teachers who have to have professional development upgrades and they are not currently with a school? What sort of assistance is given to them?

Ms McAlister: We are deliberately communicating with our schools about the importance of providing offerings to casual teachers as well as our permanent members of staff. So we are reaching out and saying it is important that our casual teachers have those opportunities. Our casual teachers are not excluded from accessing any professional learning opportunities in the directorate.

MR DOSZPOT: But do they have to pay for that themselves if they are doing it

outside the regular teaching hours?

Ms McAlister: They have an opportunity to access the professional learning that suits their career pathway and skills development. If there is a fee associated with that, then staff do pay that fee, but there are many professional learning opportunities where there is no fee.

Ms Burch: And given that professional development and certainly the requirements for registration sit with TQI, I have no doubt you would like to hear from Anne Ellis on that.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I would.

Ms Ellis: One of the most exciting things that have been happening this year with the introduction of requirements which could have been very onerous but have been put in a positive way for all teachers to be regarded as ongoing professionals and to access professional learning has been working with casual teachers from Catholic schools, public schools and independent schools about what professional learning actually is. In the ACT our teachers have a requirement to access five hours of accredited professional learning but to look at their professional learning needs and be able to include things such as professional reading, research and attendance at non-accredited programs. So what we have been doing with casual teachers has been talking with them about what it means to be a quality teacher, what it means for them to be regarded as someone who has the right to engage in professional learning but not to be concerned that professional learning is only about attending a program.

We accredit professional learning that happens in ACT schools, and that has been a really significant step, because it is recognised that actual schools in the ACT are running quality, professional learning programs and, again in integrating professional standards, can provide really good opportunities for teachers. But what we do when we have accredited professional learning programs is provide information about it to all teachers. So in the collaborative, cross-sectoral approach one of the best things that have been happening is, first of all, casual teachers have, for the first time in a long time, started to regard themselves as professionals and professionally recognised. They have got opportunities to go to programs, they have got opportunities to think of themselves as learning through the study and professional reading that they do.

The anecdotal evidence we have got from all sectors is really interesting, because for the first time they have got casual teachers coming along, perhaps a bit reluctantly but once they are there, realising that this is actually something that they have missed and want to engage in.

MR DOSZPOT: The Teacher Quality Institute is doing a wonderful job, and I commend your efforts in that as well as your department's, but we do get some contrary points of view from people. I just want to share one with you and get your comment on it. A recent letter from a constituent claimed that the Teacher Quality Institute was offering very few accredited courses and mentioned African drumming as one of those on offer. There are others that people like. Given they have an annual learning quota of 20 hours, many are struggling to reach that threshold. So how does the TQI, I guess, address that and determine the courses on offer?

Ms Ellis: We have at this stage over 280 professional learning programs accredited. The African drumming one was a program put forward for music teachers who have the right to have a specific professional learning program for them. I think part of the process for us this year is to recognise that this is a period of change and that in change you have got to work with people. We are working closely with people, as are employers, to actually unpack what it means for them to account for professional learning.

The really significant thing that has happened in the ACT is that in the compliance bit for teachers they actually reflect on the impact of their professional learning. No other jurisdiction is doing this. In terms of access for people, they have to access five hours of accredited professional learning and the remainder can be made up of things that they are determining themselves.

So we will continue to work to explain to people that this is about recognition, not compliance, in a way that is unrelated to their work. But every student in the ACT, whether they attend a Catholic, public or independent school, has the right to a quality teacher.

MRS JONES: Are you able to supply to the committee a list of those 200 courses that are on offer?

Ms Burch: It is on the TQI website.

Ms Ellis: Yes, it is on our website, but we can certainly provide it to you.

MR DOSZPOT: Just on that, you mentioned 280 such courses. The teachers can pick any one of those 280 or are there subsections of that available at any one time?

Ms Ellis: What we have had as the highest priority is to make sure that the decision about what teachers do comes from them setting their own professional learning goals and accessing professional learning that is relevant to them. The fact that we are accrediting programs that are actually happening within ACT schools is widening the opportunity for our teachers more so than in any other jurisdiction. So the rules have been kept to an absolute minimum. A teacher needs to be able to look at their professional goals, look at what is on offer and over the 12-month period be able to choose relevant professional learning.

What we have developed, in terms of the promotion and the recognition of what teachers are doing, is an online profile so that they can actually record all of their professional learning and from that submit the stuff that they need to in terms of their professional learning hours. But no teacher will have difficulty over the 12-month period in being able to access enough professional learning.

My staff work all the time answering queries. I think I may have talked to the person who you are mentioning. That person is now in a school where the school has provided several professional learning programs. So that teacher, when we calculated the other day, would have about 35 hours of accredited professional learning he could access.

THE CHAIR: We need to move on. Ms Berry has been waiting.

Ms Burch: On the support for teachers, going back to Ms Porter's question, we have teacher scholarships on offer. Also, what was disappointing for us was the federal government's cancellation of a \$26 million investment in the ACT when it canned the Centre for Quality Teaching and Learning, which would have provided significant resources and opportunities for our teachers, not only the existing ones in the workforce and those who are in the casual workforce, but also those that are aspiring to be teachers in the future. This would have set us apart, I think, from other jurisdictions. A wilful withdrawal of that is extraordinarily disappointing.

MRS JONES: We might get to that in a second, but some of us have not had a chance to ask our first question.

THE CHAIR: Members, we are currently on output class 1. If we can deal with 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 before the lunch break, that would be a good thing. It seems to be ranging over a number of issues. Ms Berry has a new question and then we will go to Mrs Jones.

Ms Burch: There is a correction of the record, please.

Mr Whybrow: Can I provide some additional information?

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

Mr Whybrow: We talked about the teachers investment fund. My concern is that that significantly understates the investment of government into teacher training. It should also be recognised, as the minister has identified, that there is an annual scholarship program, which is \$250,000 a year. There is also a principals training fund, which equates to one per cent of a principal's salary of approximately \$100,000 a year.

It should also be recognised that a number of our national partnerships have very large components of training to them annually—the teacher quality NP and more support for students with a disability, as well as the annual investment into the Hedley Beare centre, which is a magnificent facility that provides the learning environment and key staff for the coordination of training programs in the ACT.

I did not want the record to show that there was only a small \$1.25 million annual investment in teacher training. The other key point is that we have minimum requirements through the TQI. The government makes significant investments into the operation of the TQI, as well as the investment by government into the operations, which I have already mentioned, of the Hedley Beare centre.

I was trying to get on the record that with those small investments we do not holistically identify our cost structure of teacher quality investment. Things like those five days minimum training of teachers are costs because those salaries are being paid for, and they need to be incorporated.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. A new question, Ms Berry, and then Mrs Jones.

MS BERRY: I have a quick supplementary to Ms Porter's last question around the school work that is being done in Belconnen, particularly in west Belconnen, given the increased housing development out there and future housing developments. Has the ACT government committed to building a government school in the new west Belconnen Riverview development?

Mr Bray: In terms of forecast planning for the construction of new schools, we obviously utilise the data that Ms Stewart's section develops, in consultation with the government demographer. At this stage, as you are probably aware, we have done expansion work at the Macgregor Primary School. We have expanded that to a four-stream or four classes per year school. That was to deal with the short-term forecast in that area. In terms of Riverview, I will refer you to Ms Stewart. She will give you the latest in terms of the government's land release program. That will indicate when we need any new schools in that area.

Ms Stewart: We are currently in discussions with the developers in Riverview and with our colleagues across the ACT government, in terms of requirements for new schools in the region. We have asked that land be set aside for new schools, both public and non-government schools, to cater for the needs of Riverview. But as the developer is still finalising its plans for the region we have not yet agreed finally on what the requirements for new schools will be. Once its plans are finalised then we will be in a position to make decisions around that. As I said, we are in discussions with the developer and with our colleagues across the ACT government around those requirements.

MS BERRY: My new question is around healthy eating. We heard from the health minister about the growing rates of childhood obesity. What are ACT government primary schools doing to tackle this issue?

Ms Burch: We have released a policy in conjunction with ACT Health around fresh food and healthy choices. We certainly have pulled out vending machines from all schools, as I understand it, from the end of term or certainly in this semester, if they are not already out, and also removing sugary drinks from canteens from the end of this year. They are two key, important planks of that work. Ms Wright can go into the details.

Ms Wright: The ACT government Health Directorate has led the whole-of-government work on the healthy weight action plan, "towards zero growth". Within that action plan there are two projects specifically under the auspices of schools and the schools cluster to initiate and deliver. The first of those is around the introduction of a public school food and drink policy. That policy is around promotion and mandating of the national healthy schools canteen guidelines. That is about the reduction of the sale of categorised food that is high in sugar and fat within the school canteens. Alongside that are the initiatives around curriculum and learning for students, particularly in primary schools.

Earlier this year, along with the Chief Minister, Minister Burch launched the fresh tastes program, which is a joint initiative of ACT Health and the department of education. Under fresh tastes there are a number of initiatives that each school will

work with their school community to prioritise. In particular, there are some curriculum aspects which are tied to the Australian curriculum in health. That relates to those educational components of curriculum around healthy eating and ensuring that students begin to develop their own understanding of the impacts of what they consume, in terms of their overall health progress.

In terms of the rest of the initiative, I can confirm that vending machines have been removed from all ACT public schools. Alongside that we are also rolling out the installation of water refill stations in ACT public schools. All schools where the vending machines were removed had, by the end of term 1, those water refill stations. So the ACT government is promoting water as the drink of choice in all public schools. According to the rollout program, by midway through next year, by the end of June next year—this coming financial year—all ACT public schools will have at least two water refill stations in place on site.

The second initiative under the healthy weight action plan is the building of teacher capacity in the delivery of physical education in primary schools. Under that particular program we are going to be running some pilot programs across a number of ACT public schools in the second half of this year. There was an expression of interest for providers, and we are working with our colleagues from Sport and Recreation to work together with providers who are very keen to work with schools and students to promote physical activity, and also to target our teachers and their capacity to deliver physical education programs that are very much structured about increasing student participation and building teachers' confidence to deliver those programs.

It is an area of the curriculum where, in some primary schools, we have specialist teachers but in other primary schools the delivery of the PE and physical activity program is done by generalist primary schoolteachers. So the capacity of those teachers is really important in ensuring that students in every ACT public primary school are given opportunities to participate in high level, high quality physical activity programs.

Under that pilot program we will be working with four providers in the second half of this year to roll out a number of different types of activities. We are working with ACT Health to develop some evaluation frameworks around those pilots to get some really good feedback about which particular programs in the schools led to the greatest increase in teachers' confidence and feeling of capacity to deliver programs and also to give us some baseline data on teacher attitudes towards physical activity in primary school settings. Over the next four years we will continue to build upon that and hopefully look at the upscalability of some of those pilot programs.

That is in addition to the obvious requirements under our physical education curriculum policy, which mandates a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity and health education in ACT primary schools.

MRS JONES: Per week?

Ms Wright: Per week. So that is mandated activity. We are looking at improving the quality of activity that students participate in during that mandated time.

Ms Burch: Going back to the start of that, around the curriculum of healthy food, I am sure we have all been to schools which have a garden. I was at Wanniasa Hills just recently, and they have a fabulous environmental centre and a garden with chooks, so that the little ones collect the eggs. It is definitely a whole-of-school approach so that the children not only get out in the fresh air and plant a garden but also understand healthy food and where food comes from. So it is definitely a whole-of-school approach.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry has some more questions and then Mr Doszpot has a supplementary.

MS BERRY: I know that sometimes parents send food to school that is probably not the healthiest. How are the schools using that opportunity to capture parents and teach them about nutrition as well as the children?

Ms Wright: As part of the fresh tastes initiative there are six action areas. One of those action areas is called food from home. Obviously, there is an opportunity to work with school boards and P&Cs about how the strategies within that particular component of the program are employed at the school level and building that awareness of the importance of providing nutritious food coming from home into the school environment as well. So that is one of the six action areas that is identified as part of the fresh tastes program.

MS BERRY: Is it 150 minutes per week for physical activity or are health and nutrition included in that?

Ms Wright: I think it is 30 minutes a day of physical activity, and then it is 180 minutes all up with the health education component.

Mr Bray: If I could add some more information, we are also working on the physical side of school environments to enhance students being encouraged to participate in physical activities. In 2013 we completed five artificial grass sports fields at five schools. The feedback from that is that kids are very attracted to playing on the surfaces. They are set up for multisports. We have had feedback from Telopea Park School that outside organisations have approached them to use their sports field as well. So we have had a very positive reaction to those.

The other area that we are working on at the moment is bicycle-riding facilities at schools. Earlier this calendar year we opened the Southern Cross early childhood learn-to-ride facility, which, again, was very successful. We are now building one of those at the moment at Franklin Early Childhood School. We also opened a bicycle track at Melrose High School, which has a very strong—

Ms Burch: A dirt bike track.

Mr Bray: Yes, a dirt bike track, which is obviously targeted at high school students. We were trying to work out what was attractive for high school students in terms of physical activity.

MS BERRY: That was going to be my next question. In primary school it is relatively easy, but the challenge really is once they hit high school, isn't it?

Mr Bray: That is right. It was fortuitous that we were looking at the bicycle side of activity and Melrose High School indicated to us that they had a strong bicycle riding program. The problem they had was transferring the students over to Stromlo mountain to do their cycling there. By working with them, we opened a couple of weeks ago a training facility on the school grounds, which is available for use by the community outside school hours. The feedback we have had just in a short period of time has been very positive.

We are now looking to do possibly another one of those at another high school. We have also just started planning to do a learn-to-ride facility at Hughes Primary School. Because it has a strong introduction to English learning centre there, we will design that for parents as well to use that to gain and improve language and road skills. We will be targeting that at both children and adults; as part of their transition to living in Australia, they will learn about road rules and riding, and it will hopefully encourage them to take up riding as adults as well.

We are going to progressively roll out various learning bicycle-related facilities over the coming years and shape them appropriately to each school. There is not one solution for everywhere; it is about having this sort of facility at these sorts of schools, and letting it grow naturally.

MRS JONES: Are those facilities available for use at lunchtime, or are they only under supervision and as part of a class group?

Mr Bray: Obviously, it is up to the school to use them as they desire, but my understanding is that the schools use them during school lessons as well. It is basically about how they set the curriculum up. Certainly, children can use them during the breaks and they are available for community use after school hours as well.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary from Mr Doszpot and then a new question from Mrs Jones.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Wright and Mr Bray, what you have taken us through is all very commendable, and I think it is great that it is happening. But I guess I need to address my question to both Ms Joseph and the minister. Given all we heard this morning in these very commendable areas, why on earth was Rob de Castella's SmartStart for kids program abolished at a time when it would have fitted in exactly with what is being done very, very well at the school level? His program addresses both the physical activities that kids should be doing and healthy eating. His programs are nationwide, yet here in Canberra, where he is a local product, we actually destroyed the initiative. Minister, the question is for you.

Ms Burch: Ms Wright is going to provide the answer.

Ms Wright: If I can just clarify, funding for Mr de Castella's program was previously provided through the Health Directorate, not through the Education—

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that. That is why I was addressing it through the minister, because the minister has got a say in what happens in Education. If it was as good a program as I am led to believe it was, I would have thought the minister would have picked up that cudgel and fought for—

Ms Burch: We are back to the stick, again, are we, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: We certainly are. I am trying to ask why you have not done it. If there is a good reason, I would like to know. If not, it is not too late to actually engage a person of Rob de Castella's stature in the community, who still has a fantastic reputation amongst kids, but I guess even more importantly with the adults who really have to follow some of the initiatives that Mr de Castella espouses.

Ms Burch: Ms Wright can go to some of the detail, but I think what we have displayed this morning is a suite of programs that go to the health and wellbeing of children and addressing childhood obesity, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: And this would be a very good stepping stone to what is being done.

Ms Burch: It may be, and it is no comment on the value or otherwise of the program. It was funded through Health through the health promotions grants.

MR DOSZPOT: How far are you from the health minister's office, Ms Burch?

Ms Burch: I was just explaining what is happening, Mr Doszpot. We have mentioned probably a margin of the efforts that we have put in around addressing the health and wellbeing of children.

Ms Wright: In terms of that particular program, it did require a user pays cost recovery component which precluded some school communities from directly participating in it. It was not taken up across those. Along with that, there is a range of other programs that have been implemented in schools over a number of years, including the blue earth program, which is one of the programs that are going into the pilot phase in the second half of this year.

MR DOSZPOT: Which was also a part of the program of Mr de Castella's.

Ms Wright: It was. In terms of the breadth of the curriculum content with the Australian curriculum coming out, there are new requirements for schools to continue to deliver curriculum-based learning in health and wellbeing and physical activity.

I should just mention that Ms Berry's question was specifically about requirements in primary schools, but there are requirements in high schools as well in terms of curriculum delivery with physical education. With the ongoing focus through the whole-of-government action plan, there are a number of areas across the Community Services Directorate in terms of the work that they will be doing as part of the whole-of-government initiative. It is a wraparound initiative that goes across the majority of directorates. I suppose there is a component where Education has an obvious role to play in terms of our delivery in curriculum for health with the broadening of it with the introduction of fresh tastes.

There are a number of initiatives that we have been part of. I think Mr Bray has talked about ride or walk to school, but there is also a partnering with Deakin University around a program there that is called “it’s your move”. That has been run from an evidence base and a research base with Deakin University for a number of years. It also looks at increasing and improving the evidence base about what works in school environments.

In terms of endorsing any one particular program, the directorate’s approach is that we must have sustainable ongoing programs that do not require ongoing funding. We are also moving into delivery across the curriculum in other areas, including dance and the arts, that include a range of physical activities, and we have had the launch in this past year of Kulture Break’s online learning for dance programs.

Across the curriculum there are lots of opportunities, and we must always be looking for sustainable models of delivery that do not require ongoing funding support. I think part of this is building the capacity of our teachers but also building community awareness across the community. The focus of the whole-of-government healthy weight initiative is that it does not just reside in schools.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Wright, I understand and I concur with probably 90 per cent of what you just said. The missing element here is you refer to Deakin University studies. Mr de Castella has one of the longest longitudinal studies in obesity-related issues and a lot of universities are after his data. He is a local person. It is not too late, minister. It is a good initiative to fit in with what you are doing. I am simply calling on you to have a look at how that could be utilised with the very good programs you are looking at at the moment. That is all I am saying.

THE CHAIR: All right. Ms Berry has a supplementary and then we will move on to Mrs Jones.

MS BERRY: I think you mostly answered it, Ms Wright, but it was about having this sustainable model that works with changing the culture not just within our school environment but across our community to deal with the obesity epidemic. That is the way the school system—primary and high schools—is trying to manage this, rather than having a user pays system. As you just described, some schools could not afford that. Can you explain to us how that is working in the schools now? I know you have gone into a lot of detail, but how are schools committed to changing that culture not just within their school but within their community?

Ms Wright: I have mentioned already in particular the fresh taste program. Under that program, under the six action areas, each of our primary schools is working through a process with their school community of identifying the six action areas. They include things like growing food, cooking food, food from home, the curriculum aspects and a couple of others that just elude me at the moment. It is about developing an action plan at the school level about the actions that are most appropriate for that school and community to engage them.

In terms of the work of the whole-of-government healthy weight initiative, there is a steering committee and there are obvious overlaps as each of the different action areas

across directorates are more fully fleshed out in the way of planning. So there will be opportunities around promotion through the school system as well about some of the other action areas that rest more across the community, rather than being delivered by the schools.

As part of the whole-of-government healthy weight action plan there is that opportunity to use schools as a communication mechanism as well, including regular newsletter updates and information to parents and the community via the school community to ensure that all of those key messages get out about the actions that can be taken.

The phasing out of sugary drinks in public schools is one of those really proactive and very public steps that are being taken this year, to look at ACT public schools being an area where those items are not sold to children. Across government, other directorates are looking at actions and initiatives they can take place in retail areas—without going into detail on other areas—and there will be obvious opportunities for Education to play a role in communication with the community because of the relationships that we have with parents.

THE CHAIR: All right. We might leave the issue there and move on to Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I wanted to ask a supp on that topic, if I may. Are we measuring the types of programs that are being put into that physical activity time frame—and I am just reflecting on my own school experience—because kids could get the whole way through school without ever actually raising their heart rate if they just did everything slowly? Are we actually measuring the physical impact of the 30 minutes a day? Obviously, 30 minutes a day is enough to change someone’s fitness and to let them leave school with an ability to do exercise that raises their heart rate, but it is not a given. So are we measuring that?

Ms Wright: In term of: are we actually measuring the students’ heart rates—

MRS JONES: I am not saying, “Have we got a monitor on their chest?” I am just asking if you are looking at the actual calorie burn and muscle tone improvements or something.

Ms Wright: One of the myths has been that children running around at lunch time is counted as part of a component of that physical activity.

MRS JONES: If they are running around at lunch time.

Ms Wright: And that is not the case. It is actually curriculum delivery of that component. In terms of our professional learning for teachers, the importance of raising the heart rate is a key factor. In October this year there is a conference for PE educators where there are many initiatives around national concern. It is a peak body from Victoria that are coordinating the conference being held here in Canberra for our physical education teachers but, more broadly, we will be encouraging staff from across all sectors of Education to attend. It provides really good, clear evidence about the type of activity that students need to participate in in order to raise the heart rate. There is that opportunity through professional learning to ensure that teachers

understand that it does need to be physical activity that raises the heart rate for the maximum benefit.

MRS JONES: Yes. I only learnt it when I decided to join the military reserve when I was 20. I just want to go on to a substantive question. I will just go to my question on bullying, because if I referred to it before I had not mentioned it in detail and therefore it was difficult for the last group to answer. How many reports of bullying have been made in the last five and 10 years? How many non-official reports, as in ones that were not escalated up a chain but where someone made an actual complaint, were made? How many of them were substantiated? How many of these people experiencing bullying or who claim to have experienced bullying are currently off work on workers compensation? And over the same time period have there been reports of sexual harassment or other types of harassment, such as pregnancy harassment, and what was the method for dealing with them? I do not necessarily need the detail today. I am very happy to have it taken on notice from the transcript if that is easier.

Ms Burch: We will take some detail on notice, but I think it is an opportunity to inform the committee about our approach in addressing bullying.

Ms McAlister: Thank you for that question, Mrs Jones. We are seeing very pleasing trends in our data around positive workplace culture. If I may, I would like to talk about four elements, be they four pyramids upon which sits positive workplace culture, or four stepping stones that come together to actually address positive workplace culture.

The first is the deliberate proactive approach that happens throughout the directorate around establishing expectations about staff behavior. I want to give an example, if I can, about a staff charter from Isabella Plains Early Childhood School. This is one example of 86 that occur in the workplaces throughout the directorate. I will not read it. I just want to touch on it, if I can, because it is a real cornerstone about creating and maintaining a positive workplace culture. “At Isabella Plains Early Childhood School the wellbeing of our staff is purposefully planned for. We believe that happy, motivated staff can work to their potential to provide the best programs for children. This is achieved through our values, our collaborative teams and our intentional actions.”

Then the charter goes very explicitly through how the values look in that worksite, how the collaborative team approach looks in that worksite, and then they talk about their intentional wellbeing actions. So it is a staff charter around how we will behave in this workplace.

MRS JONES: Is that given to all staff or is it done in staff training?

Ms McAlister: Correct. Then it is revisited as needed informally when required and more formally if required.

MRS JONES: So it is a standard of expectation?

Ms McAlister: Exactly. We also have, as a standard, the ACT public service values

which are articulated in an education and training setting through the code of conduct for staff which is visited each year formally for staff and also again informally throughout the year. I had a conversation with a principal last week where we were talking about workplace behaviour and that principal knew the element of that code of conduct that we were talking about. So it is a very well used document.

Part of the proactive approach that we have in the directorate is a very strong focus on respect, equity and diversity training. We have identified cohorts that we continually train. We have three upcoming training sessions occurring and they are all full.

MRS JONES: Cohorts of teachers?

Ms McAlister: School leaders, teachers, building services officers, business managers and so on. We actively reach into employees as they enter those groups and bring them into the training sessions. We also have our REDCO officers—our respect, equity and diversity contact officers—integrated into 90 sites throughout the directorate.

MRS JONES: Into schools?

Ms McAlister: In schools and also central office as well. They have a very proactive role about raising awareness of the importance of safe workplace and positive workplace culture.

MRS JONES: So does every school have one?

Ms McAlister: Yes. We also have quarterly REDCO network meetings where we continue to skill them up in their role as well and they also keep the directorate informed about the role that is occurring in schools.

Two more elements that I would like to touch on around prevention are that we have a strong focus in the directorate on alternative dispute resolution where that is appropriate. So we have identified and trained 23 conflict coaches in the directorate. These are site-based employees who go through a significant training process—conflict coaching—and this year we have had 16 sessions on conflict coaching.

MRS JONES: And the objective of those is de-escalation; is that right?

Ms McAlister: That is correct. We are seeing a strong trend in our data in terms of the strong focus within the directorate of reduction in reporting. Having a high reporting rate is not a bad thing—that actually reflects that there is an awareness raising going on—but between last year and this year we have seen a 40 per cent drop in the reporting and we are also seeing a drop in the number of reports that need to go to formal investigation.

MRS JONES: The difference between reporting and unofficial reporting: is that when someone raises the issue versus when it is continued on?

Ms McAlister: That is correct.

MRS JONES: When you report back to me with the stats, I would like included when something is raised and not continued on, obviously because you have had a successful de-escalation.

Ms McAlister: Terrific, and we have a very strong focus around informal dispute resolution techniques and the success of those within the directorate. That is the first stepping stone, which is around proactive awareness raising.

The second is around formal reporting and Mr Andrew Whale outlined to the committee on Thursday the process. He outlined it very clearly. We also follow that process. Where required, we will follow the procedures in the relevant enterprise agreement around formal reporting.

MRS JONES: Delegates and so on?

Ms McAlister: That is correct.

MRS JONES: Who defines who the delegate is? Is that a choice of management or is that a choice of the staff member?

Ms McAlister: It is usually the director of people and performance.

MRS JONES: In the directorate?

Ms McAlister: That is correct.

MRS JONES: Deciding about who the delegate is in each school?

Ms McAlister: Mr Whale, when he talked to the committee on Thursday, talked about delegates. He was referring to the nine directorates. Usually, the delegate in each of those nine directorates is the director of human resources.

MRS JONES: Things are, as he mentioned, taken directly into the department—into that human resources position—once they are raised?

Ms McAlister: That is correct. We have a very close relationship with our schools. So our schools will, where they are unsure, make contact with us immediately. A school will informally use their charter—their code of conduct—to talk about expectations of performance. They will deal with or respond to the majority of incidents through talking about the agreed conduct within that site.

Where that is not appropriate or where a school feels that they need more information, they will usually make contact with the director of people and performance to sort of talk an issue through. So that contact will be very immediate.

MRS JONES: So that is from the school leader to the—

Ms McAlister: That is correct; usually a principal.

MRS JONES: For the employee on the school side, maybe when you come back to

us you can let us know how the person that they raise the issue with is chosen because that obviously is a—

Ms Joseph: It is within the REDCO framework—respect, equity and diversity. There is the no wrong door rule, I think it is. So any employee can raise an issue. It may not be with their principal. It may be directly to someone in the directorate or maybe straight to the Director-General.

MRS JONES: Or another staff member?

Ms Joseph: Or another staff member or the REDCO coordinator. The REDCO coordinator is usually appointed or nominated because they are viewed by all staff to be trusted and they are usually not part of the leadership team.

MRS JONES: Is that a subjective decision of the leadership of the school or is that something that the staff vote on?

Ms McAlister: It is managed differently in each school site. We have a number of REDCOs that feel a strong sense of pride about that role. They have a strong sense of social justice. They continue in that role for more than just a year. So it depends on the school.

MRS JONES: But it is an annual appointment?

Ms McAlister: It is an annual appointment. At the beginning of each year it is really important that we know who those REDCO officers are. I would like to talk about the third element, which is responding to informal complaints because I think your questions are really around how we manage those more informal complaints. We do have a proactive way of addressing those. We may have information that comes to the directorate through more informal pathways.

It might be at the point of transfer, for example, or in a return-to-work program or they come across more informally. The directorate does deliberately reach out to those individuals, seeks more information and asks those individuals to provide more information so that we can support them and actually address the concerns.

Then, finally, the last piece I would like to touch on is the recent people matter survey—the whole-of-government survey. It had a strong emphasis on values and behaviours in the workplace. We did a very large promotion within the directorate to try get the greatest number of teachers and staff responding to that survey.

MRS JONES: Was that anonymous?

Ms McAlister: Yes, it was. We are constructing a very deliberate conversation for our school leaders to have about workplace health and organisational health within their setting. We will be supplementing the information that the directorate receives from that whole-of-government survey with other information which we may have about leave and so on—

MRS JONES: Have you got the data disaggregated down to the sites or not?

Ms McAlister: Not yet. We will not receive—

MRS JONES: Is that an intention or are you not going to be doing that for anonymity reasons?

Ms Joseph: My understanding is that it will be down to different sites. I think the point Ms McAlister is making here is that it is actually what you do with the data.

Ms McAlister: Exactly.

Ms Joseph: For the first time we will have some data that we can benchmark across ACT government and across schools. But it is particularly about the leadership—the leadership from the senior executive and the directorate, but particularly with our school sites how the leadership at school sites and networks actually respond to it.

What Coralie is talking about is the deliberate strategy. Okay, you have got your data. How do you then get the conversations with the employees? Whilst you have got the data, you want to make sure that people feel that they have been listened to, they know that issues are going to be responded to and that we improve the workplace.

MRS JONES: But also that they are not going to be victimised as well.

Ms Joseph: That is right.

Ms McAlister: Yes. Those elements really work together to develop a very strong workplace culture and a safe workplace culture.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

Ms Burch: In addition to that, probably at an even more macro level, is the code of conduct for teachers. It is linked to professionalisation and registration.

MRS JONES: Is that a separate one to the public service code of conduct? Is it additional or is it part of it?

Ms Ellis: Because we register teachers from all sectors, some of them are public servants—those working in the ACT directorate are—but others are not. The Assembly actually made a really important statement earlier this year when you adopted the code of professional practice and conduct. It gave a strong message to the community that you, as the Assembly, thought that the role of the teacher was vitally important and that principles to guide every teacher's practice should be common across all teachers.

That has been something that works alongside all the frameworks that the different employers have. It was a very important statement about what a professional does, and certainly respectful interactions with students, parents, community and colleagues is a key part of that.

MRS JONES: Fantastic. Also in reporting back with the data, maybe it would be

worth putting in the overall FTE number so that it does not seem enormous because you have got a large cohort of employees. That would be great.

Ms Ellis: Yes.

THE CHAIR: All right. A new question, Mr Doszpot.

Mr DOSZPOT: Thank you, chair. My question is related to the Australian curriculum and the federal review. I guess the question is to the minister or to Ms Joseph. Did the ACT Education and Training Directorate make a submission to the federal review?

Ms Joseph: Yes, the ACT government did make a submission to the review. I call on Ms Wright to give some detail on that.

Ms Wright: At this stage, the ACT government's submission has not been made public from the review. My understanding is that the Australian government has advised that following the report release of the review is when those submissions will be made public.

Mr DOSZPOT: Did officers meet with the reviewers?

Ms Wright: From the ACT, there were a number of invitations issued for people to meet with Dr Kevin Donnelly and Professor Kim Wiltshire. I met with them as the director of curriculum for the directorate. The Director-General, Ms Joseph, and Executive Director, Education Strategy, Mr Gniel, also met with the reviewers on behalf of the directorate.

Invitations were also provided to the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools and to the two parent groups that represented both government and non-government sectors at the time. That was the Council of P&C Associations and also the APFS, the Association of Parents and Friends, which is the non-government parent body. I believe that all of those individual consultations took place. They were hour-long meetings with the reviewers in person held here in Canberra.

Mr DOSZPOT: The Australian Primary Principals Association in March this year made a submission to the federal government review on the national curriculum. The association believed that the national curriculum is overcrowded and needs to focus more on basic literacy and numeracy skills. Is this the view of the ACT public school principals as well?

Ms Joseph: I think with the Australian curriculum the ACT has been a lead jurisdiction. We were in a very fortunate position when the Australian curriculum was first phased in. We had done a recent curriculum review in the ACT. Based on that ACT curriculum, every chance to learn, we were fairly well lined up with the new Australian curriculum.

In making sure there was enough time in our curriculum, the focus for each of the areas was right. Because we had done the review just immediately prior to the Australian curriculum review coming in, our subject areas and time allowances and

everything for those subjects was fairly well defined locally.

The alignment with the Australian curriculum was very fortunate. That has enabled the ACT schools—public, Catholic and non-government and independent—to lead that implementation. Ms Wright can provide further information.

Ms Wright: In terms of implementation nationally, we are at a very early stage. One of the commitments under the Australian curriculum is that it will be regularly reviewed through ACARA, which is the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, which is responsible for development of the Australian curriculum.

As we have only implemented four of the learning areas here in the ACT, which is still at the forefront of implementation nationally, some jurisdictions have made public comment on the amount of curriculum content, having not yet actually implemented some of those learning areas themselves. But we have implemented four.

I think it would be unwise not to say that it is something that we will continue to monitor as we work cross-sectorally in the ACT. The implementation of the Australian curriculum is monitored cross-sectorally through the Australian Curriculum Taskforce. Through that task force we look at implementation and staged implementation of the Australian curriculum.

So in respect of the four subjects—English, maths, science and history—that we have rolled into curriculum alongside the every chance to learn curriculum in the other learning areas, it is not an issue that has been raised through the curriculum task force at this point in time as an issue for ACT schools around the amount of content or difficulty in delivering those Australian curriculum content areas alongside the content areas and curriculum that exist for the other learning areas.

MR DOSZPOT: You have addressed everything very well, but my question was: is the view expressed by the Australian principals association—which was that the national curriculum is overcrowded and needs to focus more on basic literacy and numeracy skills—the view of the ACT public school principals?

Ms Joseph: I meet regularly with the ACT principals association, and they have not raised it with me in the last two years of me being Director-General.

MR DOSZPOT: That is one question. The second is—

Ms Burch: Sorry, I just make the comment that whilst you are referring to commentary by one body, there has been significant commentary about the review. In fact, the overwhelming response from teachers and families and educators that I have spoken to is that the curriculum was sound and, indeed, that this review was driven by ideology and a particular view of the coalition. Many states, as Ms Wright indicated, have not fully implemented the national curriculum. So to try and link that to poor performance of Australia, which was the early commentary—

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, you are jumping ahead. My question—

Ms Burch: No, no, I just want to make the point—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, it is Mr Doszpot's question. He understands his own question.

Ms Burch: Yes, and I am giving an answer to it. I think it is a very poor form to undersell the time ACARA put into developing curriculum. To think that a three-month review could do it justice is a furphy, quite frankly, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what we are referring to is a very simple statement from the Primary Principals Association.

Ms Burch: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: I was simply seeking your views. You are the one who brought ideology into my question. I still want to get a firmer answer. You say, Ms Joseph, that none of the principals have addressed that issue with you. Have you actually asked them about that?

Ms Wright: I can add to the response, Mr Doszpot. The task force has a working group underneath it called the Australian curriculum implementation committee, again, a cross-sectoral committee that has principals and deputy principals. This is the ACT implementation committee. No issues have been raised at that committee either from the principals and deputy principals or from any sector—independent schools—around that particular focus on whether their curriculum is overcrowded.

MR DOSZPOT: My question is based on a pretty broad statement by a very big group of people. We are not talking about ideology; we are talking about fact. Is the view of the education directorate that you are comfortable with the curriculum as it is? Is that what I am hearing?

Ms Burch: Yes.

Ms Joseph: We have time lines for implementing the Australian curriculum in the ACT which we have determined locally. A lot of the implementation—how we go about resourcing it, supporting schools and leadership teams, supporting teachers—has been done through the ACT Australian curriculum implementation task force, which is cross-sectoral. A lot of our professional learning is focused on supporting teachers implementing the curriculum.

The other big bonus around the Australian curriculum for ACT in particular has been the access to resources. Teachers for the first time can access curriculum resources online fairly readily for every outcome area of the Australian curriculum, Together with that there are dynamic, online interactive learning resources that our schools can have access to.

The feedback we are getting from our schools and school leaders cross-sectorally is that our schools are comfortable in implementing it. Are there challenges? Yes there are always challenges in implementing curriculum, because the teacher's job is hard and it changes all the time depending on the cohort of students you have got. But for the first time it is not just ACT teachers creating the resources; the accessibility to

resources and support is far greater in implementing our ACT curriculum, which is the Australian curriculum. We have a strong foundation for supporting all of our schools in that area.

Ms Burch: To add to the, “Yes, we are comfortable with the curriculum,” it goes to how the curriculum was developed. Some of these curriculum subject areas take three years to develop. They are put together by experts, they are tested with the schools, they are tested across the different sectors with the teachers that will be using them and teaching the students with them. It is a very long-term investment, a solid investment. The quick answer is: after all that effort and investment across teachers and across sectors, it is a solid program and a good, solid curriculum.

The other feedback I am getting from parents is the value of the common reporting that is linked to the Australian curriculum. Where previously schools have implemented their own reports, now for the first time we can have an A or a B or a C—whatever the level of grade is—that is matched to the Australian curriculum regardless of what school it goes into. So, yes, I am very comfortable with that as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for your quick overview. On that note, the ACT was the first to adopt the national curriculum. Minister Barr, as soon as the idea was floated, said, “Yes, we’re in.” What do you believe has been the advantage for educational outcomes of the decision for us to be the very first?

Ms Wright: In terms of the opportunities of the Australian curriculum and being at the forefront of the implementation, our teachers have been on the ground working directly with ACARA throughout the process. This has provided extensive access to experts gathered from across the country in curriculum development. Our teachers have trialled curriculum. They have contributed to the development of work samples across the learning areas that have been implemented so far and it continues to provide a great opportunity for our teachers to gain a very thorough understanding of the Australian curriculum as it has evolved and to provide very direct feedback from their expertise base to ACARA on what works in the classroom.

Our active engagement and involvement in the process I think stands our teachers in great stead in terms of their familiarity with the curriculum as opposed to other jurisdictions which have not been trialling it and have not been engaged during the time that it was being developed. In particular, Minister Burch talked about the achievement standards. The ACT did a lot of work around validating those achievement standards that are publicly available online for parents to be able to access for the first time and get a view of the expectations of learning in each of the learning areas for any given year level.

The degree of transparency and opportunity that there is for teachers and parents to engage in really open dialogue means the curriculum is no longer a mystery for our parents and carers. I think those opportunities to increase the level of parental engagement with Australian curriculum through its online accessibility are important.

The other opportunity for us as a jurisdiction moving forward with Australian curriculum which we cannot deny is the mobility of our population and the opportunity it provides for very mobile workforces such as the defence services. So

some of the vigour with which we have approached it has been around meeting the needs of our students and knowing that we are going to have students coming into our classrooms from jurisdictions all around the country. Those opportunities cannot be denied for a jurisdiction such as the ACT, and I think we have really leveraged off the opportunities that have been available.

Also, if we look at the sheer investment nationally in Australian curriculum as compared to what we have been able to do locally—and we have done a very good job and have always been at the forefront of curriculum development—the reason we were so very well placed was that the national statements of learning that were developed prior to the Australian curriculum were embedded within the every chance to learn program. We have always been a jurisdiction that looks at what is going on nationally and sees how we can embed that in our structures for curriculum. The opportunity provided by the Australian curriculum that the pure investment and manpower that has been part of it that we as a jurisdiction on our own could have not achieved is clearly apparent.

THE CHAIR: We still have output classes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 to hopefully be concluded by 12.45. Members, you might sharpen your focus to get through the output classes.

Sitting suspended from 11.27 am to 11.45 am.

THE CHAIR: Members, we will resume the hearing. Please remember we are doing output classes 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and it would be good if we could conclude those three areas by 12.45.

Minister, the Childers Group spoke to us on one of the community days and raised the issue of the arts in schools and the need for arts education officers. As the Arts Minister, you have probably heard that or read that transcript. What is the department doing in regard to the arts in the ACT? What does it think of arts education officers? And given there is such a strong link between arts and creativity and arts and music and wellbeing and performance, how are we focusing on that?

Ms Joseph: I will pass over to Leanne Wright, because there is obviously a link with the Australian curriculum. But there is also a breadth of programs, most notably our instrumental program, across public schools as well. But Leanne Wright would know that.

Ms Wright: As Ms Joseph said, the ACT is moving towards implementation of the Australian curriculum in the arts. The arts takes into account a range of learning areas—music, dance, visual arts.

In terms of how we are working to build teacher capacity and to support teachers in the implementation of arts curriculum, we are working again closely with ACARA. We are organising professional learning from the team that wrote the arts curriculum coming down to Canberra and working with teachers cross-sectorally about implementation of that curriculum and, in particular in the primary setting, how generalist teachers can adapt and work with the curriculum to deliver those key learning outcomes.

Across specifically the arts, Ms Joseph mentioned the instrumental music program that engages primary and high schools in specialist band programs. In the primary schools there are also ukulele and fife programs as well. So schools have the opportunity to use that program to enhance music education.

In terms of how primary schools deliver arts curriculum, schools make decisions about what specialist teachers they use to deliver teaching other than face-to-face teaching. For example in some schools you will find that there is a specialist music teacher that will take classes from preschool right through to year 6. In other schools you might find that they will employ a visual arts teacher and have a slightly different, predominant arts focus in their teaching and learning. The expectation is that students throughout their engagement in education will have opportunities to engage with the arts in a variety of ways, including performance arts as well.

Each year the directorate hosts the step into the limelight program which covers visual arts, media, the film festival and also the schools limelight gala evening, which is the big, I suppose, concert evening that has been held at the AIS for the last couple of years. So there are opportunities. Schools also engage in activities through Wakakirri and a range of other options for curriculum delivery that are actually celebrated through that step into the limelight program as well.

We also, in conjunction with artsACT, deliver the artists in schools program. That is an opportunity for specialist artists to go and work in schools for generally 10 weeks and do some specialised arts education program, in primary school settings again. In the high school make-up of staff, you may generally have the arts faculty which covers off a lot of the arts areas.

In terms of how arts education is also supported from the directorate, we will see programs such as the one I mentioned earlier and Kulture Break for dance. Part of that program is actually being a little innovative in terms of using technology to deliver some aspects of arts education. So that dance program is an online resource so that teachers can have some professional learning. We have run some sessions with teachers on how to interact with that resource, and then—

MS BERRY: I was just smiling when you were saying having some individual lessons with teachers about hip-hop.

Ms Wright: And that is exactly what it is. Those particular workshops engage teachers in a non-threatening way about how to deliver the dance curriculum in primary schools.

THE CHAIR: Specifically, are you across the proposal that the Childers Group made? No?

Ms Burch: Leanne Wright is probably not. The Childers Group certainly raised it with me. I know they raised it when they appeared before the committee. My response to the Childers Group has been our strong building up of curricula more broadly across a range of curricula. And I do not foresee in the near future a designated arts education officer; rather, we will build on what Ms Wright has spoken about, how we build on the arts curriculum and how we build our curriculum and support teachers

across the spectrum rather than having one central, dedicated person to be all things to everybody.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Regarding the instrumental music program that you were just talking about, have you done any comparison on the program costs for parents compared to the cost of equivalent instrument rental and tuition in the private sector?

Ms Wright: I do not have a specific breakdown of that cost, but my understanding is that if you went on an hourly rate, with the contributions that parents are asked—and each school sets the contribution locally in conjunction with their school board—contributions for the instrumental music program, from my experience, are generally somewhere between \$200 and \$350 a year, depending on the school and the type of band. That provides for the formal tuition twice a week from the specialist teacher over 40 weeks. It provides for the rental of the instrument, and if you break down those costs to a weekly rate you are getting to very small rates for the actual face-to-face tuition. Alongside the specialist tuition, the school-based band teacher also does another generally two lessons with the band as a whole.

In terms of affordability for parents, even though there is a parental contribution—and it is an optional enrichment program that does attract a parental contribution to it—the base rate of funding that is required for students to participate in that brings the costs of that tuition down significantly in comparison to anything that could be privately sourced by parents. And, as you say, it is the rental of the instrument. The program works in such a way that if a child's instrument fails today, generally within 24 hours it is replaced with another instrument while their instrument is repaired. The staff at the instrumental music program have a large degree of expertise in managing the instruments themselves, which is a significant investment on behalf of the directorate, to have those instruments available for students.

So I am not aware of a specific cost breakdown. It would, I would suggest, vary from site to site. That just depends on the number of students in the band itself because the schools make a contribution to the upkeep of the instrumental music program on a cost recovery-type basis. But it is very cost efficient.

MS BERRY: And I know that, broken down, that \$300 over a year is a small amount each week, but are there programs within schools for parents on low incomes to be able to afford to have their children enjoy that?

Ms Wright: Schools receive equity funding that they can access. Prior to coming into my current role I was a school principal in a primary school, and generally speaking that cost to students, whilst considered quite cost efficient to participate, across all public schools is worked out by including students wherever possible. Where cost is a barrier we address that generally at the school level. Certainly in the times when the instrumental music program has come under my supervision I have not had any cases raised with me where cost has prevented participation by a student in the program. And we certainly know that at the school level principals and teachers work really hard to make sure that it does not impact on access to the program.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, on page 8 of the budget statement it talks about students in ACT public high schools achieving high academic rates against national standards. But my question is generally around children meeting the standards for academic excellence in numeracy and literacy, how we are travelling with that and in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in closing the gap with those students, both in the primary school and in the high school setting, and whether or not we are, in fact, closing the gap.

Ms Burch: Ms Stewart can go to the detail of that. Certainly our students are at a high level on our NAPLAN results. We continue to lead the nation. The most recent NAPLAN data showed us first or equal first in 20 out of the 20 elements, and certainly ranked first or equal first in numeracy and grammar and punctuation. So we do rank highly. If we look to international data, if we just look at the ACT compared against international data, we perform well as well.

In regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there is still work we need to do, but we perform better than other jurisdictions in their retainment, the completion of year 12 and their prospects for employment or education once they leave school. Ms Stewart.

Ms Stewart: As Minister Burch has said, we do perform very well across the range of national and international assessments. And just to reiterate, in the 2013 NAPLAN testing in the ACT, NAPLAN tested five domains, reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy, and across four year levels, years 3, 5, 7 and 9. So we get 20 testing areas. And we were top in the nation or equal top across all those 20. In reading, we have been the highest since NAPLAN was implemented in 2008. In numeracy and grammar and punctuation, the ACT has been the highest since 2009. So we do very well in that testing.

We are also starting to get some more data coming through NAPLAN. For example, we are now measuring how students are improving their performance as they go through schooling. We look at how students are progressing from year 3 to year 5, year 5 to year 7 and year 7 to year 9. We also are seeing data now that the ACT does very well in making sure students are progressing through the years of schooling. Our growth, the amount of improvement that students are making between the two years of testing, is also quite high across the nation, which is an important issue for us because that level of growth is actually influenced by how well the students perform. If, for example, students are very highly performing in year 3, there is not as much room for them to make as much growth as other students who perhaps were a little lower down. So the fact that we are doing very well in that growth, given that our students are already highly performing, is a good feedback about how well the education system here in the ACT is going.

Minister Burch also mentioned international testing. We have a range of international testing that comes out from time to time. Most recently at the end of last year we had PISA, which is the program for international student assessment. That assesses students in reading, maths and science. Again, the ACT performed very highly. We were certainly in the top 10 in the world, if we were our own country, across all those

three areas and, again, were amongst the highest in Australia. Western Australia was also up there with us in a couple of the areas but, basically, we were quite far ahead of how other students across Australia were performing.

In terms of actually closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes, there is a national agreement that we are part of that was commenced in 2008 which had a 10-year time frame to close the gap by 50 per cent for outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. That is a COAG initiative. That is monitored each year. We are now at the halfway point for that.

The ACT—and not all jurisdictions are in this case—are on track and have met our targets to the halfway point. And the COAG reform council announced very recently that we are on track to achieve the target by 2018 to halve the gap in performance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

MS PORTER: Some of the budget papers seem to indicate that there is some lag in the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people remaining at school when it comes to year 12. Do we have an issue in relation to young people leaving school early and, if we do, what are we doing about that?

Ms Burch: Again, I think as far as obtaining a year 12 certificate or equivalent is concerned, we probably do better than other jurisdictions. But a number of our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women choose an alternative pathway. They may pick up an ASBA, an apprenticeship program, from year 10. Mr Gniel can talk to that.

Mr Gniel: I will let Tracy start on the data for the first part and then lead to our areas for improvement.

Ms Stewart: Just a little background about how well we are keeping students in our system, particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there is a national collection that measures the retention of students from year 7 through to year 12. For example, we are retaining 97.7 per cent of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from year 7 to year 10—they are staying in the system—and that is the highest in Australia. That is very good retention.

From year 7 to year 12, last year we retained 65.2 per cent of students through to year 12. While this was a little lower than the year before it was well above the national average which was below 50 per cent. Not quite as many students were retained through to year 12 but it was still significantly higher than the national retention rate through to year 12.

MS PORTER: Do we know why it was slightly lower?

Ms Stewart: Sorry, why it was—

MS PORTER: Do we know what it was slightly lower? Have we got any theories as to why it was slightly lower?

Ms Stewart: Through to year 12? I might let Mr Gniel expand a little on the

introduction of earn or learn and the requirement for students to stay through to year 12 and some of the strategies around schools with all that.

Mr Gniel: Before I go into that, I think one of the key points for this data, as well, is that the cohort for this group was 55 students in 2013, if I remember rightly.

Ms Stewart: For year 12.

Mr Gniel: For year 12, yes. Year 12 is by far our smallest cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. To give you a bit of an example, I think there are around 180-odd in our preschools now. So we are seeing larger numbers coming through our system. We are averaging a bit over that 100 in our public schools in the early primary years. Moving through into the secondary schools, it is around 80. So this is a very small cohort compared to previous years. I would have to get Tracy to clarify that, but small numbers mean that any small change in any of that information does have a greater impact on the percentage response. That is the first point.

The other point I would make is that through the work of the school funding review that was carried out a few years ago by David Gonski, one of the areas that they did identify as requiring further support in terms of funding is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It is a recognised area where we need to do more, both through funding and, importantly, what we do with the funding. We have heard a lot about what we do with our teachers in terms of special needs, gifted and talented and learning difficulties; it is also around what we are doing for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Again we have a raft of programs that we put in place for those students to try and better their outcomes for each of those individual students.

One of the things specific to the ACT is that, with the small cohorts, it is looking at each of those individual children. Whereas in other jurisdictions we have thousands and thousands of students, we have a very small cohort where we can be tracking each of those individual students and making sure that they are transitioning into something at the end of their schooling—that is, work, more study or training. That is the basis of our policy throughout those years.

But that does start right back at our Koori preschool program, which I know you are aware of, Ms Porter. It works throughout our schools, in terms of the basis on which we offer those programs as well, so we know that it is not just about the quality of the teaching. It is about the cultural environment that people walk into; our cultural competency training; our school and community partnerships; our reconciliation action plans that we have talked about previously; and targeted work around professional development for principals and leadership teams around accepting the challenge and looking at specific issues around the cohorts in their schools.

That is one of the other challenges for us. It is a bit specific to the ACT that we have a small cohort and it is dispersed across our schools. We do not have huge concentrations of schools with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they have in other jurisdictions. So when we get programs from the commonwealth government and things like that, we always have to make sure that the ACT is considered as slightly different, because we do not have those same program issues in the ACT.

That goes through all of the work that we are doing with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who enter our education offices. We have 11 in total; they work across 14 of our schools, in the areas where there is the most need identified. We also have, as part of our network student engagement teams that work in each of the four networks of schooling, family support officers that work on engagement issues with those students and their families. We also have a student engagement officer who works on a case-by-case basis around working with those kids; tutorial support to the tune of over \$100,000 per year from the ACT government into high schools, particularly in those senior years; an aspiration program that works with our students from year 5 all the way through to year 12; and a scholarship program that was built on through the previous budget, if I remember rightly, to expand the current scholarships into the health area as well as into teaching.

There are still challenges for us. We do not shirk that responsibility, but we are continuing to work on those areas that are demonstrated to make the greatest difference. I would turn back to the Gonski review and say that it is still a commitment of this government to have our funding based on need. We are broadly consistent with that already, but we will be doing further work on that sort of stuff next year.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones has a supplementary and then Mr Doszpot.

MRS JONES: The issues specific to the cohort—what have you identified precisely as the specific issues for the cohort that you are working on?

Ms Gniel: What we do know about our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is that probably the greatest effect is that a disproportionately large number of those students come from low SES backgrounds, which compounds the needs for those students. Again, if I go back to the school funding reform review carried out by David Gonski, that was also shown as a specific area of need. So as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs, we have low SES needs that we need to address with those students. Then others, if there are people with a disability, again compound that.

MRS JONES: Yes, but what are the specific issues that you have identified specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that set them apart and that can be dealt with specifically. We are all aware of SES issues, and I think the models of funding historically have also dealt with low SES, whether that was in the ACT or whether that was just the national model that was used previously. I am interested in how we are actually to effect change in this area, so I would like to know what the specific issues are that you referred to.

Mr Gniel: The specific issues around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not dissimilar to those for other students but they are, at times, more pronounced. Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receive a preschool education is an example. The importance of early childhood education is a key; hence the Koori preschool program. Another one is their lower attendance rates. Again, at most times that stems from family issues—around getting them to school, around school support from the family. Hence, we have our engagement officers program.

MRS JONES: So the engagement officers follow up non-attendance?

Mr Gniel: That is right, yes.

MRS JONES: On a daily basis?

Mr Gniel: At the school site they do, yes. Some of these programs are on top of the existing programs that operate in schools for students with any need base that they have. These are particular programs that go to that cohort. I think that is what you were asking. There are specific needs for these children, and that is what is addressed through those additional programs. As the minister said, we still have work to do there. As Ms Stewart said, we are on the right track, because I think we are on track for closing that gap.

MRS JONES: We have seen in this committee some pretty good results in some other areas for that group of people in the community, so I am just interested in seeing similar results within education.

Mr Gniel: Yes. The other one, if I could draw your attention to those year 3 results, is that we are certainly seeing those increases in NAPLAN in line with our results for non-Indigenous students. One of the things that we have to work on here to close the gap is not just about doing better with our kids as they come through—Koori preschool programs and things like that—but also not letting the kids that are already in our system at the higher ends fall behind. That is why things like tutorial assistance, the scholarships programs and aspiration programs are really key in making sure that we not only start with the younger children but address the needs of the kids as they come through secondary school.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary, Mr Doszpot. Then a supplementary, Ms Berry.

MR DOSZPOT: My supplementary goes back to Ms Stewart—the benefits of NAPLAN, and the successes, which are great. But NAPLAN also allows us to look at some of the areas that we should be looking at where there are problems. There are significant numbers of ACT students falling below the national standard, particularly in year 3 and in year 7. In 2013, tests showed that for year 3, 48 out of 88 schools are below the national standard for reading, and in year 7, 17 out of 35 schools are below the national average in spelling. How does the ACT public school literacy and numeracy strategy address that to ensure that outcomes for all students line up with these NAPLAN results?

Ms Stewart: Mr Doszpot, I believe that the data you are referring to is probably data that has come from the My School website, which shows the performance of ACT schools, and those levels, in relation to a select group of other schools across Australia. Is that correct?

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct, yes.

Ms Stewart: What happens in that case is that the particular ACT school is compared on the basis of a small group of, say, 20 schools from across Australia. How that school is comparing—

MR DOSZPOT: These are like schools you are talking about?

Ms Stewart: Yes. Is that correct? That is the basis of your question?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Stewart: What we actually do is measure the performance of our students across the board in relation to the national minimum standard that applies. Our students are towards the top of the nation in that respect. We have between 92 and 97 per cent of our students actually achieving the national minimum standard across all year levels. I am sure my colleagues in education strategy would confirm that we do have strategies in place to increase that even further, but, as I said, that is quite high, and the national standard is certainly up there.

MR DOSZPOT: My question was related to the 48 out of 88 schools below the national standard for reading.

Ms Stewart: The national minimum standard measures each child individually in terms of their performance and the percentage of students who fall below that. We do not actually refer to it as a benchmark, but it is that benchmark level of the national minimum standard. That is the basis for assessing how many of our students are actually achieving that national standard and how many are above. There are percentages in each domain in each year level, but it does range around 92 to 97 per cent of students.

MR DOSZPOT: My question is related not so much to the percentages and the reality of what is given to us, but about what are the strategies. How are you addressing those students who need to be looked at?

Mr Gniel: Mr Doszpot, I am just trying to clarify if I am answering the question around the small percentage of students that do not meet the benchmark or if you are referring to schools with like schools, which is around the average.

MR DOSZPOT: Whether it is like schools or not, the percentages were referring to published results, and 48 out of 88 schools are below the national standard for reading.

Ms Stewart: I will give a bit of explanation. That is the information on the My School website that does compare our schools with similar schools. Sometimes we refer to it as red or green, depending on the margin for how our schools perform in some domains against similar schools. Some schools perform quite comparably with similar schools—or with what we actually say are schools serving similar student populations. There is also a difference depending on whether we measure those schools against the Australian average or whether we measure them against that group of similar schools. My understanding, Mr Doszpot, is that the data that you are quoting relates to the comparison of our public schools with similar schools in the 2013 My School results.

MR DOSZPOT: To make sure there is no confusion in what we are asking for, we will put it to you in a question on notice. So we will come back to you on this.

MRS JONES: The point is that no-one is disputing that the reportings are comparisons. The question that was being asked was about what is being done to fix the problem.

Ms Burch: There are two, I think. What is the average if we want to get an average attainment of our students in our schools, regardless of any comparison elsewhere? And then what are we doing with those students that need to be supported to pull them up to a mark?

MRS JONES: Yes, but if Mr Doszpot wants to compare students' achievements in the ACT and externally, that is a fair comparison to make, even if there are issues with the way that comparison works. It is still an outcome, and it would be good to know what is being done to address the concerns.

Mr Gniel: Sure. I am not arguing that; I was just trying to make sure I was answering the question that is being put to us.

MRS JONES: I think it is clear now.

MR DOSZPOT: We will clarify the question so you can answer it.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot is going to put it on notice with great clarity. Ms Berry had a supplementary, with a new question. Time is a-wasting, members; you have got about 45 minutes.

MS BERRY: I have a couple of questions regarding NAPLAN. How soon after NAPLAN is the information fed back to teachers, parents and schools?

Ms Stewart: We have just finished NAPLAN testing for this year, in May. The time frame since NAPLAN was implemented has been that 17 weeks after NAPLAN is completed, information would be available to schools, teachers and parents, and also to us as a jurisdiction so we can have a look at how we are going. There is an Australian government commitment to reduce that time frame, particularly in getting results back to teachers so that they can use them in the classroom to assist with lifting student performance. My understanding is that from this year we will be releasing the results across the nation within 16 weeks and we will be moving forward to see how we might be able to get that faster into classrooms. It may be then that results will come out at different times for different jurisdictions, depending on how quickly we can actually get the results out.

MS BERRY: Is that across the country—that 16-week time frame?

Ms Stewart: It is at this stage, yes. I am just urging caution: moving forward, it may be different. If a particular jurisdiction can get it out in 14 weeks versus 15 weeks, they will go when they have it ready and get their results out to their teachers.

THE CHAIR: So just for clarity, the testing was done in May so it will be approximately September?

Ms Stewart: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: On the NAPLAN, do home-schooled kids participate in NAPLAN?

Ms Stewart: They are eligible to participate. Our area within ETD makes contact with them and determines if they wish to participate. If they do then we involve them. We include them in the testing and we have facilities set up for them to be included.

MS BERRY: I have a question regarding sex education in schools. We talked about this a bit in Health. Can you give us a snapshot of what the ACT government does to prepare young adults for healthy relationships?

Ms Wright: Within the health and physical education curriculum there are streams and outcomes in relation to young people's development of understanding of interpersonal relationships and the health aspects of sex education. So those programs are supported at the school level and there are a number of service providers that schools can access to support curriculum delivery in those areas.

Schools generally work with their knowledge of students around how that delivery is facilitated at the school level. From a curriculum point of view there are clear curriculum outcomes that are expected. As the Australian curriculum comes in in health and physical education, that curriculum also incorporates a strong emphasis on both interpersonal relationships and health and wellbeing aspects of sex education.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary. Can we get a copy of the curriculum that is used across the schools? We were told in Health that there is a specific age group where it is very important to get information across—an optimum time frame. We wonder how that is delivered in ACT schools. What is the curriculum, what are the expectations from that curriculum as to what will be achieved and what the teachers are given to deliver? If we could have a copy of that, that would be great, so that we can understand it better. Thank you.

MS PORTER: I have a quick supplementary. I want to understand the professional development of those teachers. I think mention was made somewhere along the line that there was some concern that physical education teachers may not necessarily have the background knowledge or skill level to deliver this kind of education, particularly in the personal relationship area.

MS BERRY: More than just reproductive—

MS PORTER: Yes, more than just the mechanics and the plumbing.

Ms Burch: In the nicest possible way; well said, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Relationships are a crucial understanding of this, as young people develop their own skill in this area. Could you give us some indication of how these teachers are supported to deliver this very important—

Ms Burch: Before either Mr Gniel or Ms Wright goes to that, your comment is very

sound. That is why we encourage respectful relationships and also invite within the school gate groups such as the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre to provide education and information that are relevant to the students.

Mr Gniel: Part of the teacher training includes health aspects. In the primary sector, where people are trained across the broad spectrum, that is part of their training. I am a primary schoolteacher; I received some of that training at that time. In the high school area, within PE and health, teachers receive that training in the first place.

As the minister said, your comment is really valid. In consultation with their school leadership team, which is the principal or another member of the school staff, and they do that yearly, if they have identified that they are not confident about providing any area of curriculum—in this case sexual education, for example—then they would have that conversation with their leadership team and they would then look to what types of professional learning are on offer. There is a wealth of information out there to support teachers providing that curriculum.

Ms McAlister and Ms Ellis talked about the accredited programs of support for teachers for professional learning. Those are the other places that those teachers would then look to around, “Well, this is a particular area of need for me. If I’m going to present this or if I’m going to deliver this curriculum then I want to be confident about it.”

MRS JONES: So it is self-referred, if people feel that they are not confident?

Mr Gniel: Either way, I think, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Otherwise how are they identified to not be confident; I think that is the question.

Mr Gniel: That would be through their regular feedback loops into the classroom. We have teachers teaching next door to each other; they might raise these concerns with each other. A lead teacher in the classroom at the time might identify that; it could be in response to parent concerns that may arise or student concerns—

MRS JONES: So it is based on complaints or concerns that are raised?

Mr Gniel: Yes, that is right. Not necessarily complaints; also parents are a key partner in this. That is the other part that we need to put on the record here. As part of that curriculum it is about working with parents around the readiness of students, making sure they are aware that those programs are taking place in the school and that there are options for parents around how they would want to approach this as well.

MRS JONES: You will provide us with the documentation?

Mr Gniel: The information we will provide is the curriculum.

MRS JONES: Great.

MS BERRY: Is the relationship and sex education program that you are talking about

in the curriculum delivered to students with disabilities as well?

Ms Mitchell: I was actually going to talk a little more broadly about not so much the teacher professional learning side of it but more what is available to the students themselves. I will do that part and then I will refer to students with disabilities.

Students in all of our schools, particularly in senior secondary, have a lot of questions and things going on in their head at that stage in their life, and they need to know this kind of information. They do not always necessarily want to do this within the curriculum and within the classroom. There are also pastoral care workers in every high school. There are school psychologists in every school. There are network student engagement teams, too, which have social workers and senior counsellors attached to those teams who can work with a network or work with a school's pastoral care team in setting up small groups or places for students to go and talk through things and find out a little bit more in a more one-to-one way.

Students with disabilities have access to sexual health and family planning through a partnership with SHFPACT. We run curriculum specifically for those students designed to differentiate that so that they can understand at the level that suits their learning ability. So that is quite personalised as well. So there are a lot of different ways that schools approach this area.

Mr Gniel: Obviously those resources are there for the parents, too. A number of parents would approach the school counsellor, for example, or the youth worker in our high schools as well, and the pastoral care workers. Again, it takes us back to that partnership approach where appropriate, and also the mechanisms that Ms Mitchell talked about around the privacy that some of our students expect as they get into those senior years and want to talk through what are really important issues.

The thing that we work on there with Ms Mitchell is like having a no-wrong-door situation in an HR sense. We want kids to actually ask those questions so that we can provide support wherever that is necessary. A lot of that is about the people that have that appropriate level of training and professional learning. Once it gets into more specific work, we also have school health nurses in some of our schools that can provide that level of counselling. There are cross-government links with the Health Directorate and Community Services, if we need to call on their assistance where there might be specific issues raised. Working with the police is also another really important partnership.

MS BERRY: On the assistance and advice that are being provided—and it is also about being able to have a chat with somebody about that—I know some high schools offer different programs that kids can participate in around inclusiveness. How are high schools working around issues for people who are unsure about their sexual identity or gender and being sensitive to that?

Ms Mitchell: Very much through a range of levels. There is the curriculum level. About three years ago, on our national day of action against bullying, we had the anti-homophobia day. Schools and school leadership groups went back to schools and made small films and developed resources to talk about a student's right to be safe in school and to express their sexuality. The minister's student congress has talked about

that at length. They have also gone back to schools and come up with different programs. Each school does that in a way that suits their school and their community.

We have small groups and access to the school counsellor, which is another way to talk about that. Schools will invite groups into schools such as Diversity ACT. They might come to a school assembly and talk, depending on the school, the age and what is going on in that school at that time. It is very individual but constant. So there are lots of different ways.

Ms Burch: What we may do is put that into some localised view and ask John Stenhouse from a college perspective how that would look.

Mr Stenhouse: I was previously the principal of Canberra College. I thought it might be interesting for you to hear something about the sexual health screening program that has been run by the Canberra Hospital for over 10 years now in our public colleges. Teams from the Canberra Hospital come out to colleges on a two-year cycle, which means they have the opportunity to interact with all public college students. The program is voluntary but it has always been very well patronised by students. Well over 50 per cent of students will take advantage not only of the free sexual health screening but also of the advice that is on offer from the professionals that come out from the Canberra Hospital.

In terms of the screening, if any students are identified as having a sexual health issue that needs to be followed up, there is follow-up and treatment if necessary. So that is a program that is well established. It is certainly not so much on the relationships side, but I think the sexual health side is extremely important as well. Statistics tell us that when students get to that age, again, more than 50 per cent of them are sexually active.

MS BERRY: I have lots more questions.

THE CHAIR: I am sure they can all go on notice, or we can squeeze them in before a quarter to one. Mrs Jones, a new question.

MRS JONES: As to the submission to the ACT budget consultation about school fees for children of migrants on 457 visas, with it being Refugee Week I think we all have a focus on how people are dealing with those coming into our community. I understand there are a number of children of both 457 migrants and also asylum seekers who are unaccompanied humanitarian minors as well as accompanied minors. Can you provide information as to how many there are in that category in ACT government schools as well as other schools, which colleges and schools are housing and educating those kids and if they are eligible for ESL support and counselling and other support?

Ms Burch: We will take that on notice because there is a different response to different visa holders. It is my understanding that asylum seekers and refugees are treated differently to 457 visa holders. There are lots of nods from the audience, so I am glad I have got that right. But with asylum seekers and refugees we have a government policy position of bringing them in and giving them education through our access cards—so public education and health services. But we will take on notice the question regarding the numbers, if we can, across the different visa systems and

what our response is.

MRS JONES: My understanding is that commonwealth government funding when it is paid into our system on their behalf only lasts till they are 18, but sometimes these students are not finishing school at 18 because they are either starting later or they have got to catch up. What happens with their funding if they turn 18 before they finish year 12?

Mr Whybrow: In relation to refugees, the funding is provided directly to the school.

MRS JONES: From the commonwealth or from the ACT?

Mr Whybrow: It is provided to the ACT. Within the directorate we provide that additional funding for the schools. Schools actually operate holistic programs. So there is a capacity for the school of managing an entire groups of programs. We actually have higher levels of refugees at a number of our schools. It is probably worth handing over to one of the experts, which is Beth Mitchell.

Ms Mitchell: I was previously the principal at Dickson College, which has a refugee bridging program. In terms of funding students who turn 18 and their visa categories, it is becoming increasingly complicated. However, at the school level, as Mr Whybrow said, schools have been given that funding in a holistic way. Funding comes over from immigration depending on the visa class, and it is up to the school principal to use that to fund the students, to work out the ratio of teachers needed for learning English as a second language or dialect and to buy the appropriate devices, if that is the case—iPads, laptops et cetera, et cetera. The funding is quite comprehensive.

MRS JONES: And it is flexible?

Ms Mitchell: It is very flexible in that way. The other thing you would understand is that in terms of turning 18, for a lot of our refugee students it is quite difficult to ascertain exactly how old they are because they do not have their birth certificates. They think they might be 18, 19, 17. They have been in a camp for a long, long time and there is not a record and that clear delineation for them.

MRS JONES: Basically, you have a commitment to get them through to year 12 if that is what they want?

Ms Mitchell: Yes, an absolute commitment. ACT colleges are very able with the Board of Senior Secondary Studies program to be flexible and to extend years 11 and 12 even over three years if language acquisition is not at the level required.

MRS JONES: Can you also report back in that information on the last five or ten years of how many have completed year 12 on the 457 or refugee visas.

Ms Mitchell: I have my older numbers here on the 571 student visa subclass, but you are not asking for that one.

MRS JONES: Well, I will ask for the 571 visa class, too, thank you.

Ms Mitchell: That one is easier, but we will have to take the other on notice.

Ms Burch: We will bring back what we can across the different visa categories.

MRS JONES: It should be a good news story for the ACT that we commit to these students until they finish year 12.

Ms Mitchell: You are right, and there is lots of good news. Certainly out of Dickson College it might be over 100 students now who have graduated through that program.

Ms Burch: One of the questions you are going to is that some of these students are funded by the commonwealth through a particular stream and category and you are wondering then what happens to those—

MRS JONES: Perhaps you can give us a guide to the different visas, how they are funded and how they get through.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question, quickly.

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister and it is on school autonomy. In November last year the ACT Australian Education Union sent two ACT principals to a meeting of the yearly international principals conference, at which opposition to school autonomy was strongly endorsed. What engagement has the minister and/or the directorate had with ACT public schools principals on this issue? Given that the union and the ACT Council of P&C Associations have voiced strong opposition to the principle of autonomy, does the government intend to continue in this direction?

Ms Burch: On school autonomy or school empowerment or local school decision-making, I am very supportive of it. Ms Joseph and Ms Gniel can go to some of the detail about what that looks like here in the ACT. But I meet with the principals quarterly, and they are very supportive. The principals I meet with are champions of that local decision-making because they are the ones who know their students and their families best. I will hand over to Ms Joseph.

Ms Joseph: I think we have quite a history here in the ACT about local decision-making and where decisions are made best. When we listen to the national conversations we have to then say, “Okay, but what does it look like in the ACT?” The ACT’s 86 public schools have always had a very empowered, autonomous environment. There has been school-based management since 1996. When we look at the national partnership for empowering local schools, the evaluation of that report and the commentary on ACT autonomy and empowerment was that ACT was one of the leaders, if you like, nationally on what autonomy looked like. Our principals have always had a great deal of decision-making.

What we achieved with the last enterprise agreement was further autonomy, particularly in management of staffing. That was through consultation with the AEU, in particular, but also working with our agency schools that we now have local

selection and local advertisement for the majority of staffing positions in our schools. We used to do a lot of centralised staffing decision-making, so the autonomy, the local decision-making for staffing, has been handed over to schools.

So far as who we worked with on that, obviously the AEU, but in the implementation over the last couple of years, in particular, we have worked with our 86 public schools, we have trained up people to be on panels and we have agreed selection training with the AEU. People in every school have gone through that training. A weekly HR report to schools supports schools to have the environment for local decision-making.

We still have quite a bit of work to do with the tools that schools could use—so from board chairs, principals leadership teams, how they can audit their HR data and finance data and how they can make sure that every dollar is getting the best value on the ground. We are still doing some work on what are the systems, tools and processes we use to support our schools. We have a number of different reference groups that we work with—business managers and principals—to make sure that as a system we can design processes, tools and templates to support that local decision-making.

MR DOSZPOT: It is good to hear. Obviously I wanted to find out whether your directions have been influenced at all by the support of the union and the Council of P&C Associations, who are still very strongly opposed to it. Are you working with them to find out how why they are so opposed to it?

Ms Joseph: Yes. I meet quarterly, as does the minister, with the AEU and with the P&C. To take where the ACT sits and look at the national commentary, a lot of it does not apply to the ACT. For example, what might be happening in other jurisdictions is not applied here because we have had a great deal of autonomy already. In particular, the last enterprise agreement negotiations, the fear around what autonomy means in some particular states across the nation had quite a different context to the ACT context.

We have worked with the AEU, the P&C and all of our principals to say, “Well, in the ACT, we have had school-based management for a number of years. How can we do that any better? How do we make sure our school leaders and our teachers have continuous improvement from every individual in the workforce and that our schools are continually improving?” That is the focus of our empowering local schools.

MR DOSZPOT: Glad to hear that. I am a very strong supporter of school autonomy. Can I take from that that the two entities I have mentioned are supportive of what you are trying to do here in the ACT?

Ms Joseph: I believe they are supportive in that the last enterprise agreement was overwhelmingly supported by all the AEU membership. A majority of our principals and teachers are part of that membership. At the meetings I have had recently with the P&C it has not been raised as an issue.

THE CHAIR: There was recently a lockdown of a school in Tuggeranong. How many major events have occurred in the last 12 months that have involved schools being locked down, and how many incidents have been reported to the police?

Ms Burch: Ms Joseph will come forward with that information. We regularly report through the annual reports on these incidents, Mr Smyth.

Ms Joseph: As of 24 June six critical incidents have been recorded in 2014. This compares to 13 critical incidents over the same period in 2013 and 22 critical incidents in 2012, noting that a critical incident can be anything which may result in a significant disruption to the school's normal procedures, a school being at lockdown, evacuated, or requiring temporary closure, police notification and involvement in the school, and any significant threat to the safety of students and/or staff. So those figures are more than just lockdown; they cover all critical incidents. It is a variety. It could be something that has happened from within the school that has caused the lockdown or it can be something in the school area. When something happens near a school sometimes we will lock down the school for that incident as well. It can be a range of issues where we report on critical incidents.

THE CHAIR: The royal commission against abuse in institutions was here in the last couple of weeks. Over the last 25 years since we have had self-government have we kept statistics of the sorts of events that are being investigated by the royal commission in the government school sector?

Ms Joseph: I will take that question on notice. However, I can refer to the checks and balances the education directorate have put in place particularly over recent years for the training of our teachers. Every teacher is trained in mandatory reporting, and the processes for reporting are very, very well understood by all ACT teachers. I cannot say the exact date that that was brought in. There are the working with vulnerable people checks that have been brought in in the last 12 months for our teacher registration through the Teacher Quality Institute. You put all those regulations together with the supporting processes for those to be enacted.

In the last 12 months we have converted our mandatory reporting training to an online module so you do not necessarily have to wait to the start of the year to get the training. The proactivity of the ACT government and the Education and Training Directorate in that regard means that, whilst it does not guarantee anything, the training and responsibility and obligations of our employees are very, very clear.

THE CHAIR: And that would be teacher against student, student against teacher, and student against student.

Ms Joseph: All of the above, yes.

Ms Burch: With the incidents, we are doing some very strong work with the non-government sector. We report this in our annual reports, and every time we do often you will have a voice from the AEU saying that the non-government schools do not report this. A number of parents, and, indeed, the non-government sector themselves, recognise the value of this reporting as public information. We are working with the non-government sector about how we can make uniform some of this reporting just for public interest. Hopefully we will see some progress in the latter part of this year so non-government schools can also start reporting it in one or two years' time once we finalise some of those processes. I think it is valuable information across the community.

MRS JONES: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Yes, to put a spotlight on it. We will end the session there. Members, I am going to assume now that we have finished output classes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. Any further questions can be put on notice. Thank you very much for your attendance here this morning, and we will finish the session.

Sitting suspended from 12.47 to 2 pm.

THE CHAIR: The time being just after 2 o'clock and three members being here, we are right to go. I think everybody was here this morning and heard the warnings, the housekeeping, the privilege statement, and all and sundry. We will get stuck into questions on output class 1.4, disability education in public schools.

Ms Burch: Thank you. Mr Chair, before we start, can Mr Bray make a clarification statement following on from this morning?

THE CHAIR: Mr Bray, the most popular man of the morning.

Mr Bray: Yes. I have obviously been getting some additional information from Territory and Municipal Services Directorate with regard to the Birrigai site and the asbestos issue out there. What they have actually confirmed is that there are six areas on the site which have been identified as containing asbestos contaminated materials. The areas were defined on a very conservative basis, the basis being that they have found very small fragments of asbestos cement sheeting generally the size of your thumbnail, to give a sense of scale.

All of those sites have been topsoiled and seeded now. They have also been fenced off to allow the grass to grow over those areas. That is in accordance with the asbestos management plan for the site. Up until that work was completed just two weeks ago, they were doing the check and the pick up every three months. Now that that topsoiling and dressing of the surfaces has occurred, they will now check it once per year. Unless other reasons trigger to do it otherwise, the routine now is an inspection every 12 months. In accordance with the management plan, that mitigation action has now been fully implemented.

Ms Burch: Thank you, Mr Bray.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Bray. Minister, the total cost for education has gone up a couple of million dollars, but it only looks like it is about one per cent, which is probably less than real growth. Why has it gone up so little?

Mr Whybrow: In relation to special education costs, I refer you to our key performance indicators and our average cost per student on page 14. It identifies that there have been increases in cost, but like all other jurisdictions, when we have one extra student, that does not mean we have full costs that are on-passed for that one extra student. So you do not get an extra principal; you do not get extra buildings when you have movements in students. Generally when you have increases in students, and we saw a three per cent increase in public education this year of 1,038

students, you will see the average cost amount not rise as high. That is simply because of fixed costs versus marginal costs.

The other, I guess, complexity with special schools is that in the ACT every student with a disability goes through an individual assessment of need and funding is provided under that assessment of need, which is referred to as the SCAN process. That remains the same. All students are assessed under the SCAN allocation and have funding allocated to the individual schools on that basis.

THE CHAIR: The GPO has only gone up some \$350,000.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: The total cost has gone up, \$2 million. Why has the cost per student come down so dramatically?

Mr Whybrow: It is based on the total number of students. As I was saying, if you have an increase in number of students and you are not providing the full fixed cost associated with it, your average moves. Maybe the best way to show that is at page 14. I will do the other example, which is high school education. The cost has gone up there by 3.6 per cent. That is actually driven because there is a reduction in total school numbers. On that same basis, we do not take away resourcing from schools when there are movements of students; so it is that fixed versus total cost component. Specifically in relation to students—

THE CHAIR: But go to the other numbers.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Preschoolers have dipped

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Primary school has gone up slightly.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: High school has gone up.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Secondary has gone up. Colleges have gone up.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So why would kids with disability dip so significantly? That is an eight per cent drop.

Mr Whybrow: There are two components that are adjustments in total funding. There is an increase in indexation in enrolment in that space of \$1.6 million. There is the end

reduction from the previous year's national partnership of students with a disability of \$0.5 million, and there is a part-year difference between last year's funding for disability transport and this year's funding for disability transport of \$0.8 million. They are the three total adjustment numbers. But, again, when you have a significant increase in students, your average cost per student falls.

THE CHAIR: What was the significant increase in students? How many in the last calendar year and how many this year?

Mr Whybrow: Yes, I think I have got that somewhere—the total number of students and movements in the number of students. I might get Mrs Sharma to look for that information. I will follow up on your previous question, which is around preschool, where there was a significant reduction you were identifying in the preschool cost. That is driven by the universal access partnership.

THE CHAIR: No, I actually was not doing that. You had suggested, I think, in high schools that even though the numbers had dropped, the payment had gone up. I was suggesting—

Mr Whybrow: The total cost per student number has increased by more than the overall total, which is a 3.6 per cent increase. It moved from 17,543 to 18,176, which had that exact opposite effect. As you had a smaller number of students making an adjustment against the fixed cost, the average cost per student number moves up because you do not do those adjustments for fixed costs. I will just check with Mrs Sharma about the movements of numbers.

Mrs Sharma: In 2014 there was a six per cent increase in students with disabilities in special schools and mainstream settings of 24 and 108 respectively. So 24 in special—

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, Mrs Sharma, you are very hard to hear.

Mrs Sharma: A 24 student increase in special schools and 108 in the mainstream. So there was a six per cent increase from the 2013 level. There has been a lot in special schools, which pushes the average cost down.

THE CHAIR: Minister, there was no consideration of maintaining the average cost at last year's level and increasing the funding?

Ms Burch: You will see in this budget that the overall increase in budget is over five per cent. There has been no loss of funding. What you are seeing here, and it is what I think Mr Whybrow and others have explained to you, is that this is a very crude instrument of a line of funding divided by the number of students. If there are variations in the numbers, the result is a variation in the average cost.

THE CHAIR: Why did not kids with a disability get a five per cent increase, then?

Ms Joseph: Because it goes back to funding individual students. As the minister said, it is a fairly bland measure when you take it as an average. But in respect of students with a disability, every individual student who comes is addressed through our SCAN

process, our student-centred appraisal of need model. So the disability funding that goes to adjust the programs for the students is based on the individual. Then it goes back to not just an average cost per student. It actually is an individual cost. So depending on the complexity—the age, the level of adjustment that is required—every student will have a different amount of funding associated.

THE CHAIR: I understand that completely, but the raw numbers show that the GPO went up \$343,000. I mean, it did not go up five per cent. So the minister's claim that education got a five per cent increase did not apply to kids with disability. I am asking why not, and that might be a question for the minister.

Mr Whybrow: So under—

THE CHAIR: No, no, thank you. I get the maths. The question is—your claim is that education got an increase of five per cent. We should all be very happy with that and I think we all are—

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: but why did not kids with a disability in their funding get an across-the-board increase of five per cent?

Ms Burch: There has been no diminishing of investment and support to kids with a disability, Mr Smyth. If you want to go into—one thing you are not asking about is the lower number for average cost into preschools. That is a direct result of a reduction of commonwealth payments through the universal access national partnership.

THE CHAIR: Somebody might want to ask you a question about preschools. I am sure they will. I am asking you a question about disability.

Ms Burch: I have answered the question, chair.

THE CHAIR: No, I am asking the question of you, minister: why did kids—

Ms Burch: And I have answered the question, chair.

THE CHAIR: with a disability not get a five per cent increase across the board as others did?

Ms Burch: Well, I have just said—

Mrs Sharma: If I may?

Ms Burch: Please, Mrs Sharma.

Mrs Sharma: The five per cent is for the total directorate. If you look at the public school education funding increase, it is 3.2 per cent. While Mr Whybrow was asked about the costs—there is a fixed and a variable cost—total cost is made up of fixed costs plus the variable costs. When an additional student is entered into the school

with a special need, the fixed cost remains the same—for example, the principal and the minimum structure et cetera. So funding is not provided for the fixed cost while it is provided for the variable cost. When this is translated into average cost, the percentage will not remain the same as the funding increase, as the average cost is just a statistical measure.

THE CHAIR: Look, that may be so—

Mrs Sharma: And that is one component. The other component, as Mr Whybrow has said, is that there are two variables. There are increases relating to indexation and enrolment increases and enrolment funding over there. However, there is one initiative with special needs transport of \$800,000, whereas the 2013-14 base had a higher amount. The reason why is that it is half-yearly funded because of the transition to NDIS, plus also there is the impact of the students with disabilities national partnership.

Again, in 2013-14 it has a higher base compared to 2014-15. For that reason there is a net movement of \$0.3 million. Excluding the impact of one-offs, it will be \$1.6 million. It will be around a three per cent increase. If you exclude that impact, it will be a three per cent increase in funding.

THE CHAIR: It is what it is. You said earlier that public education got a 3.2 per cent increase. The total cost increase here is less than one per cent. It is 0.9 per cent, which is well below CPI, well below WPI. It is interesting that kids with a disability suffer in this way. Ms Porter has a supplementary.

Ms Burch: Mr Smyth, you have made an assumption that we are disadvantaging—

THE CHAIR: No, that is okay.

Ms Berry: our children—

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

Ms Burch: with a disability—

THE CHAIR: Minister!

Ms Burch: and I will refute that.

THE CHAIR: No, no, minister. Can you be quiet? Ms Porter has a question. Ms Porter, a question.

MS PORTER: Thank you, chair. Good afternoon, minister. Good afternoon, Ms Joseph and all the officials. You made reference a couple of times to the SCAN process and also to the NDIS and to special needs transport. I have a couple of questions around that. They were my substantive questions, but given that they have been raised anyway, I will just ask them now. I want to know how the NDIS would be affecting the funding of special needs transport and what will happen to special needs transport under NDIS. Also, what will happen with the SCAN process under NDIS?

When will that kick in?

Ms Burch: Mr Whybrow will start and then I will go to Mr Gniel.

Mr Whybrow: I will start with the funding element of NDIS. While under NDIS the majority of the activity does not relate to education, there are some components of our education service provision which are NDIS eligible. They include the special needs transport. They also include early intervention services and they also include personal care arrangements in schools.

In respect of the total funding for the organisation, there is not a reduction in any funding. There has been a lot of talk particularly about early intervention. But funding will be provided from the ACT government to the NDIS. My understanding is that there will be in the order of an additional \$5 million in ACT funding for people with disabilities. Given that funding context, there are not savings in this space. It is not about less; it is actually about a larger environment of total funding.

Handing across to Mr Gniel around the issues of special needs transport and the other implementation of that is probably the way to go. But from that funding component, it is not about less funding.

Mr Gniel: In terms of special needs transport, as Mr Whybrow has outlined, that is in scope for the national disability insurance scheme, but the criteria for eligibility for the service currently provided by the ACT government has not changed. That will not change over the period of the trial. Whilst we look at the costs associated with that and the packages that people are then putting together as part of their programs through the disability agency itself, that will not change.

In terms of the student-centred appraisal of needs, it is similar in that the eligibility and the criteria for funding—and that is for targeted funding on top of what students already receive in terms of their base allocation for schools—also have not changed. The area that Mr Whybrow talked about, which is part funded through the student-centred appraisal of need around personal care for students with a disability, is not changing in terms of the way in which it is being provided.

MS PORTER: Can I just have some clarification around the special needs transport? You have a young person who is currently utilising that service and if the parents decide to use some other form of transport, they must still use that form of transport. I thought this was about choice. I am just seeking some clarification.

Ms Burch: No, because they will just get it in their package.

Mr Gniel: That is right. At this stage, which is for the trial, it is provided as an in-kind service, which means that the young person—and generally with their family for these members of our community—would go to the planner and they would identify that transport to and from school was a need around their disability. And that would then be provided by the Education and Training Directorate with the service that is currently there. It would be attributed to their package and the costs associated with their package through the National Disability Insurance Agency.

MS PORTER: That clarifies it for me; thank you.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary?

MR WALL: Yes, a quick one. What was the rationale for maintaining the transport service yet taking the decision to withdraw from providing other disability services? Why are some staying and others are being cut, essentially?

Ms Burch: You are talking about early intervention, I am assuming, Mr Wall?

MR WALL: Yes. Some packages within Education are going.

Ms Burch: Early intervention is a program. We took the decision as a government, as a direct provider of a service, to withdraw. Whilst we accommodate transport, we are not a direct provider. We enter into contracts with other agencies to deliver the transport service, which is the approach we will be taking with early intervention.

MR WALL: So who currently provides the contract for transport?

Mr Gniel: There are three parties to that—in fact, multiple. ACTION provides some of that transport, Keirs, which is a bus company, and also taxi services. They are individual providers, obviously.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: My question was around what you were asking before about the reduction in commonwealth payments. What impact was coming from those cuts and how was the ACT government increasing payments to offset the reduction? I would like some more clarity around that so we can try and unpick this very complicated area. It seems to be complicated at the moment, to me anyway.

Mr Whybrow: If I can just refer to what I said earlier, which was—

MS PORTER: I am sorry to ask you to repeat it. I am just trying to understand it.

Mr Whybrow: That is fine. It is not explicitly identified in the appropriation table on page 16. There is funding from the commonwealth. It is actually page 17: commonwealth grants, more support for students with disability. That is an adjustment to base funding. But if we look back at the overall base funding, the difference between the two years is approximately \$500,000. So 2013-14 had an additional \$500,000 compared to 2014-15 in commonwealth funding under that program. That is a variation between the two years of total funding for that output class 1.4, which shows effectively a reduction in the spend based on commonwealth funding provided.

MS PORTER: It says on page 17—am I reading this incorrectly?—that it is 333 and then it drops to 194. Is that what you are talking about? And then it disappears.

Mr Whybrow: Yes, it is partly that. There are total numbers on the top of page 16, and if you see those numbers going across they are not exactly the same. They are

already incorporated in that. In previous budgets for that particular line item there was a reduction in any case. The total value of that overall reduction is approximately \$500,000. So that is part of the reduction, but already included in the base was a reduction of that as well.

THE CHAIR: So what is the \$600,000 at the top of page 17?

Mr Whybrow: The funding in the amount above relates to a rollover from the previous year's expenditure.

THE CHAIR: So it is money you have rolled over?

Mr Whybrow: That is correct. Again, we are talking about: rolling all those components together we have an overall difference between those two years of approximately \$500,000.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps a written reconciliation with the ins and outs—

Mrs Sharma: Can I explain? In 2013-14, in the estimated outcome, there was a—

MS PORTER: Mrs Sharma, your voice is very soft.

Mrs Sharma: In 2013-14, there was a rollover in the opening base, already a rollover from the previous budget process. Then additional money is coming in, 585, as you can see. So what we are saying is that there is an additional amount of rollover in the 2013-14 base, compared to the 2014-15 base. In 2013-14, the total rollover was at \$1.5 million, compared to about \$900,000 in 2014. So the difference between the two years, which is the movement, is the reduction with the impact because of the rollover. That is what Mr Whybrow is saying. So the reduction in funding associated with more students with disability related to the rollover impact, whereas for the national partnership there is a base funding of an additional \$900,000 coming from the commonwealth.

THE CHAIR: An additional \$900,000?

Mrs Sharma: Yes, there is money there, and this will be the last year. 2014-15 will be the last year of funding and then it will discontinue from 2015—

MS PORTER: Because of the NDIS?

Mrs Sharma: I think it was meant to finalise in 2014-15, the national partnership—

Mr Gniel: It is the national partnership; it is not linked to the NDIS.

Ms Burch: They have a limited life.

Mrs Sharma: It has nothing to do with NDIS.

THE CHAIR: So it was just the end of the program?

Mr Whybrow: Delivered for a fixed period of time.

Mrs Sharma: Yes, generally.

MS PORTER: Can I see that on a piece of paper?

Mr Whybrow: Yes. We will simplify it by bringing it out of what was the total funding in 2013-14 and the total funding in 2014-15.

MS PORTER: That would be great; thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, a new question.

MS BERRY: Thank you, chair. I have a question regarding individual learning plans. It says in the accountability indicators that 100 per cent of students who access special education services receive an individual learning plan. I think you talked a little bit before about assessing children with disabilities, but I am assuming they have individual learning plans as well. How do they get assessed for special education services?

Mr Gniel: Ms Berry, are you talking about which students have an ILP as a requirement? Is that the question? So the 100 per cent relates to the student-centred appraisal of needs. Any student that goes through that process must then have an individual learning plan. Ms Mitchell can explain the process by which it is determined if you access that targeted funding. Is that what you are asking?

Ms Mitchell: I can tell you about the SCAN process.

MS BERRY: The SCAN process as well as the assessment of the child for an individual learning plan.

Ms Mitchell: The SCAN process is the first part. That is quite a complicated process in the sense that there is an ACT moderator and a team of people meet, and if a student qualifies under ACT disability criteria they are assessed in 10 areas, five of them under access and five of them under participation.

That generates a student profile and then that student profile is combined with a student's disability, and then it gets really complicated. An algorithm is used and then that algorithm generates a banding between zero and 14 and the student is placed on the banding. That then ascertains the level of additional targeted funding that the student will get.

Now, I guess the really important part about that then is the individual learning plan—and that is the thing you wanted some more information on—because the individual learning plan is the part where the family, the parents, the carers, the therapists, the occupational speech therapists, the teachers and the teachers' aides all sit around the table and talk about that student's short-term and long-term—and the students themselves, wherever possible—goals and hopes. They look at assessment criteria and what they are able to do and what they want to be able to do.

There are at least two meetings a year and if a student on an individual learning plan is about to transition to another setting—say a student in year 6 is going on to high school—then there would also be a transition action plan component of that where the high school and the primary school would organise visits. There would be lots of talk about what is maybe scary about high school, what the student hopes to get better at when they get to high school et cetera.

The high school will look at the individual learning plan with the partners. I have got an example here. There was a student who was really nervous about transitioning into high school and on his individual learning plan one of his interests was Dr Who; and he was fascinated with Dr Who. The high school happened to come down to the primary school and see that on the plan and talk to him and then they realised that at the high school there were some kids in an informal Dr Who club that used to meet at lunch time. So they organised his visit to go to the high school on the day that club was meeting. They introduced him to those students and he was much less nervous about going to high school, and it has been a really smooth transition.

I guess that is an example of how it works in practice. It is all aspects—the social aspects, the intellectual, the family, the medical profession et cetera all using the same strategies.

MS BERRY: What level of disability do the ILPs or the output talk about?

Ms Mitchell: With that output every student with a disability has an individual learning plan; is that what you mean?

MS BERRY: Yes.

Mr Gniel: So they are the ones that meet that specific criteria, Ms Berry. I think at another hearing I went through the fact that under the disability act, the Australian act, the definition of “disability” is really broad ranging—for instance, if you break your arm and you have a disability for a period of time. The criteria for the ACT is the information that Ms Mitchell went through, which is a specific criteria for what targeted funding will be applied to students with a particular disability. I mentioned before that that targeted funding is a top-up of what students already receive. So all students, no matter what, are funded to meet their needs.

Some students, it is recognised, need additional funding to be able to access and participate in the curriculum—those two areas that Ms Mitchell went through in the SCAN process. Those students must have an ILP. That is also part of the accountability about the use of those resources to improve the opportunities for those young people.

It is not limited to using individual learning plans to just those students that meet the criteria under the student-centred appraisal of need. We have a number of students who have gifts and talents, for example, that have used ILP processes to best work out their needs. It is the same with learning difficulties. There are students that might need that. We also use it with a number of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students where that process works best. Really, at its essence it is meeting an individual student’s needs for a formal plan of which the key people are involved.

That can be the basis for any student.

MS BERRY: This is students through mainstream public schools as well?

Mr Gniel: Absolutely, yes, and specialist schools.

MS BERRY: If a parent wants their child to be in a mainstream public school, do they get supported in that? How does that work?

Ms Mitchell: This SCAN process generates the additional funding and that funding can be used to support a student in a mainstream school or a specialist school. If you are talking about in mainstream schools and not necessarily in a unit, because there are specific units in mainstream schools—

MS BERRY: Yes.

Ms Mitchell: If you want integration support, if you wanted your child to access school in that way, then the funding is generated to suit that integration. I think there are 825 students who are on integrated support and there are also—you were asking before—2,180 students who have gone through the SCAN process and they are to receive targeted funding. So 825 of them have opted for that choice.

MS BERRY: Sorry; I am just getting the numbers right. What number of kids with a disability are mainstreamed in ACT public schools?

Ms Mitchell: 825.

MS BERRY: Okay.

MS PORTER: I am asking this question on behalf of the chair because he is not game to ask it himself. He wants to know who is your favourite *Dr Who* character.

Ms Mitchell: You want to ask me that?

MS PORTER: Yes.

Ms Mitchell: The guy with the scarf. I won't say any more than that.

Mr Gniel: The choice lies with the parent and the student around which program they would access and then the resources are adjusted accordingly. If they go to a specialist school, that is where the resource is and that is what Mr Whybrow talked about with those fixed costs. If they are in a mainstream setting because they want to access the mainstream environment with support, the targeted funding would follow into that.

MS BERRY: With these 825, are they full time in mainstream public schools, are they just there sometimes or does it vary?

Ms Mitchell: On the whole, but sometimes students are part time in the unit. Let us say the student has autism and they are in an LSUA and as part of their ILP they start doing more mainstream classes. In particular that would happen if a student is getting

older and more confident and wanted to do some things that were not offered in the unit. So they might go to a music or a drama program that is outside their unit in mainstream and they would get support to go there. So it is actually really flexible and it is designed to suit the child or young person, and to tie in with the aspirations that have been listed or recorded in the individual learning plan.

MS BERRY: How are the teachers supported or being offered extra training?

Ms Mitchell: That is a really good question as well because I did not actually go into detail. With the individual learning plan, there is an adjustment matrix for teachers to understand how levels of adjustment can be best made to suit that child or young person. If they are going over to the sport class and the teacher who teaches them all the time knows that X and Y works better and they always do this to help this student then the adjustments are there.

When they are in a physical activity, these are the kinds of levels of adjustment you need to make so that they can participate at the same level as everyone else, or they may be doing a musical activity. There is that adjustment matrix that the teachers have with the ILP, plus they talk all the time to each other.

Ms Joseph: There is also an expectation that all teachers have an understanding of the disability education standards particularly. I think we mentioned earlier this morning the disability education coordinators. There is a DECO in every one of our schools to support all staff to understand the disability standards and also understand how to make adjustments for students identified with a disability. Sometimes it goes broader than just students who have additional funding.

MR WALL: I have a quick supplementary. Ms Mitchell, you said the SCAN process rates students on a scale of zero to 14.

Ms Mitchell: Yes.

MR WALL: And that is tied to the funding. Can you give us a breakdown of what the individual funding is at each level?

Ms Mitchell: Yes, I can do that. It is quite comprehensive. Do you want me to—

MR WALL: Can you submit it on notice?

Ms Mitchell: Yes, I can submit that on notice because I have got it all here. The intensive bands, 13 and 14, generate the most funding. The funding is different depending on whether you are in a specialist school, an ISP, a college, a unit or in a unit in a college.

MR WALL: If the intention of the carers or parents was to mainstream the child is there a difference in funding between that and the specialist school?

Ms Mitchell: Yes. I have the whole thing here. That will be provided then, if that is okay.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, three of the four special schools in Canberra have a nurse based at the school. The fourth school, Woden School, had a nurse there, and only because we pushed for the service to be provided to a constituent's child. Can you update us on what the current situation is in that regard? Is there still a nurse at Woden School?

Ms Burch: My understanding is that, with the provision of nursing services within special schools, the model has been changed. It is based on an outreach system, so to speak. I know I have met with a family whose child is at Woden School around this new approach to nursing support in schools. I might go to Mr Gniel for the details on that.

Mr Gniel: To follow on from what the minister said, we are working really closely with Health, who we rely on to make the decisions around the healthcare needs of students more broadly. The advice we are getting from them and working on with them is that basically there are ways in which we assess the types of needs there are for each of the individual children and then also within each of those schools. So where there is a need for nurses in a school, there will be nurses there.

If the service can be provided by a teacher's assistant, a teacher or someone else, depending on what that is, that is about training those individuals to make sure they are comfortable, while making sure that the parents understand what it looks like. Again, we take the lead from the healthcare professionals on that around what things can be auspiced and which things need to continue to be provided by nurses.

There are things like personal care that we have talked about. Also, we have students in our schools that need assistance with feeding. We take great care in making sure that all the medical procedures are followed in the way in which they need to be. Again, it depends on what kind of care is required about who then provides that service.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Gniel, the parents concerned are pretty well known to me. If we are talking about the same child, and I think we are, the parents were very concerned that there was no nurse at the school. They fought very hard. They approached everyone, including the minister and the health minister, and in the end the health minister agreed to provide a nurse there. The child's situation is not going to change. He is not going to get better, quite frankly, in this regard. He does need a nurse. So while I understand the overall philosophy, we are talking about a specific case where it has been deemed necessary to have a nurse there.

I understand that the parents have had to go through a lot of heartache and have had to go back and talk to people to explain the same issues. My question is very simple. I am simply asking: are they going to be accommodated, as I understand they do need a full-time nurse for their child at the school? Is there going to be a full-time nurse at Woden for these parents?

Mr Gniel: My understanding is that there is still a nurse at the Woden School at the moment. Until we are advised otherwise that a nurse is not required they will continue.

MRS JONES: Is that a full-time nurse?

Mr Gniel: I understand it is. This is part of the issue around needs in a school. We have more and more students that are going to need these types of services accessing mainstream schools, so we want to make sure that we are catering for the needs of those students, absolutely. We also want to be mindful of the people who are providing that service. A number of these students may need something once every few hours, for example. With a full-time nurse, there is an interesting question around making sure that it is a nurse that is needed to provide that service and whether we want a nurse sitting there and waiting.

MRS JONES: What is the decision-making process around a full-time or part-time nurse allocated to a person? Is it to do with a clinical assessment or is it to do with an internal education decision?

Ms Burch: This is all a clinical assessment around what the clinical needs are and how they are best addressed. I am very much aware of the family; they have been in my office. We all have sympathy for their need. It is my understanding that the new model is about unlocking that resource, regarding how it has been held historically, and applying an equal, as-needs basis response across the special schools and, indeed, increasingly into mainstream schools. I think they are looking at this year or next year as the transition into that model.

I might get an update and provide it back to the committee about where that is. As a nurse—and I am sure Ms Porter, as a nurse, would understand this as well—we have to keep nurses professionally engaged and professionally competent. It has come to me from a nurse saying that it would not be an ideal job. But having outreach so that you can have some depth to your practice would be an attractive job.

MRS JONES: Or if there is another person who could fulfil that role and be a carer in a sense—but that is a clinical decision, I am sure.

Ms Burch: Absolutely. The three levels you have are a personal care approach, an allied healthcare need and then the professional level of care through a nurse.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, that is my concern. I am really quite astounded that we are still talking about the theoretical issue behind a clinical nurse or the realisation of what the parents are asking for. The parents understand their situation pretty well. There was a situation where only part-time assistance was provided, much to the detriment of the health of a young child. There could have been a very serious outcome. All they want is a full-time nurse, for the very reasons that they have come to see you about.

Ms Burch: Yes, but some of the elements they raised in the care of their child did not require the professional standing of a nurse. I do not want to play it out here, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: No, I do not either.

THE CHAIR: The government has agreed to take it on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: I would very much appreciate that.

THE CHAIR: I think all sides seem to agree that there is concern. I am sure the minister's answer will cover it all, won't it, minister?

Ms Burch: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to pass to my colleague.

MR WALL: To some extent it is a follow-on from Mr Doszpot's question about in-school supports. What impact is the NDIS going to have? As the trial is implemented across the territory, how are these supports, the care supports, the nursing and specialist-type assistance that are offered currently through education—I believe the majority of them are—going to change once the NDIS is implemented?

Mr Gniel: The personal care is in scope for the NDIS, and that is not changing. Nothing in terms of service delivery is changing.

MR WALL: So that will be provided as an in-kind—

Ms Burch: It is an in-kind component, yes.

MR WALL: And that is the only other real component that falls within the scope; okay.

THE CHAIR: While we are talking about the schools, there are still the four special schools and two special units?

Mr Gniel: We have four specialist schools. Malkara and Cranleigh are primary; Woden and Black Mountain are secondary. Turner School provides a special program as well. We have learning support units or centres across the vast majority of our public schools.

Ms Burch: And there is no change with those.

Mr Gniel: There is no change.

THE CHAIR: Each of the special schools and Turner I know were given new buses in 2000-01 with multiple points for securing wheelchairs. How often are those buses updated and have they been updated recently?

Mr Gniel: I might turn to Mark for that one.

Mr Whybrow: I do not have the answer to that question.

THE CHAIR: There you are; you all heard it here first! But I am sure you could find out.

Ms Burch: These are buses that have been purchased for those individual schools?

THE CHAIR: No, these are buses that were purchased after the Special Olympics, which Mr Doszpot had a great interest in.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: They got six Sprinter buses that went to each of the special schools and units. Have they been updated, and what is the policy on updating those buses? Do those schools have more than one bus, for instance, given that there is probably a multitude of kids in wheelchairs at such schools?

Ms Mitchell: You asked this question before.

THE CHAIR: I did.

Ms Mitchell: We had to take it on notice, and I will have to do that again. In terms of the buses, we just sent a brief over about the ones they got after the Olympics. No, they have not had new ones recently. And as to how often they get updated, there is not a schedule. All schools get a bus if they raise some money or they need a new bus; they look towards that. But the specialist schools are very well equipped with the buses they currently have, and they are regularly serviced and regularly maintained. I can easily get you that information; I think I just sent it in the other day.

THE CHAIR: That would be useful to have. But the buses are now 14 years old, and they still—

Ms Mitchell: They look really good.

MRS JONES: You maintain them like the military do?

Ms Mitchell: Yes. And they have got ramps, and all of the detail was there.

THE CHAIR: So what you are saying is that there has not been a request for them to be updated?

Ms Mitchell: No, there has not. And they are regularly used. The students go on excursions in the buses and they are able to cater for their student population and be really flexible. They go on all sorts of fantastic excursions using those buses.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Mr Whybrow: Mr Smyth, I can add that approximately 12 to 18 months ago Black Mountain did update their bus, but the nature of these buses, as Ms Mitchell has identified, is that they are specially fitted, so there is a significant cost in the update and upgrade of those. So they do tend to have a longer life experience than normal fleet cars that turn over every three years.

THE CHAIR: Is 14 years a reasonable life for a bus for kids with a disability?

Mr Whybrow: I think the issue would be around the safety and effectiveness of those buses.

THE CHAIR: All right. We will wait for the update. Ms Porter, a new question?

MS PORTER: I do not have any more questions in this area.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, a new question?

MS BERRY: No, I do not have anything in this area.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: No.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: I will pass to Mr Wall.

MR WALL: While we are on the topic of capital and assistance that the specialist schools have, I note that Black Mountain, Malkara and Cranleigh have a swimming pool that they use for therapy. Is there a consideration to extend that service to Woden at all?

Mr Whybrow: There is no capital initiative at the moment around a swimming pool at Woden.

MR WALL: Have there been any requests for that to happen, or is there a need for it at the Woden school?

Ms Burch: Certainly nothing has come to me about that. There would be an open-door policy to the other schools for the students from Woden school to access the others, particularly Malkara, which is only metres away.

MR WALL: What challenges does that pose with transport? Obviously it is going to be considerably more disruptive if the children need to be piled on to a bus, be moved to a different campus, do their activities and then return again, as opposed to it being on site?

Ms Burch: It would not be any more complicated than any other activity those kids in the special schools get on their bus and go to, in many ways, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: I would imagine that the swimming programs are utilised considerably more frequently than some other excursions.

Ms Mitchell: My understanding from talking to the principal at Malkara is that the Woden School and Malkara share the facilities and that it is a really effective program and they make use of the Malkara pool.

MR DOSZPOT: My understanding is that Woden, if they had their way, would like

their own set-up, but I guess the question should be: is there any plan to have such? Is there a budget for such an upgrade at Woden school?

Ms Burch: I have nothing in front that I can see—unless Ms Joseph has not shared something with me. No.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand it has to come from the principal.

THE CHAIR: Any final questions?

MS BERRY: I do have one more question, actually.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: We were talking earlier about the national curriculum. With the development of the national curriculum for students with a disability, I wondered where that was up to.

Ms Burch: Ms Wright will come forward.

Mr Gniel: While Ms Wright is getting ready, I will quickly lead into that work. As well as the national curriculum, which is broken into the content areas, there is supplementary material available for teachers to support working with students with a disability. Ms Wright can talk about that. Before I answer the question, I will hand over.

Ms Wright: As I have said before, the ACARA national curriculum website gives online access to all the information that is publicly available for parents and teachers. There is a special tab on the home page of the ACARA website related to student diversity. That diversity tab takes into account gifted and talented students, students with a disability and students for whom English is an additional language or dialect.

ACARA, through their ongoing work, are specifically adding resources to that tab that can be cross-matched. It sounds complicated, but you can download the content. The website actually takes you through a process where classroom teachers can access additional material to support adjustment of curriculum, whether it be to adjust for any of those three specific areas of student diversity or something else.

The advantage of the online curriculum is that you can download the mainstream curriculum and then, through navigation, you can add in some of those adjustments about how you can adjust Australian curriculum to meet the needs of individual students. It is part of the package of accessibility that the online Australian curriculum has that is a great advantage over previous published documents, where you would have to do a lot of cross-checking and cross-matching. You can use filters that allow you, at any given year level, to work through and add special filters on there.

Part of the premise of Australian curriculum is that it is a curriculum for all students. The expectation is that there is breadth across the curriculum and the content levels, and guidance available for teachers to be able to choose curriculum appropriate for the level of need of the student and their developmental and learning needs. And, as I said,

it is about that being online and easily accessible for all teachers.

MS BERRY: Thank you for that. I am going to go and look at it.

THE CHAIR: Any further questions on disability education? No. With that, we will move to output class 2.1, non-government school education. I will give my question to Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, chair. Minister, my first question is regarding the registration reviews that are conducted with non-government schools. I note consistent 100 per cent non-government school registration reviews. How many are considered each year, and what do they involve?

Ms Burch: I will get Ms Garrison to talk on that registration.

Ms Garrison: Each year we undertake the registration review of non-government schools. In doing that, in 2013 I think we went through a process of registering 13 non-government schools. Part of that involves the Catholic education system, which undertook 11.

The panel is a cross-sectoral panel which involves government school principals, deputies and staff; non-government school principals, deputies and staff; and also members of the Education and Training Directorate, who look at financial viability and also aspects of occupational health and safety and compliance with those relevant bits of legislation.

The panel, when they visit the school, look at the facilities in general. They also look at the curriculum documents to ensure that they are meeting the requirements. They look at the staffing, the staff, and ensure that they are registered with the TQI and have appropriate qualifications for what they are teaching. And they look at a whole range of policies and procedures that they have in place around student welfare and student engagement. They visit the school. The school prepares documentation for them.

By and large, it is a compliance regulatory function that they are performing. Therefore, they ensure that they meet what we say they should be meeting in terms of providing quality education for all students.

MR DOSZPOT: What sort of time frame is this conducted over?

Ms Garrison: It depends pretty much on the size of the school. When they are visiting a school that caters from preschool through to year 12, you can appreciate that that would take longer. But it is about three days. There are two to three days in the visit. But it can vary. There is also work that happens outside of those visits when we are looking at the documentation that is provided by the non-government school.

MR DOSZPOT: Have any schools failed such a registration review at this point?

Ms Garrison: With the registration review, the only school that has not got through a provisional registration process was the At-Taqwa school last year, in December last

year, which was going for provisional registration. In the past there has been another school where they were looking at the provision of secondary, going through to year 8. The panel, in doing that, was concerned about the curriculum offerings and the facilities for that; the school then chose not to offer that year 8 program.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how many homes are currently registered for home schooling?

Ms Garrison: Currently we have, I believe, 186 students who are registered for home education. That is as of just now. Out of those 186 students, we have about 21 who participate in home education and school education. They are electing that for a whole range of reasons. People select home education because, number one, some are very committed to that from a philosophical perspective. Others do that because of health. There is a whole range of factors that influence that. Maybe school education for that particular time is not working or meeting the needs of that child. We have 186, as of now, registered for home education.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that a growing number or is it a fairly static number?

Ms Garrison: It has steadily grown since 2009. I can say that in 2009 we had around 139 registered for home education at census time—the census in 2009. In the census this year, it was 177. But as I mentioned, it is now 186.

Ms Joseph: Could I just add to that in terms of total growth and what that looks like in comparison in growth. In 2009 the 139 students represented 0.2 per cent; in 2014 the census figures represented 0.3 per cent. So it is a fairly steady number, I would say, that we incorporate. Our records also indicate that, particularly for secondary education, home schooling families choose to come into the education system rather than continue home schooling through the secondary years, as a general trend.

MR DOSZPOT: That was my next question. How long would typical home schooling take place, and what is the transition to bring them back into the government sector?

Ms Joseph: Our liaison unit that Joanne heads up have very close contact with the families who do the home education to make sure they are supported, to make sure of the curriculum, to make sure they are properly registered and to make sure that, if they are home educating or wanting to transition into an education setting, they are supported to be able to do that.

MR DOSZPOT: Just one final question: have any of these applications for home schooling ever been rejected?

Ms Garrison: An authorised person visits the homes for those who apply for home education. That person is a qualified educator. At times, when they have actually visited and met with the family and the student, they have been able to help direct that family into other avenues for that child to be engaged in their schooling. Sometimes it is around distance education. They may even look at the program that the parent is looking at trying to provide.

The role of the educator is to ensure that that child will receive an adequate education, even though it will be different to that in a school. So they are able to look at alternative avenues for that. That happens on a whole range of occasions. Sometimes the families just need somebody else to really want to engage with them, to talk around their needs at that particular time. The combination of home schooling and school education, that 21, even though it does not sound like a lot of numbers, has grown over the time. So we are really working with the family to look at what is best going to suit that child. And often those students then do transition back into school education full time.

MRS JONES: Just as a supplementary to that, the government cannot actually require that people register at a school if they want to home-school, can they?

Ms Garrison: No, the legislation allows for families to apply for registration as a home educator. That is what the Education Act 2004 states. So there is a legislative requirement that families must register for home schooling or schooling after the child turns 6 through to 17. We have, I think, quite good compliance in the ACT of those families who will put in for provisional home registration, because that gives them six months before they are then fully registered for home education, to either seek other alternatives or try home education if that is what they wish to do.

MRS JONES: So you support it in general as an option?

Ms Garrison: Yes.

THE CHAIR: New question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, we have heard a lot about the impact on public schools of the national education reform agreement with the commonwealth. What is happening around that? How is that impacting on non-government schools in the ACT? And following on from that, what has the non-government sector said about the changes that have been mooted?

Ms Burch: Certainly the non-recognition of one six-year agreement and the change through the national education reform into just a CPI growth for non-government schools has a significant and detrimental effect on the independent schools and indeed the Catholic schools. What I have been told—and Mr Whybrow might be able to go into other details—is that the disadvantage is between \$7 million and \$17 million for both the independents and the Catholic schools over time.

The feedback to me from both those groups has been that they are very disappointed indeed. Not only the failure to honour the six-year agreement but effectively just to move to a CPI increase will not even maintain a three per cent growth, which was part of the reform in the NERA, until they got to the student resource allocation. They will go back down to 2.5 per cent. So it is a significant financial disadvantage.

MRS JONES: What is the time frame you mentioned? You said over time. What was that time frame?

Ms Burch: It comes in, I think, in 2017-18 or the 2018 year. We are not very far from

there.

MRS JONES: Sorry, funding cuts begin in 2017-18. Is that what you said?

Mr Whybrow: If I take you through it, the commonwealth budget came down on 13 May 2014. Within that budget there was a change to commonwealth funding under the national education reform agreement. Now it is called students first. That is what the commonwealth government is referring to its education policy as. Under that, it changed, as the minister has said, from the SRS-based, needs-based, funding model, which had specific components of indexation in it.

The base level amount had in it, you would have heard, a minimum of three per cent. That was for schools that were identified as above the SRS, the school resource standard. If you had more resources than that standard amount, you had a minimum increase in your funding levels from all elements of government, the ACT and the commonwealth, because it was a signed agreement about an agreed funding model going forward, a three per cent increase in growth as a minimum. If you were below the SRS you got a higher indexation level, and if you were at the SRS you got a higher indexation level. They were identified at 3.6 per cent.

The other main difference, and the basis of that announcement, is that a new model comes in from the 2018 school year. If we look at our budget papers and the commonwealth budget papers, essentially there is a very small difference in that, because it is the fourth year out, it is only for six months, and it is a very small adjustment in those budget papers. What that then said was that, say you are above the SRS, you then do not get three per cent as a minimum, you get CPI or WPI, which is estimated in the commonwealth budget papers at 2.5 per cent.

The bigger difference is for schools that are below the SRS. In the ACT in the non-government sector, the Catholic non-government systemic schools were all identified as below the SRS. That means that come 2018 they will only get two-thirds of the way to the SRS and then they will progress indexation at the 2.5 per cent. So everyone from 2018 will see their indexation at a 2.5 per cent component.

MRS JONES: Can I just clarify? The SRS system was not applied to the ACT in quite the same way as it was to the rest of the country, was my understanding, because it was difficult to ascertain social need in suburbs that had a very great mix of different incomes. What had happened there previously?

Mr Whybrow: In relation to Catholic systemic schools, the SRS used for Catholic systemic schools was the average Catholic systemic school calculation across the nation of 101.

MRS JONES: So there was a nationalised—

Mr Whybrow: Yes. So that is what has happened with Catholic systemic schools in the ACT. I guess the other element of this is that in the ACT, because this is a joint funding model, fundamentally things have not changed in the sense that non-government schools receive commonwealth and ACT funding. Broadly in the ACT that is 75 per cent commonwealth funding and 25 per cent ACT funding. The ACT

funding in the budget papers has not changed and we will see in the outyears for that half-year in this period, because that is all the budget papers cover, the existing arrangement under the national education reform agreement. So there has not been a change in ACT government policy in that space.

I guess the other really important thing to look at in the budget papers—and it is identified in budget paper 3, part 2—payments for specific purposes, education, and then under the “Students First”—

Ms Burch: The commonwealth budget?

Mr Whybrow: Yes. It identifies in those tables essentially the new arrangement is subject to negotiation.

MRS JONES: The new arrangement from 2018?

Mr Whybrow: It is from 2018. There are estimate figures identified in the budget papers, but there is a footnote to those budget papers saying “subject to negotiation with states and territories and the non-government sector”. I guess I was saying there is still an element of “watch this space” in the development.

MS PORTER: So that was going to be my next question, I guess, in relation to that. What capacity has the non-government sector, particularly the Catholic systemic schools, to alter that situation and to get back any lost revenue that may be forecast at the moment?

Mr Whybrow: Again, if I take what the minister said, she was exactly right on those numbers. The estimates that we have done based on a reduction from the existing arrangements for those last two years, the difference in those last two years, is an estimate of a \$7 million impact on the independent schools and \$17 million in relation to the Catholic systemic, based on the parameters that we knew were in existence beforehand.

THE CHAIR: But with room to negotiate?

Mr Whybrow: That is my reading of the commonwealth budget papers.

Ms Burch: There is a sub-note there. I think there was a question about what can schools do about that.

MS PORTER: Yes.

Ms Burch: And I think they do what they are currently doing now, imploring the federal government to honour indeed the funding arrangements that were in NERA. And if you talk to the Australian Independent Schools ACT or the Catholic Education Office here, they were supportive of the existing arrangements, the arrangements that were in place and signed by the Australian government, and they are not happy to be losing \$17 million and \$7 million, respectively.

MRS JONES: Or to be going to the negotiating table again, yes.

Ms Burch: There was much said and much on both sides of the fence spoken about Gonski and was it right or wrong. It did have a student needs-based approach and what we are seeing effective from the federal budget that was put out, regardless of a neat little footnote that says “subject to negotiation”, is that those schools have missed out. Those students miss out and that is not a good thing.

THE CHAIR: Just as a supplementary, what percentage of the ACT funding is the total funding in the non-government sector?

Mr Whybrow: What percentage is ACT funding? Twenty-five per cent of their total government funding component.

THE CHAIR: But of the total spend, when you include the school fees it has been hovering around 18 per cent for some time. So what is—

Mr Whybrow: Sorry. Correct me if I am wrong, I think the question that you are asking me is historically we have done a comparison to the average cost of government schools in the ACT. So the calculation which we did again this year is 18.7 per cent. Is that right? I believe that was the case, 18.7 per cent or 18.9 per cent.

THE CHAIR: What was it last year?

Mrs Sharma: So in terms of the total public funding, both the ACT and commonwealth, the proportion is 25 per cent contribution from ACT government and 75 per cent from commonwealth. So in terms of total non-government, including the fees, we do not have the data.

MRS JONES: If you can just speak up? It is hard at this end of the table to hear.

Mrs Sharma: In terms of the total government funding, on average it is about 25 per cent from the state government, the ACT government, and 75 per cent from the commonwealth. In terms of the total bucket of money for non-government schools, including fees and charges, we do not have the data because we do not collect the non-government schools’ total financial data.

THE CHAIR: The comparison of funding for a student in the non-government sector as opposed to the government sector?

Mrs Sharma: It is around 18 per cent.

Mr Whybrow: It is 18.7 per cent in 2014-15, which is what we have been quoting in this forum now for a number of years.

Mrs Sharma: It was generally around 18 per cent.

Mr Whybrow: I do not have that previous year’s figure on me.

THE CHAIR: If you could give us the last three or four years on notice, that would be kind.

Mr Whybrow: If I can follow up on that, we would expect to see an increase in that space, given the headline figures that we have seen. I already mentioned today there is over a five per cent increase in ACT funding to non-government schools where we are seeing a 3.2 per cent increase of funding to government schools. So that differential would have been slightly lower last year.

THE CHAIR: That is all right, take it on notice.

Mr Whybrow: Certainly.

MS PORTER: I just want to clarify with the minister, are the independent school network and the Catholic systemic school network approaching you to write to the Minister for Education on their behalf?

Ms Burch: They have certainly approached me and had discussions about this. They have not asked me directly to write to Mr Pyne. I think they are doing that under their own steam. Their question to me has been will we maintain our commitment and support to them. The answer has been yes. So that is in stark difference to the federal coalition government.

MRS JONES: As a supplementary, will you go and get a meeting with Minister Pyne and try and get the negotiating going for the ACT? I understand there is a fatigue issue because obviously there have been negotiations going on forever and everyone felt like it might be done. But are you able to go and see him and have a conversation about the future?

Ms Burch: The NERA funding was raised at the most recent minco, and the ministers at that one that had signed up to the national education reforms were wanting the federal minister to honour the six-year agreement. That was the voice of all but the later signers.

MRS JONES: Yes, but if it becomes clear that that is not going to happen or that they are looking at a different model, then are you willing to go and have a conversation about where he is at, what he is actually trying to achieve and how we might get the best deal out of it?

Ms Burch: I am quite happy to try all avenues to get the best deal for the ACT, but at the moment I am probably not hopeful. But I will give it a crack.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, my understanding is that the ACT is the only state or territory government that does not give funding for capital works for non-government schools. Can you explain why that is?

Ms Burch: I went to St Jude's preschool when it was opened, and that was built from ACT capital funds, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Capital funds from when?

Ms Burch: From ACT government.

MR DOSZPOT: From under the old scheme?

Ms Burch: No.

Mr Whybrow: No, a 2013-14 budget initiative provided \$1.2 million per annum to support capital work in non-government schools for the creation of preschools and the expansion to preschools.

MR DOSZPOT: But my understanding is that the ACT government—I will repeat it—is the only territory or state government that does not give funding for capital works for non-government schools.

Mr Whybrow: While there is no new access, the intrasubsidy scheme is still in operation at the moment. There are a number of pre-committed projects where there is support for the borrowings—

MR DOSZPOT: I understood that was closed off.

Mr Whybrow: It is closed to new entrants, but because those projects take 20 to 25 years, we are still making payments under that at over a million dollars a year. My understanding is a number of other jurisdictions have intrasubsidy schemes rather than capital work grant programs.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Whybrow, my question stands to the minister: why is it that we are the only jurisdiction that does not give capital funding? I would be interested in your answer, minister.

Ms Burch: I think Mr Whybrow has just indicated that some jurisdictions have a similar arrangement to us.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, he is not comparing apples with apples here. I am asking you a direct question.

Ms Burch: Well, Mr Doszpot, I do not know what other jurisdictions do, but Mr Whybrow has indicated—

MR DOSZPOT: Well look into it. It might surprise you.

Ms Burch: Sorry, Mr Whybrow has indicated that other jurisdictions have an intrasubsidy scheme similar to ours.

Mr Whybrow: That is my understanding. Some do.

MRS JONES: Just on that, if we have an intrasubsidy scheme that is now closed off, what do new applicants do? Is there no opportunity for new people to access assistance with developing new infrastructure? Are there other programs, or are there new grants or has it just been finished and that is it? Obviously you are maintaining

payments that you have entered into, but as far as new building works go—

Mr Whybrow: Certainly, and there was a commitment from the government at the time when it was turned off—I will probably get this wrong—in the order of 2004?

Mrs Sharma: 2003.

MRS JONES: It was closed off in 2003?

Mr Whybrow: Yes, so where that funding became available it has been rolled into the recurrent grants. So there has not been a reduction in that funding; it has been provided through the recurrent grants. We are very specific about reconciling that account every year and making sure that those funds, if they are not spent in that year, are rolled over to the following year and are reinvested into the non-government schools.

MRS JONES: What can the recurrent grants be spent on? What are the parameters?

Mr Whybrow: So it is to support the operations of the school. They are very broad.

MRS JONES: So it is just their running costs?

Mr Whybrow: There is not a restriction. If a school was to buy IT equipment, there are no restrictions on that. It is general recurrent support for their operations.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Chair, I am not quite sure how many ways I can put it; I have already repeated it three times. Can I ask, minister, that you take that on notice? You made the observation you do not know what other states are doing. Can I suggest you have a look at what other states are doing and have a look at how the ACT can at least keep parity with some of the other states in this regard?

Ms Burch: I am happy to have a look at it, but I think our preschool program, while you may be prepared to dismiss it, the schools that have taken—

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I am not dismissing it, but—

Ms Burch: the benefit of that are quite welcome of it.

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking about a slightly different situation. I am talking about a new school that may need to be started. Anyway, I have asked it several times—

THE CHAIR: You have asked the question; it has been taken on notice. Ms Berry, a new question.

MS BERRY: My question is about the ACT Discrimination Act and it goes to a situation last year in an independent school where some children were treated differently because of their sexuality. I understand the ACT Discrimination Act is currently under review, but I wondered if there was anything that the ACT government could do to encourage independent schools to treat vulnerable children in a more equal manner.

Ms Burch: It is my understanding that all schools, if you look at their registration processes and others, must all comply with human rights legislation and certainly respect the diversity of the students and employees within the school.

Ms Joseph: Part of the registration and re-registration process of non-government schools is to have satisfactory complaints resolution processes and how they are advertised to the school community.

Ms Burch: I might ask Anne Ellis from TQI, who supports prosecutorial work, to comment and then come back to Ms Garrisson around the registration process.

Ms Ellis: It is important to note with the code of professional practice and conduct that is now a requirement of every teacher's registration, including all teachers in independent and Catholic as well as public schools, that a key component is treating everybody with respect, including taking account for personal differences. We have just gone through a mandatory principal briefing session with all our principals to talk with them about the complete legislative framework which now governs all schools in the professional registration of teachers, and a key component of that was talking with them about the professional code of practice and advising them to work with all their staff on it.

Ms Garrisson: This year we are currently working with a cross-sectoral group—the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Office—really trying to fine-tune what are the policies and programs that all schools in the ACT can be looking at to try to address the issues that you were talking to. Certainly the national safe schools framework provides a really good framework for us all to look at in terms of what policies and programs are available so that that discrimination does not occur and, therefore, I suppose, alleviate it but from a positive perspective in terms of saying we can have these programs in all of our schools and that we are all accountable for those, and that will then be a part of the review of registration. When we go into a school we will want to see evidence of those types of policies and programs in place.

MS BERRY: It goes to the questions I was asking earlier around sexual education and students recognising or understanding their sexuality or their sexual identity or agenda, and it actually happens much earlier than we think. It often happens in primary school, and I feel like that is being missed as well.

Ms Garrisson: I suppose what we are looking at is there is much more awareness around now, and I think the benefit of working cross-sectorally, not just with the public schools, is to raise that profile of what we do in our schools and that professional sharing that can come when educators talk about those things together. That is going to put us in a better place for that, because it is also around how we build our community's understanding of these issues that then play out in schools.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones, you have a question.

MRS JONES: I want to go to schools approvals. Obviously there have been some changes and analysis of new schools approvals. How many applications have been received for registration of new non-government schools or campuses in this calendar

year? How soon after an application is submitted is it now listed on the ACT ETD website?

Ms Garrisson: We have not received any new applications for in-principle approval or provisional registration. When, however, we receive an application we put it in the *Canberra Times* as a way of informing the community that we have received it. At the same time it is posted on the Education and Training Directorate's website. What will be happening in the future following the review the minister conducted last year is that we will be writing to the chair of GSEC and the Chair of the Non-government Schools Education Council to inform them of the receipt of these applications and requesting that they inform the key stakeholders who are representative on those councils of the fact that they have been received.

MRS JONES: Has there been any further consideration of the application process, particularly the requirement that the schools identify the specific location of the proposed school and about which objections were made by the non-government school sector?

Ms Garrisson: It is quite a complex question you are asking because for in-principle approval currently it is quite difficult for some schools to say exactly where they will be located because of the land planning requirements. However, we hope that they are able to indicate where they would be. That is for the in-principle approval process. When we get down to the provisional registration, they need to be able to identify the location because it is through the provisional registration process that you can look at the facilities that are provided and whether they will meet the relevant requirements for the provision of an education program.

MRS JONES: Also, has the At-Taqwa Islamic school that was given in-principle approval during 2012 but subsequently failed to meet registration requirements submitted an updated application?

Ms Garrisson: At this point in time, no. We have not received an application for provisional registration.

MRS JONES: Do you work with people who have been knocked back to make sure they understand the process and the next steps?

Ms Burch: Yes.

Ms Garrisson: Certainly, we do. Following At-Taqwa not being provided with their provisional registration, I personally met with members of their board and facilitated for them. In this case they were really wanting to look at financial viability and what evidence they needed to provide to ensure that they had covered that. We facilitated some broad directions that could do that and also ensured that they were in touch with the Association of Independent Schools and other independent schools who they could possibly learn from and share with; so, yes, we did.

MRS JONES: Was that one of the main areas that they needed to improve on for approval?

Ms Garrison: The report became public. In looking at that, the financial viability was an issue for them, as well as the curriculum and the offerings of their curriculum for the students. It was not just one element that they did not meet through the panel that assessed them.

MRS JONES: They were planning for northern Belconnen, weren't they? Was that their preference? Am I right?

Ms Garrison: The location where they sought provisional registration was in Spence, in north Belconnen, but they did actually indicate that they were really keen to provide an educational service in the Gungahlin area.

Ms Burch: And that is a lot of their growth within where they would have their students from. The discussions I had with them in the lead-up to registration was that Spence was a temporary arrangement until they got their registration and were then able to go on and secure land in the Gungahlin region. Just to add: we did undertake a significant review of in-principle approval. That has been finalised and it will not be too long before it is published. The various changes within the public manuals, as a consequence, will be out for all to see.

That was undertaken by both the chair of GSEC and NGSEC. As part of that we also identified some evening out, so to speak, across the registration of validation process of government and non-government schools alike. It is my view that it is about fairness and equity across those sectors. Ms Garrison is doing some work on that which is very much a work in progress.

MRS JONES: There are obviously some students that come across with an interest in both and then there are also different groups who have an interest in one or the other.

Ms Burch: I believe that students here should have access to quality curriculum teachers and built form regardless of what sector they are in.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary regarding the process that the At-Taqwa Islamic school was taken though. Is there a time frame? Can they resubmit their application? Is that an automatic process or do they seek permission to resubmit?

Ms Garrison: If the At-Taqwa school wish to open for the beginning of 2015, they will need to have submitted their provisional registration application by the end of July this year. However, they will have up until December this year for their in-principle approval to still be valid. Once they submit an application for provisional registration, it needs to be six months before they want to begin operation. So if they want to start at the beginning of next year, they have got until July this year to apply. However, they could still apply for provisional registration up until December this year with the notion of opening six months past then.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. And they are aware of all these conditions?

Ms Garrison: Absolutely.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, a question for you on the same topic: in 2012 four

applications were received for non-government schools. The number, the type and the location of the schools were opposed by numerous groups in the public school sector on a number of grounds. You approved the applications in what was regarded as a secret process by certain people, and you were the subject of two successful motions at the 2013 ACT Labor Party conference criticising your handling of the issue. Do you feel that the changes you have made will placate the people who brought this issue out? Have you ever received any similar complaints or criticism from the non-government sector on similar grounds?

Ms Burch: There was a bit of media argy-bargy. I stand by my decisions. They were the right decisions to give in-principle approval to those schools, and I maintain it to be right. I also, though, reflected on the internal processes and manuals and saw that they were many years old. I took the opportunity to go through a process through the chair of NGSEC and GSEC, to go through and update that. We have done that. That will be out by the end of the year. It will also lead to some equalisation around the registration and validation process across the school sectors as well.

MR DOSZPOT: My final question was: have you ever received any similar complaints from the non-government sector?

Ms Burch: Around a government school opening?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Burch: No, I have not, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: All right. Any final questions on—

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I have some more questions. Thank you. Minister, can you tell me what sort of funding is currently given to the ACT parents and citizens association and APFACTS?

Ms Burch: Mr Whybrow will have that information and he will provide it to the committee.

Mr Whybrow: Yes. APFACTS receives a government grant of approximately \$50,000 per annum. For the P&C association it is approximately \$110,000.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. Is there any funding for the Catholic school parents for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn?

Ms Burch: Not at the moment. It is a fairly new group. I am not quite sure if they have actually formally applied or not as yet. They are fairly new group, and I have spoken—

MR DOSZPOT: So they would be eligible for funding under the same criteria?

Ms Burch: I am not quite sure whether it would be under the same criteria. I think the

first step is to approach us to put a formal request in and to outline how it would match their intent as to what we support through those other two groups.

MR DOSZPOT: The funding that you have mentioned for APFACTS and the ACT parents and citizens association: is that annual funding or is that specific—

Mr Whybrow: Annual funding.

Mrs Sharma: And they have to submit acquittals as well on how they have spent—

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, they have to submit?

Mrs Sharma: They have to submit an acquittal based on—

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. I guess that is the second part of my question. Is there a specific purpose for those amounts? That is what I was asking. If it is a specific purpose, why do they have to have an acquittal?

Mr Whybrow: Under the agreement—and perhaps I will check round the terms of the agreement—it is providing support for public education and non-government school education and the importance of community engagement in education.

MR DOSZPOT: That was my question. I understand that there is support becoming available for both of these organisations for parental engagement. So that is my question. Is this funding for parental engagement or is it on an ongoing basis?

Mr Whybrow: An ongoing arrangement for their operations. A primary component of that is engaging with parents and carers and the community in each of those areas.

Ms Burch: That is quite separate to the investment we are putting through to the ARACY project, which is the parental engagement project, Mr Doszpot. It is an investment that we have seen that will involve a working group across government and non-government sectors—so independents and Catholic. I am very much committed that parents and students are one and we have lessons to learn around parental engagement across the sectors.

MR DOSZPOT: For the record, I think it is a worthy investment in engaging with parents across the whole sector. Thank you for clarifying that.

THE CHAIR: Just while we are doing grants, is SPELD funded by the department of education?

Ms Burch: No. SPELD, the dyslexia—

THE CHAIR: So who funds them?

Ms Burch: I do not think they currently get any government funding.

THE CHAIR: Well, they did. There was an article in the *Canberra Times* several weeks ago saying they lost their \$50,000 grant.

MRS JONES: Is that a one-off grant?

Ms Burch: I am not aware of it.

THE CHAIR: Somebody is.

Mr Gniel: I have read the article, Mr Smyth, of course.

THE CHAIR: Thank God somebody else read it.

Mr Gniel: My understanding is that that was an approach of funding for \$50,000 that we did not provide.

THE CHAIR: You did not provide?

Mr Gniel: Yes, so not the removal of that funding. We are investing a significant amount of money in the response to the learning difficulties task force that we have talked about here before around professional learning. That includes responding to some of those concerns that were raised in that article that you read.

THE CHAIR: Right. What does SPELD have to do to get some funding given the issue of dyslexia is quite important in the learning sphere?

Mr Gniel: Probably respond to a need that we are looking to tender. At this stage, we have not done that. We are working with a number of our own experts and also some other providers that are providing that support to both parents and teachers around working with students with dyslexia.

THE CHAIR: Do we know what percentage of students in the ACT have dyslexia?

Mr Gniel: Not specifically in the ACT, but I think the numbers that I have seen quoted are up to 10 per cent in some areas.

THE CHAIR: We have never tried to quantify the issue here in the ACT?

Mr Gniel: No.

THE CHAIR: If 10 per cent of all ACT students had a form of dyslexia, how many students would that be?

Mr Gniel: Many. It depends whether you are looking at what the split might be between the government and the non-government sector.

THE CHAIR: How many students in both the government and non-government sector?

Mr Gniel: 60,000-odd.

THE CHAIR: So there could be as many as 6,000 kids that have dyslexia in one way

or another?

Mr Gniel: Yes, they are the numbers that are quoted.

Ms Burch: 70,000 in total, with 40,000 in government schools. I know SPELD have certainly been active in having a presence around support for kids with dyslexia. If we go back to the review that we did of learning difficulties, dyslexia was definitely mentioned in that. We have put serious investment internally in our government sector around how we support, how we identify someone within a school to be a go-to person, how we increase professional development and learning awareness for our teachers.

MRS JONES: Are you keen to see that flow out into the non-government sector as well, as you learn more about how to handle it and how to cater for it?

Mr Gniel: Yes, we share all of that information with the non-government sector.

MRS JONES: If you make an investment in the services provided in the government sector, do you then start to consider how to reflect that in funding into the non-government sector to cater for those students? Otherwise, presumably, if they need it, they will just up and move into a government school, and then you will have the whole cost of that child's education. Whereas if you are flowing through service provision—

Ms Burch: That could be taken as saying that you are wanting government to get out of service provision and putting it into non-government agencies.

MRS JONES: No, I am asking if you are interested in looking at funding for those kids with dyslexia in the non-government sector in the same way. It is good to have the choice available of government or non-government.

MS BERRY: These are for-profit organisations that you are talking about—funding from the government of for-profit organisations, because that is what SPELD is, isn't it?

MRS JONES: Are you suggesting—

Ms Burch: No, you are saying to support professional development of non-government teachers?

MRS JONES: For example, yes.

Ms Burch: We offer a cross-sectoral approach certainly through many of our professional development opportunities. We do not quarantine our PD just for our teachers alone. In the main, certainly if there is interest, and if we are offering something—it is my understanding—that we know would have a broader appeal, we do open those doors.

MRS JONES: Would you maybe take it on notice and come back to us with what is available for non-government schools in the field of dyslexia?

Ms Mitchell: If I can answer just one part of that—

Mr Gniel: Just before Ms Mitchell talks about that component, I think Mr Whybrow can give the total figures that are invested into the non-government sector to provide for the needs of their students, and it is in the many millions of dollars.

MRS JONES: Does that include dyslexia?

Mr Gniel: As much as it does into the government school sector as well; it is to meet the needs of all students. With students with a learning difficulty, it is around how we adjust for their needs. In the government sector Ms Mitchell can talk about the professional learning for the staff, including teachers and assistants, and also working with parents, and they very much value us working with them.

MRS JONES: So you do not do any direct funding for any particular type of need in the non-government sector?

Mr Whybrow: Under the national education reform agreement—

MRS JONES: I think it is a little bit glib to just say, “We fund that sector, so don’t worry about it.”

Ms Burch: The question you are asking is: do we give funding to the non-government sector for dyslexia?

MRS JONES: In any way, or for the development of teachers to assist with the needs of dyslexic students.

Mr Whybrow: Recently, as part of the national education reform agreement, and in non-government schools, the ACT government moved in line with the school resource standard. The school resource standard provides a base amount and then, depending on capacity to contribute, there is a smaller component of that, because there is part-funding from parents, and fees. But the other side was that loadings, one of which is disability, were all 100 per cent loaded. So there was no difference in loadings provided under that funding formula between government and non-government. So on the basis of the need factor—the Indigeneity that we have heard about, disability component—the total funding to those pools is done on the same basis under the school resource standard. With respect to specifics around disability, the nature of that loading is not that advanced around whether it is specifically for this or that. It is that overall loading.

MRS JONES: And where is the definition of “disability” coming from in that sense?

Ms Burch: It is in the SCAN process.

Mr Gniel: That is what I was talking about around the total funding. It includes the needs-based component that Mr Whybrow has talked through. With respect to the needs of students with dyslexia, as for students with autism, the spectrum is great around what the different needs are. That is all I was getting at.

MRS JONES: Yes, I have been through this process with my own children, and I do understand that some are diagnosable and some are not.

Ms Mitchell: In terms of the comprehensive suite of professional learning that we have, it has been accredited with TQI. I do not know if that is what Anne was going to say. So we have got a whole package for understanding learning difficulties. I could give you loads of numbers about government staff, but you do not want those. The other thing I could add is that we have been running parent workshops. I will read, de-identified, this email:

My family is two weeks into the dyslexia world and we are starting to learn to live with it.

They said:

Thank you so much for running this learning ...

After their son's diagnosis they did not know what to do. They were referred to an ACT association who referred them to a specialist who said it was going to cost \$1,000 a term. They said:

I cried for two days thinking we cannot afford to do that but how can we not give our son what he needs? We think there must be better ways to help, and then Tuesday night—

which was the stuff we were running for parents—

was a great start for us. Thank you so much. Please keep us on mailing lists.

And we advertised that widely to the community.

MRS JONES: Is that cross-sectoral as well—the parents info evenings?

Ms Mitchell: This is an interesting question because when we advertise that, we do not say, “Which school have you come from?” If a parent is from a Catholic school or an independent school, they do come to a lot of our professional learning. So we did not collect that data, but we want to do a lot more of this because it is really important.

MRS JONES: Does that get advertised through the schools as well?

Ms Mitchell: Sometimes we advertise through schools. Sometimes we advertise in the community noticeboard. Sometimes we advertise through associations.

MS BERRY: That is free, isn't it, so that parents can support their kids in their schools?

Ms Mitchell: Yes, it is free. So as well as a huge amount for teachers, if the family knows some strategies as well then they are not daunted by this, “What are we going to do?” and by the cost.

MS BERRY: That is part of the challenge with kids who have special learning needs—they do not want to be treated differently. They want to be like everybody else. So keeping them in their own schools and giving them those skills in their own schools makes them feel like they are not different.

Ms Burch: With respect to the number of students identified in the gifted and talented work, where there is a descriptor of twice exceptional, they may be gifted and talented but they may actually have a learning difficulty as well. So it gets down to the teachers and the schools being able to respond on an individual level.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a really quick supplementary. Ms Ellis, if you have something to add, we will let you put it on notice because we are going to shut it off at the moment, unless it is incredibly quick.

Ms Ellis: It is very quick. With the advocacy for quality professional learning, we are in the early days of making sure things are available cross-sectorally. It is certainly about bringing it to people's notice but also quality professional learning for all schools being available to everyone is one of the great benefits of what we are doing.

MR DOSZPOT: I have two quick supplementaries. You can take this on notice; I am not asking for an answer now: is the Shaddock review being checked off against the NDIS as to whether all the recommendations of the Shaddock review are covered under NDIS? The second question to the minister is: we started talking about the interest subsidy scheme but we went off that. Is there a possibility for the interest subsidy scheme to be resurrected?

Ms Burch: We will put that in the other answer as well.

THE CHAIR: Just to finish, is dyslexia a disability or a learning difficulty? How do you classify dyslexia?

Mr Gniel: It depends which criteria you look at. Under the Australian act it would form part of a disability.

MRS JONES: It would not?

Mr Gniel: It would, under the act. My understanding would be that it would fit under that. Under targeted funding criteria, for us at this stage it does not fit under that targeted funding.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps using both measures, could you take on notice what are the top 10 learning disabilities or learning difficulties under the act and under your criteria and tell us what percentage of ACT students suffer from them?

MS BERRY: They do not suffer from it.

Ms Burch: No. We will take that question on notice and provide what we can.

THE CHAIR: That finishes this section. Given that it is the end of the education department, perhaps I will read this: for any questions taken on notice, there is a five-

working-day time frame for return of answers to questions taken on notice. Members have three days from the arrival of the transcript to put any further questions on notice. With that, minister, we thank you for the attendance of your officials from the Education and Training Directorate and thank you for all of their answers today. We will have a short break and resume with the Gambling and Racing Commission.

Sitting suspended from 3.48 to 4.02 pm.

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon minister and officials. We have an hour this afternoon to look at the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission. For those who have just arrived, I welcome you all. There is a pink privilege statement on the table. Could you read it and acknowledge that you understand the protections and obligations of the privileges? Apparently you all do, which is fantastic. The proceedings this afternoon are being broadcast and will be transcribed. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript when it is available. If you have any corrections you wish to make, please contact the secretariat.

With that, minister, I understand that you want to add some detail from the education hearings. Then perhaps you might want to make a short statement regarding the Gambling and Racing Commission.

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair. In the earlier hearings Ms Mitchell made reference to a suite of professional development opportunities for teachers in regards to dyslexia. She indicated that they were cross-sectoral. I am looking at the TQI website and they were for ETD staff. That is how they are identified on the website. But there is a lot of cross-sectoral work. Over the break I have asked the director-general to also work with the head of the Catholic services and the independent schools to progress more broadly a cross-sectoral approach to professional development. Thank you for that opportunity, chair, to clarify that.

In regards to gaming and racing, I think my brief opening statement is merely to thank Mr Jones, his team and the commission for the work that they do and the directorate staff in EDD for the policy support to the commission as well. I think the commission has had a very productive and successful year and does our community well. I will leave it there and I am happy to take questions.

THE CHAIR: Apparently the sale of ACTTAB is impending. What has your role been in the sale of ACTTAB and what has the commission's role been?

Ms Burch: My role was to have carriage of some legislation, which was confirmed by and passed through the Assembly last sitting. Certainly the sale of ACTTAB sits with the Treasurer.

Mr Jones: The commission's role, in terms of the sale or the proposed sale of ACTTAB is along the lines of providing advice to the minister who issues the TAB licence, or the totalisator licence as the legislation refers to it, providing advice in terms of the probity and the suitability of a prospective licensee. So we provide advice to the minister on those aspects.

THE CHAIR: Minister, what is your role in the future of the racing industry?

Ms Burch: My role in the future of the racing industry?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Burch: To support it, to make sure it is sustainable and that it has a future in the ACT. It is a strong industry across the three codes. At the moment it is budget line funding. The memorandum of understanding with the racing codes underpins that commitment from the government to provide consistent and sustainable funding. I am very much aware that they have made public comment in relation to their funding and the sale of ACTTAB. Regardless of whatever decision that is, the MOU will stand and our commitment to the codes will stay strong.

THE CHAIR: All right. Post the sale of ACTTAB, how do you see the future of the racing industry?

Ms Burch: I see that it very much has a strong presence across Canberra. We are also doing some work—it is getting close to being finalised—about the consideration of a co-location of the codes, which they have been involved with through that consultancy work.

THE CHAIR: All right. The report on the co-location of the codes is due when?

Ms Burch: That is not too far away

Mr Dawes: Currently, that is just being finalised by the consultants. That will be brought to EDD. Then we will further synthesise that and then bring it forward to the minister and to the government. So it is very close to being finalised.

THE CHAIR: Minister, have any issues arisen since the proposed sale of ACTTAB about the future of the industry and what have you done to resolve those issues?

Ms Burch: Nothing has come to me to put a question mark on the future of the industry. I think our government remains committed. The MOU that we signed with the codes earlier this year—the latter part of last year—affirms our commitment to the codes. They are an important part of Canberra, not only as racing but all the sub-industries that sit underneath it with the farriers, the blacksmiths, the trainers and all those involved.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Declaration of a conflict of interest?

Ms Burch: You own a horse, I think.

MS PORTER: I have an interest in a horse. Actually, two and another one that I do have an interest in has gone off to have babies. So I am interested to see what happens to the babies. Are you happy now, chair?

THE CHAIR: I was just trying to protect you, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much. I do not think there is a problem. Good afternoon, Mr Dawes, officials and minister. There is a point under “priorities” midway down the page. It is fourth from the bottom on page 31 of the budget paper. It talks about “continuing to assess findings and recommendations of relevant gambling research projects in relation to compliance and policy issues”.

In the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission’s statement of intent, page 5, paragraph 4, it talks about the commission’s ongoing research agreement with the ANU Centre for Gambling Research. It states:

Highlights for 2014-15 will include the conduct of an updated prevalence study into gambling and problem gambling ...

I am interested in how long that will take and when we might be lucky to find out the results of that research. Also, I believe that there is a longitudinal research study in conjunction with New South Wales, which is fantastic to know about. Could you talk to us about those studies?

Mr Jones: Sure, the commission, in determining its regulatory policy, uses an evidence-based model to inform itself in terms of making those decisions. It relies on research, some of which is commissioned on its own initiative as you indicated, and some is also from elsewhere, including both within Australian and overseas as well as through Gambling Research Australia, which the commission subscribes to, as do all other Australian jurisdictions.

Most of the GRA, Gambling Research Australia, research is nationally based because its clientele effectively, or its providers, are nationally based with all jurisdictions, as I indicated. They tend to look at matters which are predominantly Australia-wide or at least international issues.

Some of the things they have been looking at, for example, are the current size and impact of interactive gambling—whether the people that use interactive gambling, in fact, have different demographics from those that perhaps use a gaming machine or a casino—actually attend a venue.

They have also looked at some of the indicators which would be obvious to staff at a venue about whether someone is struggling perhaps with their gambling or their level of activity. So they did some research in terms of indicating what factors may be relevant to indicate whether their behaviour is perhaps not in control in terms of their level of expenditure.

Specifically with ANU, the commission has a contractual research arrangement with ANU where we undertake our own research which is specifically designed to assist the commission and the ACT situation. We have had some recent research done on stigma and how stigma relates to gambling. Some of those outcomes were fairly important in terms of our policy decisions in the future because we found that stigma with gambling was significantly higher than it is for perhaps alcohol, tobacco and

even illicit drugs.

What that means is that people are effectively in denial of some of their gambling problems, not only to those that are around them but also to themselves. As we know, if someone is not, I guess, self-admitting to a particular issue, then seeking help or whatever is going to be that much more difficult. That was a particularly important study.

One of the other studies you did mention was the prevalence study. Every five years we undertake, or we get ANU to undertake, a study of the level of gambling and problem gambling in the ACT. It is a very large, very expensive study. The sample size in the 2009 study was 5,500. We will be looking at roughly the same sample size at the end of this year when we do the next study. The results of that will be out probably mid 2015.

There is a huge amount of data which is collected as part of that survey and that will give us an update of what the level of problem gambling is in the territory and it will give an update of all the demographics in terms of our profiling of our problem gamblers as well as level of expenditure and things like that. The results for that should be out around about the middle of 2015.

MS PORTER: Thank you very, very much.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: I have questions around the same sort of thing. Do we know where problem gambling is most prevalent? Is it the casino, machines, racing or online? Is there any—

Mr Jones: Most of our research indicates that those that score high on the problem gambling indices, on the scales that we use to measure problem gambling, tend to gamble or wager on about four different activities. It tends not to be just one activity. But if you look at the whole profile of problem gamblers, something like 75 to 80 per cent have gaming machines as one of their preferred methods of gambling. But traditionally there are also sports bookmaking, casinos as well. But overall 75 to 80 per cent of problem gamblers tend to utilise or prefer gaming machines.

MS BERRY: Do you think that the harm minimisation methods that are used target different types of gambling—

Mr Jones: Yes, they do.

MS BERRY: appropriately, I guess. Do they actually—

Mr Jones: Clearly, there is—because of the size I guess there are two issues. One is the preference for what gambling activity people choose and also just the sheer numbers. Clearly the largest actual numbers of people that are utilising gaming machines just puts that level of volume quite high there.

In terms of targeting the particular help processes or the early intervention, which is

our main aim, while gaming machines are clearly a target we also target right across the board because, as we know, there are quite a number of different types of gambling activity that are covered. They are not specifically covered. Some of our promotions aim at internet gaming. Some are aimed at casinos as well and some are just broad. They just cover gambling right across the board without discriminating. So it is a broad approach but there are some specifics in terms of each particular activity because they have their own individual characteristics.

MS BERRY: How does that sort of differ between different venues—for example, racing? What do they do out at the race track as opposed to what a casino might do? Are they required to do things differently or the same?

Mr Jones: There is the mandatory code of practice which covers all gaming licensees. That code of practice is reflective of where the risks are with each gambling activity. The majority of the requirements under that code relate to gaming machine activities and there are other specifics which cover the casino, some race bookmakers and even with advertising some of the lottery providers as well.

There are a lot of common elements within the code which apply to all licensees—for example, signage and things like that. But there are specific ones for each one. So there are within that code some general elements and some specific ones aimed at each particular type of gambling activity.

MS BERRY: But it would be really difficult to measure the online gambling side of things even with horse racing but also with all the games that are available, I guess. I do not know what they are. But I hear that there are a whole lot of opportunities for people to gamble online. They never have to leave their home.

Mr Jones: Yes.

MS BERRY: How do we possibly measure the impact of that on the whole gambling problem?

Mr Jones: In some ways you cannot. Internet gambling other than perhaps lotteries and sports bookmaking—they are probably the main ones; lotteries and sports bookmaking—is unlawful in Australia, which means that most or all of the sites that are being used are overseas, many of which are unregulated. We have really no idea what level of activity is going on on these unregulated overseas sites. There have been some estimates of around \$800 million but it is really a best guess because not everyone is going to admit that they are gambling on some unregulated or unlawful site overseas.

So it is just a best guess of what the size of that is. In terms of our harm minimisation things, obviously these sites which we have no control over or no influence over have no harm minimisation restrictions or requirements on them. None of our code of practice requirements, for example, actually apply to those. So they presumably are totally ineffective to an overseas, unregulated site.

MS BERRY: With online gambling—well, not online gambling but more around TABs and accounts and things like that—are there regulations around the amount of

money a person can have on account with a TAB when they are doing their gambling that way?

Mr Jones: The government does not restrict in its harm minimisation requirements, for example, the maximum deposit account that a punter could have with a TAB. What it does restrict is the amount of actual cash payout given out at actual venues—for example, a TAB outlet. That does not apply to an account held by someone. There is an enormous range of size of accounts or deposits that are made. We have got some big punters that would potentially have millions of dollars in an account. How that is regulated is up to each TAB and their own rules.

Some of it is their commercial risk and some of it is on their other requirements in terms of requirements relating to anti-money laundering and things like that that they would need to meet.

MS BERRY: So we are about to sell off our ACTTAB. Will that mean that we have even less control over what happens in that sector once it is sold—well, not control but will we be able to enforce any sort of harm minimisation other than apply the code?

Mr Jones: The level of regulatory activity will be the same or increased under a new operator. Because ACTTAB was a government-owned enterprise the commission had a reasonably light hand on its operations. Since the Totalisator Act, as the minister mentioned earlier, was introduced and is now operational, there is a much stronger regulatory regime in place all in anticipation of a private sector ownership of our TAB.

The actual level of control I would say has increased and along with that goes the harm minimisation requirements as well. In fact, what is reflected in our statement of intent is an increase in the level of audit interest in the totalisator which was not previously there, which reflects the fact that going from public to private ownership actually increases the risk of operation. So we recognise that and our audit program has been adjusted accordingly for next financial year.

MS BERRY: You talked before about early intervention. What do you mean by that?

Mr Jones: Early intervention in the context of harm minimisation?

MS BERRY: In this sector.

Mr Jones: It is recognising that some people have problems with their gambling and getting that person to control their gambling behaviour or restrict their level of expenditure before they reach a situation of harm. If you like, an analogy of those that meet harm falling off the cliff, we try to put up a bit of a fence at the top of the cliff and get them before they fall over. Having a mattress at the bottom of the cliff is fine, but they have already fallen over. So the earlier you can either educate or assist in getting a person to control their activity then the less harm will actually come to them.

MS BERRY: But that would only be in clubs and the casinos where you would be able to do that work. You would not be doing that out at the racetrack or at a TAB?

Mr Jones: It applies to all gambling licensees, including race bookmakers and online sports bookmakers. Someone can self-exclude from any of those venues, whether it is an online venue, whether it is the racecourse with the race bookmakers or any of the other clubs, casinos or lottery agencies for that matter.

MS BERRY: Does the commission keep the numbers of excluded people from each of those different venues, or is it all just—

Mr Jones: Up until this Wednesday, the answer is no, we do not, because it is a paper-based system. We have just completed the development of our online exclusion database which the casino, the TAB and the clubs will be adopting. As I said, we are rolling it out from this Wednesday onwards. That is a very extensive, very easy-to-use ACT-wide database where we will be able to know exactly at any given point in time how many people have self-excluded from what venues, whether it is north side or south side. We can run all the demographics on the particular venues, and we will have that data. But up to date, because it has been a paper-based system, no, we have not had that.

MS BERRY: That will be interesting information. So that will collect information from those venues but not from the racetrack? And it would be difficult to manage anyway because people can bet on tab or whatever.

Mr Jones: Yes, it is a little bit more problematic with online and out at the racecourse where you have the stand-up bookmakers. It is an environment which is quite tricky to control. But at this stage it is in the low numbers, the low risk category, and we are working on how we can get them to be able to use the online exclusion database. That is kind of a stage 2, if you like. At this stage, it is probably more important to focus on the clubs, the TAB that has its venues and the casino. That is what we have done in terms of rolling out the current database.

THE CHAIR: There is a supplementary to Ms Berry's question, then Mrs Jones.

MS PORTER: You mentioned before, Mr Jones, when you were talking about the different forms of gambling and how difficult it was to do anything about getting the people who are gambling online and at the racecourse to self-regulate as it were. The budget talks about developing and enhancing the commission's community education program. Is that something that is going out into the general community to alert people in the general community about this perhaps becoming an issue, therefore, helping them self-regulate when they are online or at the racecourse?

Mr Jones: Yes, it is. The education is broader. As you have suggested, it is aimed at the community through various media and other mediums in terms of getting messages there. But it is also aimed at licensees and encouraging them to be proactive in looking after their clients or their members and making sure they are sufficiently equipped through skills and training courses to recognise those people that perhaps may be struggling with their gambling or where their expenditure may be a bit high so they can assist their clients, their members, to perhaps ease off before they come to harm.

It is also educating the public to know where, for example, assistance is available

either through counselling services or self-help mechanisms or techniques. We have little brochures and little wallet-size cards where we encourage people to determine a level of expenditure prior to them going out gambling and then taking no more money other than perhaps sufficient for a taxi home or whatever their issue is so that they do not continue to expend their whole pay packet and that they set a limit and stick to it. The community education program is both publicly based as well as venue based to assist their clients or their members.

MS PORTER: Page 5 of the statement of intent talks about the current contract with regard to problem gambling support services. Is that what you were talking about before, or is that the education program?

Mr Jones: Look, it is a bit of both.

MS PORTER: How do we determine who actually provides those services?

Mr Jones: The problem gambling support service is a counselling and broader support service provided under contract to the commission. The commission through a public tender process sets out requirements for the provision of those services. Three years ago, after a tender process the first time the contract was issued was to Mission Australia. They are just coming up to the conclusion of their current contract. We have just finished another public tender process, and we have effectively announced—and the minister has partly advised the industry where we are up to—that Relationships Australia Canberra and Region has been the successful tenderer through that process. They will be commencing a three-year contract on 1 July and they will be taking over the counselling and support service from Mission Australia from that period. Relationships Australia will provide perhaps an enhanced service than what we have been used to in terms of industry liaison and promotion of the service, and we are fairly keen to see that kick on from 1 July.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones, a new question.

MRS JONES: Going to the sale of the casino, would you like to update the committee on what the government's involvement is in the sale, where we are up to, and what issues have arisen from the sale process?

Mr Jones: The background to the sale is that Casinos Austria, who own both the Cairns reef casino and Casino Canberra, had an offer from a company called Aquis, which is a Hong Kong-based developer. It was an offer for both the Cairns reef casino and hotel complex as well as Casino Canberra. Casinos Austria insisted that if the sale was to go ahead it was for both properties, not just the Queensland property. On the basis that the properties were in two states in Australia, we have made an arrangement with the Queensland regulator, the Queensland office of liquor and racing, to conduct a joint probity or suitability assessment of Aquis. That has been underway for about three months now. We are still getting information in from that company to undertake both financial and suitability checks on the probity of Aquis to properly operate both the Canberra and the Cairns casino.

The time frame for that is we are expecting our probity investigation to wrap up about the end of October, so it is a fairly lengthy process. It is a very complex and difficult

assessment. There are something like 80 or 90 companies, most of which are based out of Hong Kong.

MRS JONES: Which Aquis is part of?

Mr Jones: Yes, which is the ultimate owner, or at least partner, of most of those. A number of trust funds are tied up with that, and we are waiting on information on quite a large number of those companies as well as other critical information, such as business plans, their key staff, source of financing, that sort of thing.

MRS JONES: So the purpose of that assessment is to ascertain whether Aquis is going to maintain the business that the casino is? Is the purpose to make sure they are solid, or is about proportion of ownership by different countries?

Mr Jones: The main purpose is to make sure that Aquis and the people they employ and associate with are suitable people to operate a casino in Australia. And that is suitable in terms of all of their broad connections, business practices and making sure they are not involved with any organised crime or criminal elements. That is certainly a very important part of it, but it is also important that they have the appropriate financial abilities and the appropriate staffing skills to operate the casino, otherwise it is not going to last very long.

MRS JONES: So if the assessment comes back with no concerns about crime and they have the financials, when would you expect the sale to go ahead? If not, is the whole thing off or is it a matter of the current owner coming back with other possibilities?

Mr Jones: We are expecting our suitability probity checks to be completed by the end of October, as I indicated. Once that is given, it is then a matter for Casinos Austria and Aquis to conclude their commercial arrangements. I am not sure exactly what their completion time frame would be. I would expect probably this calendar year. I do not know how many conditions are on the actual sales documentation and what the completion of those entails, but I would imagine that once the government ticks off on suitability, if that is given, it should be reasonably speedy after that.

The other part of your question was about what happens if that does not go ahead or it falls through. I guess that is a matter for Casinos Austria to determine what they do with their properties.

MRS JONES: So it is just a matter of their application to the ACT government, essentially, to conduct a sale in this area.

Mr Jones: The sale is a commercial arrangement between Casinos Austria and Aquis. Casinos Austria have advised the Gambling and Racing Commission through the minister of a change of ownership, and that is what we are formally investigating. We will ultimately give advice to the minister on whether a licence should or should not be issued. That will be a recommendation. Then it is a matter for Aquis and Casinos Austria to finalise and settle the deal.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the collapse of Sports Alive—is there an update on the

progress of that?

Ms Burch: It is my understanding that it is done.

Mr Jones: As far as we are concerned, that is completed. You will recall that there was a Victorian Supreme Court case some 18 months ago, I think, to see whether the remaining funds were in fact customer account funds and should be allocated to those. The Supreme Court decided that they were not. The liquidator has been using those funds as part of the wrap-up of the company. The liquidator, Bent & Cogle, recently, about two months ago, put a notice on their website to say that they believe they have reasonable grounds to effectively sue or take action against the directors of Sports Alive, and they were seeking additional funding from account holders or creditors to actually finance taking those directors to court, including the insurance company that covers the directors' liabilities. According to the liquidator's website, they think they have reasonable prospects for a successful claim against the insurance of the directors, basically for the directors failing in their corporate duties, which led to their collapse.

THE CHAIR: So the Victorian Supreme Court has laid the problem with Sports Alive and its directors.

Mr Jones: Yes.

THE CHAIR: What is the implication of that for the commission? Did the commission always conduct itself in a manner in keeping with the legislation?

Mr Jones: The commission has done a number of reviews of its sports bookmaking regulatory regime. We have made a number of changes to that regime, including for increased liquidity to be held by the current licensees. And we have changed the rules surrounding the holding of segregated accounts so that we have tightened those requirements. We have also bolstered our audit program around monthly returns on segregated accounts. You may recall that the returns provided by Sports Alive were falsely signed documents provided to the commission. We have now instigated some regimes where we do more regular checks to verify those returns.

THE CHAIR: How can you verify those returns now when you could not do it previously?

Mr Jones: By taking the declarations further. By checking bank accounts and having closer scrutiny, and more regular scrutiny, of some of the other financial statements so that we can more regularly or more frequently check and balance what is indicated in the customer balances compared to what is in their financial statements.

THE CHAIR: How many other sports bookmakers does the commission regulate?

Mr Jones: There are two at the moment; one is ACTTAB and there is another operator with a relatively small turnover.

THE CHAIR: Minister, have you responded to all the correspondence you have received about this matter?

Ms Burch: From memory, I would say yes, either from EDD or through the commission. There is a correspondent who feels we have an obligation. We believe that we do not have an obligation. Certainly through the Victorian courts the findings—correct me if I am wrong, Mr Jones—are that the behaviour and practices within the commission were found to be solid. It was most unfortunate that the behaviour of the directors was not solid and was not as honest as it ought to be. There is no comeback, I believe, on the commission. I think the various review processes find that out. It remains disappointing that there are some local betters—or punters; I am not quite sure what the right word is—who have been wronged by the directors of this organisation. It is unfortunate.

THE CHAIR: I have an email from a gentleman that says, just to quote one paragraph:

This has been dragging on for years and I cannot get a reply from Joy Burch's office. We have all lost patience and if this matter is not resolved early we will take action to ensure all monies are paid ...

Ms Burch: I have got a practice of replying to every correspondent. I am not quite sure what that is in relation to. I can check my records as to the last time we had a letter when I have sought a reply from Mr Jones. Sometimes people are not happy with the reply that I give, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: This gentleman from WA is saying:

This has been dragging on for years and I cannot get a reply from Joy Burch's office.

Ms Burch: Well—

THE CHAIR: You might want to check your records. At this stage, what role does the commission have in dealing with the fraud squad in Victoria and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission? Are all the investigations now done?

Mr Jones: We have still got a watching brief on what is happening, clearly. The brief we provided to the Victorian police fraud squad is still with them. I would imagine that they are probably awaiting the outcomes of the various investigations and moves by the liquidator. ASIC are probably watching that as well. With the next proposed action from the liquidator, I think that may give some indication of where ASIC and the fraud squad may go. But these things tend to take a fair bit of time to pan out; some of it is a bit of a waiting game while other moves move on. At the moment, we have got a monitoring game, and we assist where we can and when requested.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, a new question?

MS PORTER: No, I have not got a question.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, a new question?

MS BERRY: I do have some questions about how much was collected in gaming taxes in 2013-14 and what is the breakdown between the different types of gambling

and the returns.

Mr Jones: Just bear with me. I think the total tax was \$55 million. I will just get you some exact figures. For 2013-14—I think that was your question, Ms Berry?

MS BERRY: Yes.

Mr Jones: The total was just under \$56 million in total taxes and fees. The gaming machine tax was \$34 million. The casino tax was approximately \$2 million. Lotteries, which is the interstate ones—Lotto and the New South Wales and Victorian lotteries—were about \$14 million. The casino has about an \$840,000 licence fee. And the fees paid by the TAB, by ACTTAB, are about \$1.7 million. There are some other minor ones which make it up to about \$56 million.

MS BERRY: Can you tell me what the fines are. You have got tax, fees and fines all in together.

Mr Jones: Yes.

MS BERRY: What were the fines, say, for the last financial year?

Mr Jones: I do not have the exact figure in front of me, but it would be very low, probably less than \$1,000.

MS BERRY: How much of the total gambling revenue goes towards problem gambling prevention?

Mr Jones: The problem gambling assistance fund is funded from a mandatory levy on gaming machine licensees. That is 0.6 per cent of their gross revenue. And there is a contribution of \$50,000 from both the TAB and the casino on a voluntary basis. The total that goes into that fund is between \$1.1 million and \$1.2 million per year.

MS BERRY: Is that excluding or including the casino and the—

Mr Jones: That is including that. That is all up.

MS BERRY: That changes depending on revenue?

Mr Jones: Yes. Because it is a proportion of revenue, it fluctuates. It fluctuates at between \$1.1 million and \$1.2 million a year.

MS BERRY: That is not in here anywhere, is it? Or is it?

Mr Jones: Have you got the budget paper? If you look on page 37, under “Income”, about fourth from the top, there is “Other revenue”. There is a figure of 1,111.

MS BERRY: Yes.

Mr Jones: The bulk of that is the problem gambling assistance fund.

MS BERRY: Thank you.

MRS JONES: I have a question regarding the number of poker machines. I believe there was an intention to reduce the number overall, and I just wondered if you would update us as to where we are at at the moment. I think we are down from 5,024 to 4,000, if that is correct?

Ms Burch: It certainly is our commitment to reduce the overall numbers. Some have been handed back. I am not quite sure if Mr Jones has the most current number, but we are also progressing some work that will involve a trading scheme. That also has mechanisms in it to reduce the overall numbers.

MRS JONES: Trading off numbers between clubs or something?

Ms Burch: We allow clubs to trade machines, but within that will be a mechanism to further reduce numbers.

Mr Jones: The total number at this stage is 4,970 approximately.

MRS JONES: So it has been a 50-machine reduction or so?

Mr Jones: There are 50 in the pool. So there are 50 that are actually unallocated at the moment that are effectively non-operational, yes.

MRS JONES: How does that compare to last year?

Mr Jones: It is about the same.

MRS JONES: And what is the target we are trying to reach, and when would you expect to be able to get there?

Mr Jones: The government has given a target under current legislation of 4,000. At this stage, there is no timing estimate of when that is likely to be reached mainly because there are some negotiations currently underway with the industry for another reform package with a trading scheme, as the minister mentioned, which will effectively—

MRS JONES: So we are in a holding pattern?

Mr Jones: Yes, it is on a holding pattern pending the finalisation of the reform package. And that will address more specifically the future targets

MRS JONES: And then, in that vein, some areas of the city are expanding. I guess, historically, clubs have come in with these licences in order to create family clubs, for better or worse, which is very strange for people who first come to the ACT. But it has served a certain purpose. Is there an intention to allow the trading scheme to allow new clubs in the newer areas as well? And how can we achieve that if that is one of the intentions of the government?

Mr Jones: At the moment in the legislation there are various aspects which encourage

the establishment of greenfield sites, but clearly the economic climate and the climate for the clubs is one of a bit of a struggle. There is one on its way for Gungahlin which will be open probably in a couple of years time or 18 months time.

MRS JONES: Outside the town centre or—

Mr Jones: Close to the town centre.

MRS JONES: There is already one in the town centre and one nearby.

Mr Jones: Yes. I guess there is a critical mass and obviously the planning considerations are relevant to that. It was a site identified adjacent to the commercial hub of Gungahlin so that access for the whole of Gungahlin is probably the easiest, given that that is the focus for transport and other activity.

But under the trading scheme, depending on how that lands with the reforms, that will certainly allow and encourage development of greenfield sites, either Gungahlin or Molonglo as that develops as well and reaches a critical structure. Certainly development around Molonglo is something that is at the forefront of everyone's mind in terms of developing the scheme.

MRS JONES: I just want to ask the minister: obviously it was a choice made by governments many years ago to have these clubs with the pokies in them to allow facilities to develop in the town centres. But in the long term, is that a good thing? Is that the way that the infrastructure should be delivered? Do you have a particular view on it? I know I certainly struggle with being a member of a club—I am a member of a few of these clubs because they have great kids facilities too—in that they do also house this gambling issue right there in that centre. What are your feelings on it?

Ms Burch: For as long as poker machines have been in the ACT they have been held in a community club base and are not-for-profit. Certainly the community supports clubs, and clubs themselves recognise the need to diversify away from electronic gaming machines as a source of income. Mr Jones has indicated that there are times of difficulty at the moment and if you look at clubs' revenue and if you look at revenues from gaming machines, they are on the decline.

Certainly we have put, particularly for smaller clubs, a significant investment—probably that was a bit of an overstatement—investment into supporting them, and the recent changes to the LVC have gone towards allowing them to redevelop. We did a grant round two years ago.

MRS JONES: What other income streams can they use, in your experience?

Ms Burch: The smaller clubs certainly have an interest in redeveloping some of their land with community facilities. For example, I think one club has an interest in childcare and three-star hotel accommodation to accommodate large sporting groups or school groups or family visits.

MRS JONES: So that it becomes a multiuse facility?

Ms Burch: Or semi-retirement villa-type structures as well. That is the sort of thing that I am seeing coming from small clubs.

MS BERRY: I have a supplementary regarding the trading scheme that you are working on. Is there any decision on where clubs can trade their machines to? For example, I read somewhere awhile ago about poker machines going into a low socioeconomic area in Sydney. Canberra is growing. You do not want to have a whole bunch of gambling venues where people are already struggling.

Mr Jones: The government is very conscious of that and the development of the trading scheme has certainly got the social impact on areas high on the agenda. In fact, even under the current scheme where there is both small and large-scale ability to move machines around, it is potentially subject to a social impact assessment or statement. A trading scheme will be similar where a social impact assessment will be required under most circumstances other than perhaps very small trades to take that into account.

You are absolutely right, both Sydney and Melbourne in particular, have seen, without those checks and balances in place, certainly a very rapid movement of concentrations of machines in low socioeconomic areas. Once they are in, it is extremely difficult to get people who invest in businesses to diversify. We are a step ahead of that and that is part of the planning of the trading scheme.

MRS JONES: Back to the poker machines that we have got, do you have a figure of how much government taxes were collected from poker machines last year?

Mr Jones: Approximately \$34 million.

MRS JONES: And how does that compare with the previous three years? Is that a standard or is that a change in the amount?

Mr Jones: It is fairly static. It would probably change by perhaps \$1 million or \$2 million, but it has consistently been around the \$34 million or \$35 million. So it is good within \$1 million or \$2 million.

MRS JONES: And then just additionally, how much of that revenue goes back into the official community contributions that the clubs make back to communities or is that the pure taxation? Do they separately support community groups?

Ms Burch: They separately support. There is mandatory commitment of, I think, eight per cent—is that right, Greg?—into community organisations but traditionally there has been upwards of 13 per cent community contributions made. Probably the commission's annual report and Clubs ACT's annual report will show that community contribution.

MRS JONES: Is that eight per cent of profit?

Ms Burch: That is but given the nature of what they are and their structures, they are always reinvesting within their own facilities. Yes, people make a comment about the poker machines within the clubs but I never underestimate the great value of the work

that the clubs do. If you look at the various sporting grounds, if you look at the community groups that they support, Canberra is well served by our community clubs.

MRS JONES: I think everyone can see what the benefits are. It is just a matter of weighing up the evil and the good. It is the same for all of us here.

Mr Jones: If I could just add to the minister's answer, the eight per cent is of net gaming machine revenue. Rather than profit, because, as the minister indicated, clubs are part of the non-profit sector and technically do not actually make profits, the eight per cent minimum community contribution is of the net gaming machine revenue. The commission does an annual report on the breakup of that, which is on our website and which you may find helpful to have a look at.

Ms Burch: And most clubs have a list of organisations that they support, and it is quite extensive.

MRS JONES: I think most of us here have been to meetings in community clubs over the years. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Members, it is 5 o'clock. There endeth day 8 and two-thirds of the estimates hearings process. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Minister for Racing and Gaming and her officers for appearing this afternoon. As mentioned at the start, there is a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice. Members, if you want to put further questions on notice, they can be lodged until three days after the receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript. The committee's next hearing will be in the morning when the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development and his officers will appear. There endeth the day.

The committee adjourned at 4.59 pm.