



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2016-2017

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2016-2017 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2016-2017](#))

Members:

MR B SMYTH (Chair)
MR J HINDER (Deputy Chair)
MS J BURCH
MR S DOSZPOT

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2016

Secretary to the committee:
Ms K Harkins (Ph 620 50435)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.31 am.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs and Minister for Road Safety

Education Directorate

Joseph, Ms Diane, Director-General

Brighton, Ms Meg, Deputy Director-General

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Deputy Director-General, Organisational Integrity

Whybrow, Mr Mark, Chief Financial Officer, Organisational Integrity

Wynants, Mr John, Director, Infrastructure and Capital Works, Organisational Integrity

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

Gotts, Mr Robert, Director, Planning and Performance, Organisational Integrity

Podnar, Mr Peter, Senior Manager, Strategic Finance, Organisational Integrity

Efthymiades, Ms Deb, Deputy Director-General, Education Strategy

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Director, Student Engagement, Education Strategy

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

Lucas, Ms Christine, Senior Manager, School Leadership, Education Strategy

Stewart, Mrs Tracy, Director, Governance and Assurance and Director for Families and Students

Moysey, Mr Sean, Director, Regulation and Compliance

Huxley, Mr Mark, Chief Information Officer, Information and Knowledge Services

Bray, Mr Rodney, Director, Business Improvement

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

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Rynehart, Mr Josh, A/g Director, Licensing, Community, Business and Transport Regulation, Access Canberra

THE CHAIR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to day 5 of the public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017. Today, all things education will be considered by the committee in relation to budget statement F, the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, and in relation to budget statement B. The proceedings today will conclude with the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority statement of intent.

Please be aware that the proceedings today will be recorded, will be transcribed by Hansard and will be published by the committee. Proceedings are also being broadcast as well as webstreamed. When you take a question on notice, it would be really helpful if people could say words like, "We will take that question on notice." It just helps the secretariat track it through the transcript; then we are all clear on what has been taken on notice and what has not.

On the table in front of you is the pink card which has the privilege statement. Could you please confirm that you have read the card and the privilege statement and that you understand the implications of privilege?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So acknowledged. I ask anybody coming to the table if they could do the same; that would be appreciated.

Before we go to questions, I would like to remind people that we are meeting on the lands of the Ngunnawal people and we respect their previous occupation and their ongoing attachment to the land and its traditions.

With that, we might go to the minister and have an opening statement.

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Mr Smyth, for the acknowledgement of country. I look forward to the discussion this morning about the Education Directorate, but I would particularly like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that today will be the last appearance before the estimates committee of the Director-General, Ms Joseph. As members will be aware, she has announced her retirement, and that takes effect tomorrow. She deliberately staged her retirement so she could make it to estimates, and I thank her for her continuity through that process. Obviously it has been a short time since I became minister. Colleagues at the table will be well aware of Ms Joseph's long service for the education sector, particularly here in the ACT over the past 6½ years, but over many years. In the brief time that I have been the minister, it has become very clear to me how highly regarded she is by colleagues, by her staff and by stakeholders in the education sector. Whilst I perhaps personally cannot assess this, it is clear to me from many others that her contribution should be widely acknowledged, and I think the extensive round of farewells and testimonials that are taking place reflects that fact.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Joseph. It feels a bit strange because we now have four hours of grilling her and me over the education portfolio, but it seems the best moment now to acknowledge—

THE CHAIR: I was hoping you were going to throw the D-G under the—

Mr Rattenbury: I had no intention of throwing the D-G under the bus. It is important at this point to thank Ms Joseph for her service to education, particularly here in the ACT. That remarked, I do not want to embarrass her in front of the committee, so I will leave it at that.

THE CHAIR: Having already done that.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I would like to now invite questions. We have a full selection of staff here from the directorate and also from the Teacher Quality Institute. We are happy to go to questions now.

THE CHAIR: Thanks for that, minister. Minister, could you explain for the committee the changes in the staffing on page 2, budget statement F?

Mr Rattenbury: I will hand straight over to our chief finance officer, Mark Whybrow.

Mr Whybrow: If I can just clarify your question, are you talking about the change from the budget position or from the estimated outcome? If you would like, I can do either?

THE CHAIR: You could do both, Mr Whybrow.

Mr Whybrow: Most certainly. If we talk about the changes, there are three reasons for the change in numbers. From the 2015-16 budget, we see an increase to the 2016-17 budget of 90 FTEs in total if we remove the impact of the transfer to Chief Minister of vocational education and training. The directorate in the past has had three output classes. Going forward it will have two—public education and non-government school education. The driver of that 90 increase is around increased enrolments, which is generating extra staff numbers, but also investment by government through budget initiatives, in particular the schools for all budget initiative, which provides for an additional 26 FTE.

THE CHAIR: On page 6 of the same document, there are a number of output classes. The difference of some \$15 million—it is 90 extra staff and it is \$15 million in this case for public education. What is involved in the extra \$15 million?

Mr Whybrow: We have a detailed breakdown of line-by-line adjustments on pages 14, 15 and 16, but the significant increases that we see are primarily driven by increased costs of staff, and also the investment of the additional staff that I talked about, adjusted for a number of other changes. Line by line, they are documented. Probably one of the advantages of the ACT's transparency is that we can talk about a line-by-line adjustment that shows every adjustment to our overall total.

Probably the most important element, though, if I take you to page 29, if you look at the overall department operating statement, you see only an increase of one per cent in total in the controlled recurrent payments. Sorry, I have been teaching myself that. There have been so many years of GPO. This year we moved to controlled recurrent payments. That sees an overall total increase of our resources of three per cent. That is the overall investment and is in line with the government's commitment around NERA and an overall school resourcing standard. It is probably really important to note that all schools in the ACT are funded in accordance with a school resourcing standard, ACT public schools as a system, Catholic schools as a system, and each individual non-government school.

THE CHAIR: What is education CPI running at?

Mr Whybrow: Education CPI?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Whybrow: Education is not funded through a CPI component. There is an overall three per cent increase envelope for ACT education.

THE CHAIR: But there are various CPIs—health, education, construction.

Mr Whybrow: There are various education indexes.

THE CHAIR: What is the education index then?

Mr Whybrow: I do not have the information, but that is publicly available on the ABS website. It is generally historical rather than future projections.

THE CHAIR: You do not have any recollection of what it normally runs at?

Mr Whybrow: Generally the biggest impacter of the outcome in that space is wages. If we look at the Education Directorate's cost structure, the vast majority of costs are tied up in our teachers and staff delivering the service. That is the largest component. We have an increase going forward with our current EBA that is in line with our three per cent increase.

THE CHAIR: On page 76 of budget paper 3, the expense initiatives listed for the Education Directorate—there are eight or so. Only one has full funding. Two have one-year funding and five have zero funding. How will the two, for instance, that have one-year funding, support for students and school modernisation—are they intended to simply be one-year programs?

Mr Whybrow: If I take the first one of those and refer you to page 98 of the same budget paper, which gives a description of each of those, special needs transport has been provided with one year of funding. You would note in previous budgets that that has occurred for the past few years. Special needs transport is part of the national disability insurance scheme, and we are currently in negotiations with the commonwealth about its cash out going forward. The provision of funding is for 2016-17, given that component, so that will be looked at again once there is an outcome of a cash out arrangement.

THE CHAIR: So it is still in negotiation with the feds?

Mr Whybrow: I personally do not like the analogy of the NDIS being a 747 being built in flight, but we are still in negotiations with the commonwealth.

THE CHAIR: And the one below that, better schools, school modernisation? We will all be modern by the end of the financial year, will we?

Mr Whybrow: No. In relation to school modernisation, this is—

THE CHAIR: Thoroughly modern Whybrow? Is that what we are promising here?

Mr Whybrow: This is about planning, but it may be best, if you would like to know some more details of this, to hand you over to one of my colleagues.

Mr Rattenbury: I am happy to take that. Mr Smyth, this is obviously not going to modernise the schools. This is the money to bring in the capability to plan for the future. It is about the modelling and preparing for the future.

THE CHAIR: Before Mr Bray joins us—the other five?

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Could you please indicate why there is no funding this year and where their resources will be coming from?

Mr Whybrow: If we look at some of the others, those were enhancing quality assurance at schools, improving teacher quality. We are talking about internally funded programs. In an organisation that has a \$1 billion budget, we redirect funding each year to different priorities. This is putting what those priorities are on the table. Of those five that you talk about, we are talking about initiatives going from in the order of \$60,000 per annum to a maximum of \$300,000 per annum. So we are talking about elements that in total are well below 0.01 per cent of our overall total budget expenditure.

THE CHAIR: What is the quantum on those five for this coming financial year?

Mr Whybrow: In the coming financial year? 610?

THE CHAIR: \$610,000?

Mr Whybrow: Which is well below 0.1 per cent.

THE CHAIR: Could we have a reconciliation of where the savings are coming from?

Mr Whybrow: A reconciliation around?

THE CHAIR: Where the savings are coming from. If you are observant—

MS BURCH: Are they savings—sorry, Mr Smyth—or are they just reprioritising your activity?

Mr Whybrow: I guess that is what I am saying. We have had savings in the past. We are a large organisation with over a billion dollars. An element of redirecting our resources is about ongoing continuous improvement. It does not mean that we do the same things each year.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Mr Whybrow: We do those, but for an amount of \$600,000 out of \$1 billion, we are not cutting programs or making reductions in services.

THE CHAIR: Where is the \$610,000 coming from?

Ms Joseph: The \$610,000 is coming from the overall money provided to the Education Directorate. Every year we go through a business planning process to prioritise those resources. To compare what was last year to what was this year, to that level of detail, there is always a certain degree of flexibility, very minimal flexibility,

in this regard, as Mr Whybrow has said. The main reason for highlighting these priorities is to signal, particularly to our schools and our stakeholders, the important work that needs to be done in those areas. It likely would have happened anyhow, through the normal business planning processes, in that each of the directors in the room goes through with their own budgets. But it is really to highlight the important work that needs to happen in these areas to the community more broadly.

MR HINDER: Chair, I can probably assist there. Page 80, note 3, says that the funding of this initiative is to be absorbed by the agency.

THE CHAIR: Correct, but it must come from somewhere. Mr Bray, you were going to enlighten us?

Mr Bray: I was just going to answer any questions on the detail of the school modernisation program.

THE CHAIR: Could you just run through what it is intended to do and what will happen in the outyears?

Mr Bray: In the 2016-17 budget, there was allocated \$250,000 for the school modernisation program. The investment supports the analysis of demographic trends and strategic planning for learning environments in a lot of our schools, the purpose of which is to develop a multifaceted policy framework that will look at policies and procedures to plan for the modernisation of all our schools over the next 10-15 years.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I have a supplementary on that?

THE CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

MR DOSZPOT: When you say modernisation, are you including upgrade to facilities that need regular upgrade or is this a different aspect of it?

Mr Bray: That is correct. It will include full modernisation, including upgrades. It will deal with repairs and maintenance, expansions. It will also look at greenfield site development of new schools according to the demographic projections. It is a full approach to the whole school infrastructure planning over the long term, 10 to 15 years.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS BURCH: How is school modernisation at Belconnen high progressing?

Mr Bray: I might have to ask John Wynants, the Director of Infrastructure and Capital Works, to provide that detail.

MS BURCH: And is the study exercise bike that charges smart phones still a hit?

Mr Wynants: We have actually engaged the architect to go through the design elements. We are also in the process of short-listing contractors who will complete the final design and construction side of it. So we are well progressed in terms of the

major pieces of work. We will probably have in the next couple of weeks a short list of those construction contractors to work through what is called an interactive tender process to work out who is the contractor.

To date, we have undertaken a number of pieces of work. We have completed an external play space area following the demolition of a disused building. That is a space that the school and the school community have really been pleased with. It has allowed the students to actually have formal play, sports activity, as well as informal play. We have also undertaken the relocation of the music room and the arts room. The music room has moved into what was previously the hall. The school had—a number of years ago—a new gymnasium, as well. So we are well progressed. We will have works over a couple of years as we progress.

MS BURCH: So when will the site be completed?

Mr Wynants: We are looking at the end of 2018. Works will be progressive. Part of it is the staging of works with students onsite. We need to carefully plan that and work around the students.

MS BURCH: How do you manage with—how many kids are at Belconnen high? Are there 500, 300?

Mr Wynants: There are about 360. Enrolments are—

MS BURCH: How do you manage the construction site?

Mr Wynants: We have had the experience with the building education revolution of managing construction sites at schools as construction sites. We work with the school principal. The school does have space in a separate building which we can rotate some class sessions through.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hinder, you have a question now. Just remember, members, by the morning break at 11:20 we have got to do output class 1.1, 1.2, government primary and high schools. You can range across those.

MR HINDER: Minister, there was a recent announcement of nearly 700 new places in Gungahlin. Can you tell me when the infrastructure for that will be implemented? It is \$16 plus million?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR HINDER: When will that school be ready to take more students?

Mr Rattenbury: The funding provided in the budget is for Harrison School and also Amaroo School, Neville Bonner School and Palmerston preschool. What we see across Gungahlin, of course as you well know Mr Hinder, is that it is a rapidly growing area. This will provide an additional 680 spaces. The intent is for those spaces to be available for the start of the 2017 school year. That is when they are needed. There is, of course, the new school—also for north Gungahlin. That is on a different time frame. That is due to be ready for the start of the 2019 school year.

MR HINDER: Do you know the breakdown of those students?

Mr Rattenbury: The numbers for each of the schools?

MR HINDER: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I am happy to go through that. For Neville Bonner Primary School we will see the conversion of two existing kindergarten spaces and preschool spaces for 88 children. That will be ready for the start of 2017 plus the relocation and upgrade of four transportable classrooms from Gold Creek School for 100 students, also ready for the start of 2017.

At Palmerston District Primary School we will see the purchase and installation of a new transportable preschool building for 44 children. At Harrison we will see new modular relocatable classrooms for 200 primary and middle school students. That is eight classrooms, which will also be ready for the start of 2017.

Finally, at Amaroo School we will see new modular relocatable classrooms for 300 secondary students; so 12 classrooms there. That will be ready for the start of 2018. We will also see an expanded school gymnasium. With the growth of the population there, the gym simply needs to be bigger to be able to have school assemblies and the like. That expansion of the school hall, or what I call the school gymnasium, will actually see the existing hard courts built over. New hard court facilities will be built on a different site within the Amaroo School footprint.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, before I ask a question of you, I would like to agree with the comments you made regarding Ms Joseph. I would like to thank you, Ms Joseph, for the contribution and commitment to education that you obviously have and for the contribution you have made to my better understanding of the various aspects of education. Despite the tough questions I have asked you in the past and possibly will still ask you today, I have never doubted your undoubted commitment and it has been a pleasure working with you.

Ms Joseph: Thank you, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, you have provided to the Assembly enrolment projections for Canberra public schools for 2017 and 2018. In that document you have included for each ACT public school or college a 2016 February census, the 2016 school capacity, 2017 projected capacity and 2018 projected capacity. Minister, can you explain why the enrolments for schools as outlined in the February 2016 census data varies with the number of students in the Assembly response that you gave us?

Mr Rattenbury: Can I clarify that? You are saying that the ones that were tabled in the Assembly are different to the February census?

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct.

Mr Rattenbury: I will seek some advice on that.

Mr Gotts: Sorry, could you repeat the question again?

MR DOSZPOT: Certainly. The enrolment numbers as outlined in the February 2016 census data—that was issued in February 2016—vary from the numbers that the minister presented to us where you outline what the school capacities are. There is a difference of around 40 to 50 in each of those categories.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Doszpot, can I clarify that? Are you suggesting that in respect of the table I tabled in the Assembly, the numbers in the census column there—the first column—are different to ones that were published in February?

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct.

Mr Gotts: The document that was published on the website, the one that was released, has school capacities and projected enrolments. The census has enrolments for February 2016; so it is the difference between the capacities. Sorry, I am just not quite sure I understand your question.

MR DOSZPOT: Let me clarify what I am saying. In the Canberra school census figures of February 2016, the figure is 396.

Mr Gotts: For which, sorry?

MR DOSZPOT: I am picking up one school as an example.

Mr Gotts: Which school?

MR DOSZPOT: Ainslie School. These are the school census figures. Under the heading of “February 2016 and census figures” as listed in the Assembly motion response, Ainslie has 355. Each of the schools going on from that varies from the 2016 census.

Mr Gotts: The difference is preschool. The enrolment projections are looking at K to 6 in the case of Ainslie and the census figures include preschools. That is where the difference is.

MR DOSZPOT: Thanks very much for that. Can you also, minister, explain why there is a new way of calculating the capacity for schools that you presented to us, which took you, I think, two months to bring back?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Doszpot, I did bring it back when the motion called on me to bring it back. I note your public comments about that but the motion called for it to be brought in June.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not going to get into argument, minister. You did deliver but you delivered a product that should have—

MS BURCH: According to the motion in the Assembly.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I know, outrageous.

MR DOSZPOT: The product should have—

MS BURCH: It is terrible business.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, please!

MR DOSZPOT: You should have been able to produce the projected figures. I was not asking for revised figures. I was asking for what projected figures you were working on. Please explain.

Mr Rattenbury: On the issue of the definition, Mr Gotts, thank you.

Mr Gotts: Essentially the change in definition was to make sure that both sides of the ledger were treated equally. On the enrolment side, the enrolments as recorded in the census document have always included all of the children enrolled at a particular school. The definition used for the capacities figure was an internal definition that for internal management did not always reflect all of the available spaces in a school.

For example, learning support units were not included in the capacity but the children who attended those learning support units were included in the enrolments and the census. In order to make sure that both sides of that ledger balanced, we altered the definition of capacity to include spaces that were always there but had not been previously included.

For example, at a school such as Garran that has been in the news recently there was a learning support unit there that has the capacity for eight students. It was always there. The actual capacity did not change but it was included in the definition to recognise that the capacity should balance the number of actual enrolments.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I understand that in relation to the way that was calculated before, there were specific instructions that that was the way it was meant to be done. Why was it decided to adopt this new measurement category? Who decided that this would change?

Mr Gotts: It was simply an internal decision to make sure that the information was more accurate and, as I said, balance the enrolment data with the full data for capacities.

MR DOSZPOT: Was the senior executive team involved in approving this new methodology? Is that where this whole thing started?

Ms Joseph: Mr Doszpot, the senior executive team have been involved. We continue to be involved and we continue to refine and make sure we have real rigour in the process. If we are talking about government investment into infrastructure, we want to make sure we have the absolute solid evidence base for any future investment. For meeting the demands of communities in placement of students at schools we need to make sure we are doing the absolute best we can. Yes, we have changed the definition.

We have got better at it, is the answer. Ultimately, it is about continuous improvement and it also then goes into the budget initiative we have got for school modernisation.

The \$250,000, as we have already discussed, is about doing our work better. So how do we make sure we have got the demographic data? We do not have as great an expertise in the directorate around the real science of demography as we would like. As we have already said, that \$250,000 will go into this sort of process as well.

So, yes, we have changed the definitions; we have changed some data. We have actually got better at communicating what we are doing and being consistent across our 87 schools in doing that. I would expect in the future—I think this is when I become a bit frank and fearless—that that definition could still keep changing as we—

MS BURCH: I think at your last estimates you could, Ms Joseph.

Ms Joseph: get better at it, because the other concept I know of in other jurisdictions is that a learning support unit of 50-60 square metres ultimately can hold 25 to 30 kids. But how we manage that in the ACT currently is that we say that if that is set aside for a learning support unit, there should be only about eight kids in it. There is another big conversation to be had there. Is it about the floor space and what could potentially go in there or is it about how we actually use those buildings in an educational sense? I would expect that we would have some more conversation in the coming years around having absolute rigour and solid evidence for government investment.

MR DOSZPOT: That is exactly my concern. Changing the definition does not necessarily solve the problem. In fact, the feedback I have received from parents, from teachers, is that there is quite a lot of concern that this definition change does not really address the issue.

Mr Rattenbury: I think you have to be very clear, Mr Doszpot. There was no intention that this definitional change would solve the problem. That is not the motivation of it at all. As Mr Gotts has explained very carefully, it is about being more accurate so that as we invest the money we are investing through this budget to enable us to better model. It is about being more accurate. No-one has claimed that this seeks to solve a problem. There has been your commentary in the press but nobody from the directorate or from my office is making that claim.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not the only one saying this, Mr Rattenbury; this is the concern of parents and teachers and people who are involved with the practical implementation of the terminology change. It is fine to change the terminology, but how do you have the practical implementation of that? If a school reaches its operational capacity, does the ACT government intend to relocate the special education units to other areas? These are the questions being asked.

Mr Rattenbury: You are conflating two different things. There is definitely concern in the community and there are issues in the directorate that we are examining where some schools are under pressure for space. No-one is making any secret about that. We have changes across the city. Some schools are very popular and they are under pressure. That is different. We have to address those issues, and I know parents are concerned about that. But that is different to how we measure what we have got and

being more accurate about that.

MR DOSZPOT: But that is the issue I have been trying to address for the past 18 months, and your predecessor kept telling us at various times I asked the question that there was no problem at all. The problem was not identified. The problem could have been seen without changing the definition.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure, and I have not sought to change the definition for any other purpose than to be more accurate. Mr Gotts has joined the directorate recently; this is his area of expertise, amongst others. He has brought a new perspective to it, and the advice was that this is a better way to more accurately measure what we have. I think it is quite appropriate that if we have eight students in a learning support unit that that unit should be counted as part of our capacity. If we have an introductory English centre with 20 students in it, we count the students. What you are suggesting is that we should have stuck with an old definition that does not count the space they are actually learning in.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not suggesting that at all. What I am suggesting is—

Mr Rattenbury: You are, because you are criticising us for changing the definition to a more accurate position.

MR DOSZPOT: I am criticising the fact that the capacity issue was known, regardless of which definition you use, and the practical issues that the principals and the teachers and the parents have to contend with were ignored by the previous minister. That is what I am talking about.

Mr Rattenbury: I am not going to entertain that suggestion. You are conflating two different things. There is a clear understanding that some of our schools are under pressure. No-one is denying that.

MR DOSZPOT: No-one is denying it now, Mr Rattenbury. It was denied 18 months ago.

MS BURCH: Chair, I have to respond to that.

THE CHAIR: No.

MS BURCH: And that is—

THE CHAIR: No, stop.

MS BURCH: —just absolutely wrong.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, stop. Ms Burch, you do not have to respond.

MR DOSZPOT: How can you respond to that?

MS BURCH: Because I do not have to put up with your crap.

THE CHAIR: Excuse me, you will withdraw that.

MS BURCH: I withdraw.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, you are not a minister. You are not here as a minister and you are not here to defend your time as—

MS BURCH: I know, but I am a member of this committee—

THE CHAIR: No, please let me speak.

MR DOSZPOT: And we are examining your mistakes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot! Ms Burch, you have been placed on this committee by the Assembly to make inquiries, not to defend or to answer questions as to—

MS BURCH: But I have to—

THE CHAIR: No, you do not have to. If you want to, you can make statements—

MS BURCH: When something is wrong, I will call it—

THE CHAIR: No, would you let me—

MS BURCH: for what it is.

THE CHAIR: Would you let me speak? It is going to be a long and difficult day if you think you are going to answer every question in a different way to the minister. The minister is here to answer the questions.

MS BURCH: No, I did not answer—

THE CHAIR: If you want to bring something to the attention of the committee, you can bring it to the committee's attention later.

MS BURCH: I will.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder has a supplementary followed by Ms Burch and then back to Mr Doszpot to finish his question.

MS LAWDER: Mr Gotts, I think you gave the example of Garran and the eight students in the learning support unit. So that I understand, are those eight students in that learning support unit full time or do they come and go from other classrooms?

Mr Gotts: They are in that unit full time. The unit is one that has the physical space to cope with 25 students, but given that it is being used as a learning support unit there are different requirements for that and having access to outside and so on. As a consequence of that, it is being counted as a capacity of eight. If it was not used as a learning support unit you could count it as a capacity of 25, but that is where they are.

Ms Joseph: Ms Lawder, the way our learning support units are managed, it depends on the individual students, the numbers of students and their individual learning plans. So it may be that schools have a home base as a learning support unit but some students may be integrated for certain periods of time into the normal mainstream classes as well.

MS LAWDER: I think the minister also referred to introductory English or language classes.

Ms Joseph: That is right.

MS LAWDER: Is that the same?

Ms Joseph: No. Introductory English classes are intensive classes for students. We have various centres across Canberra. Those students stay in those centres intensively for a period of weeks until they reach a certain level of language proficiency. What we have done in the past, though, is look at schools that are perhaps underutilised. That is where we prefer to place a centre like an introductory English centre. Particularly if it was in a school that had pressure of enrolments, then we would make a central decision to potentially move that. A few years ago we established an introductory English centre at Palmerston for that very reason.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, a supplementary.

MS BURCH: You mentioned—and I think it was a bounce from Mr Smyth—teacher quality. At the end of the day it is an education system; you have to have quality teachers. What are you doing in regard to making sure—Ms Evans, I am sure I will come with a question for you later—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, I am not sure that is a supplementary.

MS BURCH: This is the supp? Sorry. I will go back to capacity and change of definition. I apologise; I thought I was on my substantive.

In days of old we counted capacity by desks in a classroom and a different measure. This change is reflecting a modern education requirement so you can understand what are the needs of the students, your demographic, from preschool right through. It was mentioned that it feeds into the modernisation of facilities as well. You mentioned temporary classrooms and transportables coming in. There has always been the capacity of the education system to accommodate enrolments at every school. Is that right or is that a new phenomenon?

Mr Rattenbury: No, we continue to have the places. For every priority enrolment area there is a place in a public school for a student whose family wants to have that place. That is something we have the capacity for.

MS BURCH: And it has been always the policy of the directorate to accommodate enrolment area students?

Ms Joseph: Absolutely, it always has been the policy. That is why we monitor the

enrolments closely with what the school can manage. We have a hierarchy of strategies then in managing when we are getting close to capacity, however, there is always the priority enrolment area. Until we change that, you can still go to your school in your priority enrolment area. That is where we work closely with the schools in the responses at the school level. That might be knocking out a few walls, it might be reorganising the classrooms in some way, shape or form or it might be right to the level of bringing in a relocatable.

MS BURCH: Forecasting capacity of or interest in schools to accommodate the number of students in schools, my thinking is you build a new suburb, you assume you need a new school. But have you seen over time where different leadership teams within schools attract a higher student interest in those schools? Whilst a school would traditionally have a static enrolment base, a new leadership team or a new range of programs may pique an interest. How would you forecast that?

Ms Joseph: Yes, that occurs; however, there are still some knowns. Generally a change in leadership still goes back to the PEA in the first instance. But if there is a change in leadership or there are new programs or new buildings that send different signals to the community, we might see some increase. We have not had a sudden increase except in our greenfield sites, and we are very well prepared for that with our new schools. However, in a school where we might see a sudden change we still generally know because the principal is not usually appointed right at the start of the school year; that can happen at any time. There could be new buildings opened—for example at Caroline Chisholm—so there may be some changes. But the executive teams at our schools are fairly in touch with their community and the inquiries they are getting, so they monitor all of that.

MS BURCH: And they feed into what you are doing.

Ms Joseph: We do a February census each year. We follow that up with an August census each year and that gives us a bit of a take. We also now have our online enrolment system and that is giving better data on the number of applications and who is actually interested. It is a lot quicker than the paper-based process we used in the past. Together with our investment in the school administration system, which is another initiative, that will help schools get the data more scientifically. However at the moment we rely on the schools knowing their communities, watching the trends, the network leaders knowing what is happening in the schools and then the work through Robert's team through planning and performance in monitoring that and assisting the schools. We keep a close eye on the priority enrolment areas. We have a process that is well communicated to the community if we might change those because we have got enrolment pressure.

Mr Gotts: When we do school projections we do an annual projection each year and we do five-year projections each year. For the annual projections we go to each school leadership team and talk to them about the projections we are making and give them the opportunity to provide their local knowledge and understanding of their local community into that projection process. We can look at it both from a statistical demographic perspective and also from the input of an individual school leadership team.

MS BURCH: Do you report in the census or anywhere the percentage of out-of-area students in each school?

Mr Gotts: It is not reported in the census.

MS BURCH: But you would know it internally?

Mr Gotts: We know the out-of-area figure, and it is obviously something we monitor because, as Ms Joseph and the minister have both indicated, the commitment is to make sure that any child within a priority enrolment area has access to the school in the area within which they live. So we keep a very close watch on it.

THE CHAIR: Could you provide that breakdown to the committee, please?

Mr Gotts: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: We will take that on notice, Mr Smyth.

Mr Gotts: I could go through it one by one but—

THE CHAIR: We could, but time is short. Mr Hinder has a supplementary; I have a supplementary, we will go to Mr Doszpot to finish up and then a new question from Ms Burch.

MR HINDER: Given the nature of what you do, the issue of demand and fluctuation must be an ongoing challenge—not a problem—that you need to manage all the time. That would range from adding a few places or perhaps having the courage to close a number of schools if the government had the will for that at some point. But in an established suburb, and let us use Garran as an example, that was built in the late '60s or early '70s I would imagine.

THE CHAIR: No, early '60s.

MR HINDER: So it must be on its second or third generation of families through the school. You have always the capacity to add with demountables or what have you with some lag, I suppose, depending on when the data is available and all those sorts of things. Are there currently any resources going into that school in addition to the current capacity?

Mr Rattenbury: Garran is a good example where it is a very popular school and there is pressure there. We have been engaged with both the principal of the school and also the school community through the board and the P&C. In response to suggestions from the community and particularly from the board, we have taken the decision to allocate an additional demountable or transportable building to Garran. That is because they want to improve their focus on science, technology, engineering and maths and they were seeking a dedicated space for that. In my visit to the school I have taken that suggestion on board and we will be providing one shortly. It should be available—depending on timing—either for the start of or early in term 3. That is the sort of flexibility we have.

We talk about the long cycles of schools, but what we need to be open about is we do not want to build over capacity as that is not a good use of community resources. I think we can be strategic in using short-term capacity, and the approach we have taken at Garran is a good example on that.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on that.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary to your original question. Then we will go back to you to finish your question and you can ask whatever you want. At the start of this question you mentioned that the learning support units were included. What other areas have been included that have changed the figures?

Mr Gotts: The intensive English centres and the learning support units. Forgive me; my newness to the agency means that I am not always across all the acronyms for the different spaces.

Mr Rattenbury: There it is, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: Is there somebody who is across the acronyms and can tell us what other areas have been included?

Ms Brighton: Mr Gotts is correct. The areas that are included in the capacity include the LSUs, which are the learning support units, the LSUAs, which are the learning support units for autism, as well as the intensive English centres—IECs.

THE CHAIR: Is there a document that shows you how to calculate the new capacities? Are school gyms and halls included in the capacity?

Mr Rattenbury: With the documents I tabled in the Assembly during the last sitting week a glossary of terms was included. I think that probably goes to what you are asking, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: I am not sure it does. The glossary of terms does not tell you how it is all added up or how it is calculated. Speaking for Garran, how is the usable learning space, or whatever you are defining it as, calculated? Is it all the classrooms, plus the LSUs, plus the intensive English centres, plus the LSUAs?

Mr Gotts: That is right.

THE CHAIR: And the school hall?

Ms Brighton: Plus the learning support centres, LSCs. My colleagues nod at me as I say that.

THE CHAIR: LSCs. So we have got four now. Is the common area in front of the school tuck shop a learning space? Is that included?

Ms Joseph: It is the spaces that can be used for a classroom—if you imagine a classroom generally with around 25 students. They would be what we would call mainstream classrooms. Then we would look at the specialist facilities—library,

science rooms, art rooms and so forth—which could all accommodate a general class. And then we would look at other specialist facilities—your withdrawal spaces and so forth that would not be able to be put on the timetable for a full class. However, the learning support unit is part of the timetable.

THE CHAIR: I appreciate the glossary, but can we have a list of what is included in the calculation of how you are now determining this?

Mr Rattenbury: That is fine, Mr Smyth. We will take that one on notice as well.

THE CHAIR: If, for instance, the school was full and you could get, say, 25 students into a learning support unit, would that mean you would move the learning support unit off site?

Ms Joseph: We potentially could, looking at where units are across the system—whether they are the learning support units, the learning support units for autism, the learning support centres, the intensive English centres. We work with our schools to look at where they are best located so we can manage any pressures. But at the same time we have got to be able to communicate with families and make it accessible to families as well. There is not a one size fits all, in that we would immediately move a unit or a centre to another school because it might need to be at that school for some reason. They are the decisions that come into play, but there is some flexibility across the system in where we put some of the specialist activities.

THE CHAIR: I will finish and then go back to Mr Doszpot. Is there a hierarchy of use? Would you prefer to have a class of 25 as opposed to a learning support unit of eight?

Ms Joseph: It then comes back to what are the demands on the school and what is the enrolment pressure. There is no suggestion in the Garran instance that we are going to move that learning support unit.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Chair, I can actually throw a little bit of an answer on this as well. The department has done a good job in looking at the specialist settings which chart all of these areas, and this is part of the reason for my concern. The fact is there are learning support centres, LSCs, with a capacity for 14 in most areas—by the looks of this—a capacity for eight in LSUs and a capacity for six students in LSUAs. I could go on. The numbers are much smaller and, in theory, what the minister and Ms Joseph have been saying is that those could be used for classes but in practicality you cannot use them for classes because those children have to be put somewhere else. If they are put somewhere else, what happens to the spaces that they are put into? This is what the concern of the community is about.

I have a number of questions on this and my questions are actually meant to be productive. Minister, I do commend you for what has happened in Garran, for instance. I have been advocating for transportables there and in a number of other schools because the issue is not going to go away. The frustration I have had and the parents have had is that all of our requests and previous motions in the Assembly—and I have had a number of them in there—always ended up with me and the general public—and the *Canberra Times* ran a great article on it—being told, “No, we’re fine.”

If the issues are being addressed now and if the definition that you have come up with is going to work, I would be the first one to support it. But I would want to know, and I want to ensure for the community, that these definitions are not just going to confound the problem and cause wilful blindness, if I can add that word, because it does not really address it.

Let me ask a question. If these special education units are included in school capacity, one could conclude that these rooms could be utilised for mainstream students. What do you plan to do with the special education sites at these respective schools? If you were going to use those sites for mainstream children, what is the solution for the special areas?

Mr Rattenbury: As Ms Joseph has outlined, that would be an individual consideration. There is no wholesale plan at this stage to move any of those units. There is not a strategy there to say we are going to move them to certain places. If, as has been outlined, a decision were taken, it would be a whole range of factors that took that into account. Does that answer the question?

MR DOSZPOT: It does, but it begs a few other questions.

Mr Rattenbury: Go on. We have a couple of hours.

MR DOSZPOT: I do not expect this now, but if I can have the current numbers at each of the special education units?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: You will see what I am talking about once you have a look at that. Would relocating special education units likely cause emotional distress? How would transportables be managed if that is where you were going to put the special needs children if you were trying to create space?

Mr Rattenbury: I think there is a good understanding amongst colleagues that the students that are being taught in these spaces are sensitive. They have a range of sensitivities and therefore we have to be very careful in those considerations. Some of the students do not cope well with change and there are all the factors that we know are challenging with some of these students. So a decision to move a learning support unit would be a very serious decision. It is not one, obviously, that would be taken lightly and there is not any great strategy to move them around at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: Have all ACT government school principals and boards been officially advised of their new capacity limits and the implications for their schools?

Mr Gotts: I am not sure specifically whether or not they have been advised. I would have to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: We might want to finish here, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: I have one final question, Mr Smyth. What other schools are being

considered for transportable demountables in the 2016-17 financial year? I note that in a statement you made recently—I think it was during the presentation of the figures—you mentioned that Telopea Park School is being considered for transportables. That was, again, one of the schools where I was told that there was no capacity issue; in fact, their tennis courts were about to be sold off for other uses. This is where the conflicting information we are getting is troubling the community.

Mr Rattenbury: Hopefully, Mr Doszpot, in the information that has been provided to the Assembly there should be crispness now and a transparency around where schools are at relative to their capacity.

MR DOSZPOT: There is some recognition, and I am simply asking that more recognition be given to the problem rather than changing the definitions.

Mr Rattenbury: I am coming to that.

THE CHAIR: I remind you, gentlemen, that it is not a conversation. We have had the answer and we will now move on to Ms Burch. For the record, apparently Garran Primary School, I am reliably informed, opened in 1967.

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you very much for the research. My point simply was that, in terms of your observation, the community are not sure whether or not a school is near capacity. The information is there. It is publicly available. It has been tabled in the Assembly so people will have those debates now.

In terms of the provision of further demountables in the 2016-17 year, I have outlined already earlier today in response to Mr Hinder's question the number of those that we have placed at schools in Gungahlin. I will not go over that again. Outside of that I am not aware of any additional plans, but I will just check with Mr Wynants.

Mr Wynants: There are expansions at the preschool at Hawker and at Weetangera as part of the capital upgrades program but, they will be specific expansions for those schools. There is no other transportable to be relocated to any other school site.

MR DOSZPOT: What about Franklin?

Mr Wynants: Franklin?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, the early childhood school.

Mr Wynants: There are no plans at this stage. There are no plans for 2016-17 to do any expansion at Franklin.

MR DOSZPOT: Has any thought been given to increasing that from a K-2 to a K-6?

Mr Wynants: At this stage there has been no decision to change the type of school that that one is.

MR DOSZPOT: Because that would also add to the capacity problems in the area. Where are those kids going to go?

Mr Rattenbury: That is an opinion. There is a clear educational decision and a purpose for having P-2 schools or the early childhood schools. At this stage the advice I have from the directorate is that maintaining that education model at Franklin adds to, I guess, the suite of educational options available and that there is capacity in the rest of the Gungahlin school network to accept students.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, just on that, one of the areas that should be of concern to you is the Red Hill area, which is looking at quite an increased population if the development goes ahead around Red Hill School. Is the directorate taking into account the potential for possibly 500 to 800 people being moved into the area; how many children would be involved; and the impact on Red Hill School from that? This is one of schools that I was thinking you might mention as a potential problem.

Ms Joseph: We work very closely with our colleagues across government. Particularly with land release or any changes of use of land we work very closely to make sure that we are as close as we can be to the changes in any demographic projection.

MR DOSZPOT: Are you dealing with LDA in particular? They are the ones that are doing the densification.

Ms Joseph: Yes, we are.

Mr Gotts: Ms Joseph is correct.

Ms Joseph: As always!

Mr Gotts: We do work very closely with—

THE CHAIR: That is nice to know.

MR DOSZPOT: Always.

Mr Whybrow: It is why we keep her.

Mr Gotts: Yes, she is always correct. We work very closely with LDA. We get all the land release information as it is happening. We get information on purchases of houses. The things we are interested in are not just where land is being developed and when it is going to be developed. We are interested in when people start to put houses on that land. We are interested in the nature of the housing. Is it units? Are they free-standing houses? We are interested in the price range of those properties and what that might tell us about the nature of family formation in them and how many pupils that may generate for our schools. As Ms Joseph said, we keep a very close watch on what is happening in the property market and the development market around the ACT.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Mr Whybrow: Mr Doszpot, if I can just respond to one of the statements that you

made that there was some uncertainty about Telopea Park and the tennis courts. I can confirm for you that the directorate has no plans on that space of divestment or sale, as you were talking about. The directorate has a 99-year lease that was recently issued over that site and Montgomery Oval, which is adjacent to the tennis courts.

MR DOSZPOT: I am well aware of that, Mr Whybrow, because I think I was the one that fought for getting the government to actually hand that school back for educational purposes, if you recall. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: All right; we will move to a new question with Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Thank you. Going back to what I was asking before, around teacher quality—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS BURCH: I think there is an internally funded line around teacher quality.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS BURCH: What are the programs internally and with the TQI to make sure that we maintain the best teachers we can in front of our kids?

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you for the question, Ms Burch. I welcome Ms Ellis to the table.

Ms Joseph: Prior to Ms Ellis responding about the role of the Teacher Quality Institute, can I say that I think there are a number of things that we do across the directorate and with our colleagues across the nation in improving teacher quality. It goes right from our enterprise agreement and what we achieved in the negotiations last year in that regard—particularly using national professional standards for teachers and principals, and certification against those standards and salary increases for those teachers—and also the way we do our performance management and development across the directorate. We do a lot of those initiatives in tandem with the Teacher Quality Institute and their regulation and management and capacity building across all sectors of the teaching workforce in the ACT.

Ms Ellis: As the director-general said, we work with all teachers in the ACT. We have currently got 7,640 approved teachers to work in ACT schools; 6,408 of those have full registration, 1,139 have provisional registration and 93 have a permit to teach. That allows us to have a broad range of approaches for teachers working in Catholic, independent and public schools.

There are three focus areas at the moment that are worth bringing to the committee's attention. We were established not as the regulator but as the Teacher Quality Institute to ensure that professional standards were front and centre for all our teachers. The committee will be aware that over the past couple of years teachers have needed to account in a new professional way for their continuing learning. Our focus on professional growth has some really interesting figures. At the moment there has been a five per cent increase in the number of hours that teachers have worked with

accredited programs: 19,378 hours have been undertaken with accredited programs by ACT teachers and 24,454 hours for teacher-identified professional learning. That translates to teachers undertaking more professional learning than they are required to do just to maintain their registration.

MS BURCH: Is that a trend that you see ACT teachers involved in, would you say?

Ms Ellis: Yes, I think it is. I think it is, Ms Burch. It is really interesting to see that the approach that we have been able to take—where there is a focus on high-quality programs which are accredited by TQI but also a number of things that teachers can have to account for registration purposes—is about empowering teachers to take control, to think about their learning needs and, really importantly, to reflect on what they are doing with professional standards. For all of us, if we are after improved outcomes for students in every ACT school, the teacher's role has to be one of continuing professional growth.

It is really interesting, turning to the second area I would like to bring to your attention, that with professional standards the real focus at the moment is on certification against the highly accomplished and lead teachers. Again, the committee would be really interested to know how the ACT is punching above its weight in this area nationally. We have 34 teachers across ACT schools who are accredited against the high-level standards, 24 at highly accomplished level and 10 at lead level. That accounts for 12 per cent nationally, which is pretty good, of all the teachers who have certification.

MS BURCH: So we take 12 per cent of the national teacher workforce?

Ms Ellis: Well, our—

MS BURCH: As rating at the higher level.

Ms Ellis: Yes, that is right. In terms of certification assessors, we have 56 trained assessors. That has been a really important approach that we have taken. If you are going to improve teacher quality, you have to work with school leaders; you have to work with teachers. You have to have a united approach. Fifty-six trained assessors nationally are about 20 per cent of the total number across the nation. And today the really good news is that there are another 24 school leaders, including a number of ACT principals, who are working at the TQI office to also become trained assessors from across the three sectors. The approach with professional standards is ongoing and a really key enabler, not only for public schools but for Catholic and independent schools.

Finally, the other really important focus area to improve teacher quality is how you prepare teachers to enter into the profession. Right at this moment, also nationally, there is a huge focus around quality of initial teacher education. The committee will be really pleased to know that every course being offered at ACU and UC—11 at UC, eight at ACU and one currently under accreditation for UC, so it will be a total of 19—have been accredited under new national standards. In terms of where we are nationally with the approach to implementing new national reforms, that is really good.

What has been really important about that for the committee to be aware of is that teacher education has to be seen as a really important partnership with schools. We have a lot of work at the moment to ensure that in preparing the profession, the profession generally is focusing on their responsibilities for the ongoing development of the profession. This point in time for us is a significant joining, I suppose, of pre-service teacher work and in-service teacher work, so a big focus on teacher quality. What we hope is that ACT teachers again will show the way nationally about ongoing professional growth, collaborative practice and continuing to learn.

MS BURCH: How do the offerings—across all three sectors—that are through TQI then feed back in to what the system has identified as requirements across beginning teachers and senior teachers, and how is that collated or coordinated?

Ms McAlister: Ms Joseph talked about the enabling conditions in terms of increasing teacher quality. One of those has been to integrate professional learning into the teacher's core role through the latest teaching staff enterprise agreement. In every school, every teacher engages in professional learning communities, targeting areas of ongoing growth that are relevant right now for those students and that teacher. That then is fed into the TQI offerings and also housed through the TQI portal, and it informs ongoing professional conversations and growth in every school.

MS BURCH: Are you still assessing teachers at recruitment phase—making sure that their standards meet the high expectations of the ACT education system?

Ms McAlister: We do have a rigorous recruitment system. We have locally-based selection and we have training associated with ensuring that at the selection point for our teachers, that selection is rigorous.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I have a new question, on maintenance issues in schools. I understand there was a promise at the last election that \$70 million of new money would be spent on maintenance in government schools. Has that commitment been fulfilled?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. Since the 2012 ACT election, the government has allocated a total of \$79.13 million to school infrastructure improvement. I can go into some more detail about that if you like.

THE CHAIR: Before you do, is that new money? There is always an existing allocation in the outyears. Was that additional on top of the existing or is that just the existing being double-counted?

Mr Rattenbury: That is the money that has been spent.

THE CHAIR: In the 2012-13 budget, for the four years of that budget cycle, what was the allocation for maintenance in government schools?

Mr Rattenbury: I would need to take that on notice, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: All right, unless Mr Whybrow has it to hand?

Mr Whybrow: I think we are talking about capital upgrades rather than maintenance. Within our normal budget, we have the repair and maintenance budget, which is in the order of \$12 million to \$13 million per year over that time. In this year's budget, we have also had a capital upgrade program of \$14.570 million. Going to the heart of your question, it is a combination of new funding and capital upgrade programs in each of those years to get to over \$70 million. The minister is correct: there is 79 in total.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Mr Whybrow: That 79 includes funding for Gungahlin schools, the new announcement here. But if we talk about the period just up to 2016-17, so 2013-14 to 2016-17, it is just over \$70 million. I think it is in the order of \$70.5, but I will pass to Mr Wynants.

THE CHAIR: How much of that was additional funding, was new money, over and above the initial budget estimates of 2012-13?

Mr Whybrow: I think Mr Wynants has that detail.

Mr Wynants: Just going back to the earlier amount, at \$62 million up until last financial year, this is all new money in the context that capital upgrades are allocated each year, so it does include the capital upgrades program funding as well as other initiatives such as the school expansions. We have had hazardous materials, and there is specific allocation for that, and we had some additional funding in the first year of 2013-14, 3.345, on top of the capital upgrades component.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: All right. Could we have, from the 2012-13 budget, which would have been the base, what was the maintenance budget and the capital upgrades budget for the four years that are contained in the 2012-13 budget document against a reconciliation over what has been spent over the past four years?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, that is fine.

Mr Wynants: We can do that. We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doszpot has a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. This is again a subject I have been trying to address through the Assembly for quite a while. I have asked the previous minister, so if you could take that on board, I would appreciate that. I am not the only one asking this question, by the way. The Education Union has also highlighted the discrepancy. Strangely enough, I think we are we are both in agreement on how much has not been spent. I am very keen to get those answers, as well.

THE CHAIR: Is there a supplementary?

MR DOSZPOT: That was the supplementary. Can I get onto my substantive?

THE CHAIR: No, because I have not finished mine.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hinder is next.

MR HINDER: I will grab a supp.

Mr Rattenbury: Was that a question or was it just a statement?

MR DOSZPOT: It was a question.

THE CHAIR: I think he was commending you for taking it on notice.

Mr Rattenbury: That is fine.

THE CHAIR: As the data has been difficult to get hold of.

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, there was a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: A supp? All right; and Mr Hinder has a supp.

MR DOSZPOT: The supplementary to that was that if we go to BP3, page 97, improving teacher quality, and this again comes to the budget allocation, the total cost of that is \$1.2 million over four years.

THE CHAIR: I do not think teacher quality is covered.

MR DOSZPOT: Teacher quality was being discussed.

THE CHAIR: We have moved to maintenance and upgrades. Teacher quality was the subject of the previous question. If you want to ask about that, you can do that as your own question.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

THE CHAIR: In regard to the hazardous material survey and the asbestos management plans, what is the current status of those?

Mr Wynants: They all get updated every five years, so we will look in five years. Every school does have a hazardous materials plan; that is available to tradespeople and visitors to school sites. We also have plans posted up on the schools which show where the asbestos materials are located.

THE CHAIR: So the survey is complete and the management plans are complete and available at each school.

Mr Wynants: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you do regular building audits and surveys of the buildings?

Mr Wynants: We do condition audits every year. That gives us a report which tells us where the priority works are to be undertaken. We are also in the process of developing a strategic asset management planning tool that will help us in more strategic longer term planning. But the priority, obviously, is compliance and safety; our condition reports help us make sure we identify those. And then there is work undertaken both by the schools and by the directorate.

THE CHAIR: When will the strategic asset management plan be completed, and will it be made public?

Mr Wynants: It is still in the process of being developed. I expect that the first phase of it will be completed in the next couple of months.

THE CHAIR: Will that be published? Will it be put out for discussion? Or is it just an internal tool?

Mr Wynants: It is an internal tool which will help us with the planning for future works.

THE CHAIR: So it will be there for an incoming minister after October?

Mr Wynants: It will be.

THE CHAIR: It will be there in their briefs. Mr Hinder had a supplementary, and then a new question from Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: I want to clarify that \$70 million commitment. There is \$79 million being spent up to and including this current budget allocation?

Mr Whybrow: I can give you a broad breakdown if you would like a broad breakdown?

MR HINDER: Thank you.

Mr Rattenbury: I think we have taken it on notice to provide the details. I think, for the benefit of time, I am happy to do it that way if the committee is happy.

MR HINDER: Yes. If you could just wait until I get the question out, we can see where we go from there.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, sorry.

THE CHAIR: We are happy it has been taken on notice anyway.

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry, I meant that bit of it, Mr Hinder; please keep going.

MR HINDER: I might get on to the question. That is all new money. There is a line

item for maintenance and none of that is included—

Mr Whybrow: There is a line item for maintenance in our recurrent budget

MR HINDER: And none of that is included?

Mr Whybrow: None of that is included in that \$70 million component.

MR HINDER: There is my question. That is it. I have finished. Thanks.

Mr Whybrow: Okay.

MS BURCH: I have a sup on that. I think it was Mr Doszpot or Mr Smyth who asked the Chief Minister also about the \$70 million.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I did.

MS BURCH: It does go back to a commitment—just so we are all clear—to spend \$70 million—

MR DOSZPOT: We are all clear on that.

MS BURCH: and I think what I am hearing is that over \$70 million has been spent on upgrades and maintenance in the schools.

Mr Rattenbury: I think what this goes to, Ms Burch—I am the least qualified person in this room to go to this issue—is that a commitment was made by the Labor Party in 2012. There are disputes about the definition of that. I was going to suggest that the Chief Minister be asked, but he has already been asked.

THE CHAIR: He flicked it to you.

Mr Rattenbury: Did he?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: I do not feel I am in a position—having had no involvement in the development of that policy—to answer the definitional questions.

THE CHAIR: It is not a policy question. I am sure the department is aware of what the policy said and the question is: was the \$70 million of new money allocated and spent? Reconciliation, I am sure, will either prove or disprove that there—

Mr Rattenbury: There has been a spend of \$79 million since 2012. Whether people agree that meets the definition they thought is perhaps more of a question for others.

THE CHAIR: Which is why I have asked what was the baseline in the 2012-13 budget, which would have a cumulative total over four years—

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

THE CHAIR: and above that I expect to see an extra \$70 million.

Mr Rattenbury: No, I understand where you are going with your question.

THE CHAIR: But I am sure Mr Whybrow will give us the numbers as they are.

Mr Whybrow: Most certainly.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot with a new question.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Smyth. I go back to the question I was starting to ask before about the total cost of \$1.2 million over four years.

Mr Rattenbury: It is page 97.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: I am referring to page 97 in BP3. This is to do with improving teacher quality, enhancing quality assurance of schools and so on. The total cost of that is \$1.2 million over four years to be funded from within Education's existing resources. Can you expand on that?

Mr Whybrow: I will give you the response that I gave to the chair earlier. It is being internally funded. The component is a very small component of our overall budget. It is \$1.2 million over four years. Our overall funding for the directorate in total is in the order \$4 billion over that time. This is a reprioritising of our activity.

MR DOSZPOT: Is any other project being affected by this amount being taken out?

Mr Whybrow: I go back to that previous answer to say that we, like any other business, re-prioritise. We have funded initiatives in the past and we have not affected the outcomes. We do these things to improve our outcomes of delivery to students. We are very comfortable that we can do that again in this circumstance. I should point out in relation to this that this is changing an existing process. It is not a brand new process. It is an enhancement to an existing process.

MR DOSZPOT: Just on the BP3 again, pages 76, 99 and 129 show expenses associated with infrastructure and capital initiatives. There is some infrastructure work going on at Gungahlin School that has been spoken about a little. But on page 259 of the BSB it says that the LDA is on track to release more land, including nearly 92,000 square metres for the development of a second school in the Molonglo suburb of Denman Prospect. At what stage is planning for this school?

Mr Rattenbury: This is page 259 you reference, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Page 259 of BSB.

Mr Rattenbury: That would be the LDA's statement. I am afraid I do not have that one with me.

Mr Wynants: The question is regarding the next school in Molonglo. Yes, we have undertaken, as part of briefing government through the budget process, a feasibility study that has identified the timing of when we might need to have another school. We are looking at a P to 10 in the suburb of Denman Prospect as the next school.

MR DOSZPOT: What is currently being planned for that? Can you give us an outline?

Mr Wynants: The planning is for a full P to 10 school—preschool through to year 10. It would be likely to be staged, with a P to 6 as the first stage and the secondary school facilities, 7 to 10, also. We are also looking at the benefits to the community of including a child and family centre on that site, as well as a childcare centre which would be owned, constructed and operated by a private consortium.

MR DOSZPOT: What sort of demographic projection is the school size of the type that you mentioned based on?

Mr Wynants: I do not have the demographics. Robert Gotts looks after the demographic side.

MR DOSZPOT: What studies have been done to identify impact on enrolments at the adjacent existing school, Coombs School?

Mr Wynants: Can I go back to clarify something? With the second school, it is only at the planning stages at this stage. To go to your question about Coombs, we have looked at the school in terms of its total capacity. In fact, the capacity is greater than we actually designed the school for; so there is plenty of capacity in that school to go for a number of years.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I have visited the school and it has a lot of capacity. I have visited the school. I guess that that is where I am leading to. When you are talking about this new—I commend you for looking at it; I am not criticising you.

Mr Wynants: That is all right.

MR DOSZPOT: But can you tell me what sort of time projection you are looking at? How far ahead are you looking at?

Mr Wynants: It takes us a five-year period to go from planning through to opening the front doors.

MR DOSZPOT: How many years, sorry?

Mr Wynants: Five years.

MR DOSZPOT: Five years, yes.

Mr Wynants: Yes. We are constantly looking at—we did look at the issue of the time for the next school. Certainly in the past two years we have had a more serious look in

terms of getting a full feasibility study as part of this year's budget process. We will again look at that in providing advice to government over the next 12 months as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Also, in looking at the potential increase you may require, have there been any discussions with the non-government sector about their interest in building a school in that new area?

Mr Wynants: As part of our feasibility, we looked at public school facilities. I am not in a position to comment on that one unless—

Mr Rattenbury: No, the government is giving that consideration. There are indications from various parts of the non-government school sector of their interest to provide schooling in the Molonglo Valley. Government is currently looking at possible land releases.

MR DOSZPOT: Have they sought a particular size or type of school at the moment.

Mr Rattenbury: Just bear with me. I do not think so, but I will confirm that.

Ms Whitten: The territory has received a request from Catholic education and the diocese in relation to one of the sites in the Molonglo area.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that they have been trying to get some answer on this for quite some time. You are currently in discussion with the Catholic education system?

Mr Rattenbury: Not—well, I have certainly not had a specific discussion with them about it. What is happening, though, is that there is a consideration of when, how and how much land should be released to the non-government school sector. That is something that the Education Directorate does, particularly in partnership with the LDA—

MR DOSZPOT: Sure.

Mr Rattenbury: because, of course, they have that initial responsibility for the allocation of sites.

MR DOSZPOT: And that is the reason—I realise that we have a separate section for non-government schools—

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

MR DOSZPOT: but I thought it was appropriate to sort of have a look at what sort of consideration is being given in your overall planning to what relief can be given through, say, an independent school putting a school in rather than additional expense at this stage. Those are the points that I am asking about. Are they being considered seriously?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, there is serious consideration going on. We need to get the balance right between obviously government fulfilling that fundamental community

expectation to provide enough public education spaces, but acknowledging that there are some in the Canberra community who seek a non-government schooling opportunity, including presumably in the Molonglo Valley, just as I think with the west Belconnen development those sort of considerations are being thought about at that planning stage of that new development.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the status of the issue at Latham Primary School regarding drop-off traffic arrangements?

Mr Rattenbury: Latham Primary School was one of four pilot schools in the active streets program. A number of steps have been put in place around Latham Primary School to manage traffic in the area. For example, that is one of the sites that is being tested as a 30 kilometre an hour speed zone around schools.

There has also been put in place an active streets strategy where Latham Primary School has been mapped. There is a brochure that tells parents how their kids can walk and cycle to school, including identifying some additional drop-off points. I do not know how well you know the site but to the north of Latham Primary School—on the northern side of the oval there—there is another car park. That has been identified in this map as a place where parents can drop their children off. They walk several hundred meters across the oval. That serves two purposes: one is to disperse the traffic into different areas. The second is obviously to provide an opportunity for children to get some incidental exercise on the way to school.

MR DOSZPOT: I am aware of the discussions that have been held and the initiatives that have been highlighted. I have not heard that the implementation has been carried out as it was going to be. Have all of those things been implemented?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly the two matters I have just referred to specifically have both been implemented. I have been there for those events, those moments. We had a bit of an event, particularly to celebrate the release of the map as part of publicising it in the school community.

MR DOSZPOT: On the matter of planning, the concern regarding the Franklin P-2 school, I have received a number of complaints that the planning for that needs to be looked at because, whatever the number of students, the impact on surrounding schools is going to be fairly severe. They only go to year 2, so from that point on there obviously need to be additional spaces at other schools to accommodate those children plus the others that can go to those areas. Has consideration been given to extending that to a P-6 school?

Ms Joseph: Every student who goes to Franklin Early Childhood School has a place for enrolment at their priority enrolment area schools. What we have found with people questioning if there will be space is sometimes they have not asked the question of the schools and have just assumed. We take into account all the planning and priority enrolment and enrolment pressures as we have discussed this morning.

The Franklin school is an early childhood school. There are places for anyone who enrolls in the Franklin Early Childhood School. When they transition into year 3 there are places in the surrounding schools. We will monitor the pressures on all schools, be

they an early childhood school or a primary school, and then apply the hierarchy of strategies that we have talked about previously.

MR DOSZPOT: But given the rapidly increasing population of that whole area, parents are coming to us with concerns. They are not the experts; you are, but they feel a long-term view should be taken of what will happen. Part of my question also relates to the fact that we are talking about long-term planning. There was a strong effort to sell off the land next to the school, which is so close that it should be used for education purposes if upgrades are required. My question is: is any thought being given to making that a P-6 school considering the rapid development of the area?

Ms Joseph: There is a commitment to the Franklin Early Childhood School remaining an early childhood school. We do our planning and our projections and we monitor options for the short and long term. Again, I go back to the school modernisation initiative in the budget papers, which will enable us to do that far better than we have in the past.

I accept the issues about the growth in the Gungahlin area. Franklin Early Childhood School, we will monitor the enrolments. The commitment is to an early childhood school model of education. The commitment to students transitioning to primary schools after they have been in the Franklin Early Childhood School is that there will be places in primary schools in the priority enrolment areas. If there are pressures, then we put in the hierarchy of strategies in managing the PEAs and others. Long term, anything can happen.

MR DOSZPOT: Why would you not consult with the parents whom I am consulting with? They are coming to me trying to raise this as a serious issue. Would it not help your planning to consult with the parents on their direct needs as they see it?

Mr Rattenbury: I dispute that there has been no consultation, Mr Doszpot. I have met some of the parents on a number of occasions, and there has been quite some discussion. What you are going to is that there are different views in the community about the suitability of the early childhood school model. Some parents feel there should be a school that goes straight through to year 6, and there is an educational school of thought that says a P-2 school can be very, very effective. The discussion we are having with many of the parents is that they are not comfortable with or do not fully understand why we have that model. That is a lot of the questioning that is around.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, for the benefit of—

THE CHAIR: We are going to have to move on.

MR DOSZPOT: What parents are saying is that the children have friends and those friends may end up going to different schools, so there is no continuity, which can affect their schooling.

Ms Joseph: And that is a choice parents make. We have the well-established model of the early childhood schools starting with the O'Connor Cooperative School, which has been around a long time. Franklin is one of our newer ones where we have

implemented the early childhood school model. Narrabundah Early Childhood School has been going for about five years, so we have gone through the whole cycle of students starting there from child care and transitioning through.

We had similar conversations with the initial families involved in the Narrabundah Early Childhood School because the rumour in the community was there was no room at Forrest, there was no room at Red Hill, “We’re not going to get in.” I myself met with the P&C and families to talk about what the process was, what the model was, how we would make sure students would transition, that we would make sure there were allocated spaces at, in this particular instance, Forrest and Red Hill primary schools for the students in those PEAs.

We had to do a lot of work because in the early years of the early childhood schools model it was new to the community. We have done a lot of work with the more established ones and we need to continue doing that work with Franklin Early Childhood School. But it is a choice parents make, and they make the choice knowing it is the early childhood school model. That is exactly how the school has been built.

THE CHAIR: We will finish that question there. Mr Hinder has a supplementary, and we missed Mr Hinder’s new question last time, so we will go supplementary, new question, then Ms Burch.

MR HINDER: I have two supplementaries in relation to questions 1 and 3 that Mr Doszpot asked. The first one was in relation to the Denman Prospect allocation. There is 91,500 metres allocated. Is that in Denman 1 or the englobo part of—

Mr Rattenbury: I do not know exactly, Mr Hinder, because it is an LDA thing. But I have seen the site and it is in the bit of Denman where blocks are being sold at the moment. So I am pretty sure it is Denman 1.

MR HINDER: I do not think the englobo one has started yet, so that would be in that first lot. A primo piece of land I noticed it is, too, when I saw it.

Mr Rattenbury: The views will be great from the school.

MR HINDER: I agree. The next question was in relation to the Franklin P-2 question and the out-of-area enrolments. There is an enrolment management plan I understand, and part of its function is to limit the out-of-area enrolments into each school.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR HINDER: I understand there are familial relationships and all of those sorts of things that feed into whether or not someone can enrol out of area, but how do you police that sort of thing when that is not necessarily a factor that is advised to you by the statistics or any of the data that might be available from other directorates and the federal government?

Ms Joseph: We monitor that through the enrolment process and relying on the address information.

MR HINDER: How do you police it, though?

Ms Joseph: By asking parents for the information.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, and that is the same as—

MR HINDER: Does it impact on your own plans, though? You do not find out about enrolments necessarily until the year before, do you? Whereas you plan for a certain capacity based on statistical data that is gathered perhaps by the feds in the ABS only every four years or something.

Mr Gotts: There are a few elements to your question, so I will try to work through them. Going back to the original part of your question about Franklin Early Childhood School, there is no PEA for early childhood schools, so—

MR HINDER: Mine was not actually about Franklin; mine was a supp for one about Franklin.

Mr Gotts: With regard to the planning for the schools, as I said earlier, we do an annual projection each year for the enrolments. We look at the growth in the suburb. We look at the history of siblings and so on. With regard to the extent to which we check on enrolments, we look at the enrolments very carefully. We go back and look at whether, for example, there are multiple enrolments from a single address. We look to see whether the enrolments are what they purport to be.

MR HINDER: My substantive question is around funding in relation to public, private and Catholic education systems. The national education reform agreement—or Gonski as everybody refers to it—is a needs-based funding system. My understanding is that the Catholic system was found to require additional funding to bring it up to the level of the government schools which, on the Gonski scale, are in excess of a minimum standard.

My understanding is that the Catholic system draws funds from both the territory and federal governments, and that funding looked to me to be about a seven per cent increase in funding over this budget whereas the state schools are three per cent. How does that work in terms of expenditure of the dollars of the ratepayers of the ACT? We have an obligation, I understand, to provide public schooling. What is the rationale around providing more than double that expenditure to the Catholic system?

Mr Whybrow: I will see if I can break down that question. There is, as you say, a mirror. As I answered earlier in one of my responses, all ACT schools, whether they are government or independent, are funded in accordance with that school's resourcing standard. The school resourcing standard has an amount per student as a core component, and then it also has particular loadings, and that is the basis of a needs-based funding model.

The concept for non-government schools is that non-government schools have a core component which is funded from all government sources, less a concept which is capacity to contribute. There are fees and charges being paid. In that context they receive only a portion of their funding source for their core component from

government, but every loading is at 100 per cent. They are those needs loadings.

The measure was to ask where schools are currently placed. In the ACT we have—as I said earlier—systems components. The Canberra public schools are considered as a system, just as the Catholic systemic schools are considered as a system. The Canberra public schools are currently against that school resourcing standard. I make the point that people often think it is a standard so everyone is the same. They are not the same because it is based on those core components per student, plus the individual loadings per student

The ACT Canberra public schools' SRS would be different from the Catholic system's SRS, which would be different from every individual school, but they are still based on the same premise of funding and need. The Catholic systemic school in total is currently considered to be below the SRS, so the commitment from the ACT government under NERA is to recognise that funding component. There are multiple funding sources. You are completely correct that the ACT funds part to the non-government schools, very much on the same basis that the commonwealth funds part to the ACT public schools.

When they are below, you will see that there is an increase. The concept is to get in the ACT's NERA agreement all schools to the SRS at the end of a six-year period. In the interim that means a differential increase, and that is what you will see. There is an increase. In the budget papers—I take you to page 9—you will see there is, effectively in the order of a six per cent increase in ACT government grants and commonwealth government grants to the non-government sector. As I pointed out earlier, for the ACT government's Canberra public schools there is an overall increase of three per cent. Essentially, what is happening is we are doing what we have signed up to—bringing all schools to that standard. Hopefully that answers your question.

MR HINDER: That is a six-year plan by the look of it, 2014 through to 2020?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. It depends what happens next Saturday.

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

MR HINDER: Will that not then take the systemic schools above SRS by 2020, though? On the back of an envelope, literally, I worked out that by 2018 or so they are going to be at the same level as the territory.

Mr Whybrow: Yes. If I go back to my first point, which is the school resource standard changes every year as well—and we heard earlier there are increased costs—the school resource standard moves every year as well. And I should say, if, say, the mix changes in the Catholic systemic schools and they have a higher number of students with a disability—for example, a student with a disability gets a loading of 186 per cent—that changes their overall profile and that is what we are looking for, a needs-based funding model. In saying that, with a needs-based funding model the devil is always in the detail and there is still further work to be done on each of those loadings.

MR HINDER: So that 7.7 per cent increase will, by 2020, match the three per cent

increases in the other two to about the same spot? Got you.

Mr Whybrow: To get everyone to an overall standard. The level of government funding is different. I talked about that concept of capacity to contribute. Then the other component is the ACT share. If you look at those numbers on that page, the ACT share is very much a minor funding partner in that. But because we are signed up to an overall standard, that is what we are looking at. It is actually counterproductive particularly to look at individual funding sources, and that is the basis of the SRS that picks up all government funding sources so that you are measuring a like to a like. Quite clearly, the ACT government funds the largest component of Canberra public schools and the commonwealth funds the largest component of non-government schools. You can easily pull out those numbers and say, "Either way, that is unfair and someone is not pulling their weight." So it is really important to look at the overall funding position from governments.

MR HINDER: And here we are only talking about the systemic Catholic schools, we are not necessarily talking about the private Catholic schools, though?

Mr Whybrow: That is correct. The private public schools, for example, are somewhere like Daramalan primary.

MR HINDER: Private Catholic schools, not private public schools?

Ms Joseph: Private Catholic schools.

Mr Whybrow: Sorry, private, thank you for correcting me, yes.

MR HINDER: Unless you are talking about the English system where they are called public schools.

Mr Whybrow: Yes. Thank you for that correction. So the private Catholic schools are treated as an individual school not a system.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps we should call them independent?

MR HINDER: Yes.

THE CHAIR: There is the CEO of the Catholic systemic system and then I think there are all the other—

MR HINDER: Independent Catholic colleges, yes.

THE CHAIR: Obviously they are not government, they must be private.

Mr Whybrow: Thank you. I think you are correct. Yes. Thank you. Hopefully that helps.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: In budget paper 3, page 97, and then also in your own little glossy, on

page two, about business innovation and improvement, there is a focus on school performance and there is that budget line in there of \$1.2 million. Can you talk us through what the money will be spent on and how you are going about reporting performance and things like that?

Ms Joseph: I certainly can. The minister launched a new school performance and accountability framework, aptly named people, practice and performance. It is basically a school review process and it is around nine key elements that schools self-assess against in the first instance. It looks at school community partnerships, the learning culture, the expertise of the teaching team, how school resources are being targeted, how curriculum is being systematically delivered, how teaching and learning are being differentiated. It focuses on the pedagogical practices and overall the key points are about the explicit improvement agenda each school will have and how we are analysing and then responding to data.

Once every five years each of our schools will go through a review process. A panel will be formed, which is an external consultant that we are using through ACER. The Australian Council for Educational Research have been contracted, together with an experienced principal who has been trained in the review process. There is collection, initially, of data and evidence from the school point of view. Then the panel audits, if you like, or reviews the whole process and then produces a report for the schools and for the system in how well the school is going in their improvement agenda. It is really coming back to: how do we know that the investment into our schools is actually adding value to the learning of every child?

MS BURCH: What are some of the data elements that are picked up and how do you measure? One school may have a different improvement need to another. Are you collecting crude data, or how do you interpret all of that?

Ms Joseph: We align all the data that the school collects and our headline data comes through our budget papers that you will see there. They are fairly high level. We have a process of cascading down to the school level and then schools actually have a wealth of data, individually in classrooms, as well. It goes right from NAPLAN to student attendance; to parent, student and staff opinion that we collect by surveys; year 12 completion, retention, transition; and so forth. There is a lot of data at the moment. We have got all of that.

What we are aiming to do in the next few years is do it more systematically and a lot of that then will be through our school admin system. At the moment we are relying on a certain amount of collection of data at the school level, collection of data at the directorate level and also the national level. Our new school administration system should be able to make data more readily available. We currently have a data portal that schools use, and our network leaders use as well, to look at some of the common data we already have across schools. But our school admin system will make it real-time data so that we can use and then analyse it to change, implement, respond to student learning needs, change programs, focus where we need to invest in professional learning and so forth.

MS BURCH: Going down to the most basic level of a student in year 3, how will this allow that school to track their reading levels, maths levels and other levels against the

curriculum?

Ms Joseph: Schools already track all that information but the school admin system should give us the opportunity to see—not right down into the day-to-day detail but certainly at periods of time—different NAPLAN measures and so forth. Schools do assessments every day so far around performance benchmarks. The key to it all, for parents and the community, is how we are consistently assessing against the Australian curriculum and therefore moderating our teacher judgements about where students are achieving. Then it gets around to how we communicate that through common reporting templates.

THE CHAIR: A quick supplementary.

MS BURCH: Ms Lucas, do you have anything to add?

THE CHAIR: No. Ms Lucas has done perfectly well. Her answers have been excellent.

Ms Lucas: Thank you, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: Unless she had something to add, and then a quick supplementary from Mr Doszpot and then we will have a break.

MS BURCH: I am happy with that then.

THE CHAIR: Congratulations, Ms Lucas, excellent answer. Mr Doszpot, a quick supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned these new initiatives, which I am glad to see. You are obviously talking about NAPLAN and the new way of doing NAPLAN as well. With the capacity we have ICT-wise, will that tax the system at all or have we still got plenty of capacity to carry that additional initiative?

Ms Joseph: I am really excited about the potential improvements in administering that plan. For the first time I saw at a national meeting just a few weeks ago a test of NAPLAN online. All directors-general in the room did year 3 NAPLAN numeracy. We could use any device that we happened to come to the meeting with, except a mobile phone. So the platform is nearly ready to be rolled out across the country so that NAPLAN, in actually doing the test, will look quite different. The capacity of the ACT to implement NAPLAN online is really, really high.

We are working cross-sectorally with our Catholic and independent colleagues to make sure that we will be one of the first jurisdictions to actually implement NAPLAN online. We have the capacity in our infrastructure, our ICT infrastructure. There will always be the option for a paper and pencil-type test. However, we believe we will be able to do NAPLAN online from 2017 where we have a cross-sectoral forum organised or in planning for all our principals next term to actually start that process.

MR DOSZPOT: And that is what my question—

THE CHAIR: We are going to have finish, I am sorry. We can take it back up when we resume. We might break here and resume at 20 to 12. Members, we have apparently finished 1.1, 1.2, government primary and government high schools. We will return to secondary college education, but I assume it is basically the same crew that will be here. If you want to perhaps go to public, primary and high school and probably secondary, that needs to be concluded by 12:30. I would like to finish now, thank you. Excellent answers, Ms Lucas and Ms Joseph.

Sitting suspended from 11.22 to 11.41 am.

THE CHAIR: We will resume the public accounts inquiry into the Education portfolio for 2016-17. Members, we have until 12.30. The next session is down for public secondary colleges, but I understand that the primary school people and the high school people are here as well. Use your time wisely and range over the issues, but at 12.30 they are all out of here.

We will look at the public colleges. Where are the satisfaction ratings with the public college system? In the colleges, where are the satisfaction ratings at? On page 4 of budget statement F, there is overall student satisfaction with education, but can we break that down for primary, secondary and college?

Mr Gotts: I cannot break it down today, but we can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: All right. For the committee, could we have it for primary, high and colleges? Can you then break it down into the regions? How many regions do you have—five?

Mr Gotts: Four.

THE CHAIR: Can you break it down by region as well?

Mr Gotts: I will take the question on notice, and we will look at that and see how we can split it up.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Ms Joseph: And, Mr Smyth, I would point out that all schools publish their data in their annual school board reports at a school-by-school level as well.

Mr Gotts: Yes.

THE CHAIR: If you can provide the school-by-school stuff as well, that would be kind. Mr Hinder, a new question?

MR HINDER: Things have changed since I was at college a couple of years ago—

THE CHAIR: We are going to tell war stories, are we?

MR HINDER: It was in colour. Can you explain the courses, the streaming and how

all those acronyms work and what they are designed to do?

Mr Rattenbury: I will get Mr Gwilliam to come forward. He is one of our school network leaders; he ranges across the tiers of the schools.

THE CHAIR: I think that is budget statement F, page 7.

MR HINDER: Thank you for your assistance.

Mr Gwilliam: The senior secondary college system is in its 40th year this year, as established. The actual schools themselves across our system have always enjoyed a very strong educational focus. The context is that we have nine government-funded public senior secondary colleges; they cater for students in grades 11 and 12.

The question around courses and what is available is a good one. We are very fortunate in the ACT to have a number of options and pathways that, years ago—even up to around 10 years ago—students may not have had access to. We are privileged to have students who can participate in vocational education, tertiary studies or pathways to tertiary institutions, and also elements of both. The kinds of courses available range from what we call A courses for students. Counselling for students to engage in college study is done by a package. That happens across all sectors, particularly in our public school system. We pride ourselves on the ability to be able to support our students by knowing them best and providing them with guidance and counselling as to which package may support them around their career aspirations.

We provide courses that are tertiary; we also engage in courses that are recreational in nature. That may be the case for some of those students wishing to pursue subjects that are not specifically part of their component for going into tertiary study. We know that a balanced education—one of those might be a barista-type course where they might be engaged in a tertiary package, a T package, looking for further study at university but understand the nature of work—and engaging in something like that may provide them with skills outside their education. Does that provide you with further information?

MR HINDER: Even a bit more. You have got H courses, which seem to say they are tertiary accredited; you have got T courses that appear to be purely tertiary accredited. How does that work? What is the difference? It looks as though there is a meld of vocational plus, core plus—

Mr Gwilliam: Absolutely. If I come back to that context, within the terms of choice, students have the capacity to engage in a range of different conversations, first of all about their strengths and weaknesses, before they get to college. When they commence college, they are steered in a direction, an option, as to which kind of courses they might wish to engage in. Not every college in the ACT has specific courses that are the same. Many of the colleges do. Students have the ability to engage with each college as to which pathway they might want to take and then decide which kinds of subject choices or courses they would like to combine together to provide them with the pathway that they want to go to. There is not a specific formula, for example, for every student to follow, aside from meeting the requirements of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies in terms of their course structure, the number of

units per course that are required and so on.

Ms Joseph: Mr Hinder, Leanne Wright could go through each of those dot points. Leanne Wright is the directorate representative on the Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

Ms Wright: I was.

Ms Joseph: She was.

Ms Wright: As Mr Gwilliam has said, students choose from a range of courses. On page 7 of the budget papers it gives a broad overview of those.

The A courses are accredited courses that are appropriate for a year 11 and 12 standard for students to complete, and range across learning areas for students to select. The T courses range across learning areas as well, but they are geared towards contribution to an ATAR score for entry into university. M courses are courses that are modified courses that cater for the needs of students with a disability who are participating in gaining a senior secondary certificate. R courses, as Mr Gwilliam said, are recreational courses; they may include pursuits around outdoor education and those types of pursuits as well. Going to H courses, an example of an H course is the programs that run in partnership with ANU, the ANU extension program, where students are able to study usually one unit of study that is also accredited with the university and contributes to one unit of an undergraduate degree at the university. That opens up pathways for early entry offers into university. H courses are conducted off campus, basically, with a university provider.

The vocational programs and courses again contribute to accreditation towards a senior secondary certificate but may also range from competencies within a nationally recognised vocational qualification through to completion of a nationally recognised qualification as well.

It is a broad range of offerings, and students are given guidance at the school level on how to formulate a package which will provide them with the pathway that they are looking for and the opportunities that they are looking for.

MR HINDER: Thank you; I am much wiser. T for tertiary, M for modified, R for recreational, H is—a hybrid?

Ms Wright: H is for higher education, I think.

MR HINDER: That will do. Thank you.

Ms Wright: There is a logic to it.

MR HINDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question?

MR DOSZPOT: Just going on from Mr Hinder's question—you might want to stay

there, Ms Wright—do you have any figures on the number of students who go on to university and to CIT from high schools or colleges?

Ms Wright: I think Mr Gotts might be best placed to talk about the tracking of post-school destination data.

MR DOSZPOT: What about the high school students who are coming through to the college level? Do you have figures on the number that, instead of continuing in the government education sector, would go to non-government? Do we have any figures on that?

Ms Joseph: We can take that question on notice, but yes, we do have some figures.

MR DOSZPOT: And possibly the number of students from non-government schools that come into the government sector: is there some comparative data available on that?

Ms Joseph: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: My recollection of the figures, Mr Doszpot, is that there actually tends to be a drift back into the public system for the college level, years 11 and 12. There is a sense that that is a very popular system, but we will get you the data through.

MR DOSZPOT: I think there is drift in some areas both ways.

Mrs Stewart: I can provide a bit of background information on that. We do collect data on the transition of students once they leave year 12. That is what we call our destination survey. We ask the students questions about what they are doing following their year 12 studies—whether they are attending university; whether they were offered a place at university and have deferred; whether they are undertaking an apprenticeship or a traineeship; and whether they are in employment. And we ask them some questions about a range of other things, including questions for students with a disability about whether they are participating in options for people with a disability following school.

We do that, and we have some information on that. We have run that survey since 2009, from memory, so we have that data going back over time as well.

In relation to the transition of students, say from year 10 into year 11 and to public versus non-government, we do have an indicator in the budget papers, which again we have had for a number of years, about students who have been in year 10 at a public school and then transitioned into year 11 in a public college. So we do monitor that data, and we publish that data through the budget papers and the annual report.

We also monitor data which is collected at the national level for students in each year level and their retention in the system. That is the retention data that the Australian Bureau of Statistics publishes across all jurisdictions. We are particularly interested in the retention of students from year 7 through to year 12, and also we look at those retention figures for year 10 through to year 11 and year 10 to year 12. Those figures

are available for each of the sectors in the ACT—for the Catholic system, the independent system and the public system—and for the ACT as a whole. The ACT traditionally has very high retention rates for our students. Right through the whole school years through to year 12, we have a very high retention rate.

MR DOSZPOT: I think our retention rate is a target of 85 per cent. Is that correct? And we exceeded that?

Ms Wright: Yes. Normally we will meet that target. We do have quite high retention. We have the highest retention rates in Australia for keeping our students in schooling; in fact, right through to year 12.

MR DOSZPOT: At this stage, the estimated outcome for this current year is 93 per cent? Is that correct?

Ms Wright: I do not believe that at the moment we have our expected outcome. Somebody is going to help me with the numbers in there. It is in the accountability indicators? Yes. As I said, we have not yet had that data come through. We do have the targets in there, but the estimated outcome at this stage would be just a placeholder expecting that we would meet the target until we actually put the figures through in our statement of performance at the end of the financial year and report it in our annual report this year.

MR DOSZPOT: In respect of 2016 census data and enrolment projections for 2017-18, unlike in primary schools it would appear that colleges are underutilised. What analysis has the directorate done on student numbers in respect of colleges like Hawker, which uses less than 50 per cent of capacity and faces declining enrolments in future years, and Melba Copland, which is in an even more critical position?

Mr Gotts: The issues at the college level share some of the same practical issues as at other levels and have some unique elements as well. I will just get my thoughts organised. Sorry, I have a mental blank for a second. It will come back.

Ms Joseph: Mr Doszpot, where we have underutilised space in our schools, part of the \$250,000 budget initiative around school modernisation will also take into account what is the best way to manage those resources. At the moment what we do is really encourage at the school level, in working with the community, in acknowledging where the population around the school is declining, so working with the school in how they manage their resources as effectively as possible to put in the best program possible, acknowledging that if you have shrinking enrolments you have obviously got a shrinking budget.

There are some initiatives that take place around partnerships, around the use of ICT, around making sure you are matching your timetable to student selections. That would be the work we would do around what is happening at the school if we have underutilised space in our schools—Melba Copland, for instance. We were running a regional program around student support a few years ago. We utilised some space in that school to run that centralised program—I think it was more a regional program. Kaleen high school had some space. Our instrumental music program has a central base there.

It is really looking, in the first instance, at acknowledging the demography and doing our projections in line with the school so that we make sure they put the program in place to meet the needs of the community and use their resources as effectively as possible and manage the asset as best possible.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess I am trying to get a better understanding of the discrepancies in the two that I have mentioned in particular—Hawker and Melba. Are these demographic changes purely or are there other factors such as perhaps not offering the right types of courses that some of those students may be interested in?

Ms Joseph: We would not be able to do the analysis on that. As to your question and someone's previous question around it perhaps being a change in leadership or a new building, obviously sometimes it comes down to students and parents making a choice. There is a lot of information that can be taken into account. It may not be purely demography. It may be public perception; it may be the courses on offer. It may also be that parents are travelling to work and possibly bypassing their local school.

MR DOSZPOT: The second part of my question is this: is there flexibility to adapt the curriculum to perhaps come up with, in these areas in particular, some innovative ways of attracting the students who may at the moment be going elsewhere? I understand you are saying you have not got that data, but I think it could be quite critical when looking at the projections for future years.

Ms Joseph: Yes, there are different ways. It really comes down to how we support the executive in our schools, so the principal, the deputy principals and the business manager, primarily through the network leader, in looking at everything that is happening. The role of the principal is absolutely integral to everything that happens in the school. We know that from data. It is about going back to our school performance and accountability framework that I mentioned earlier—the nine domains there, and working in all of them.

The solution is not just about the leadership or the infrastructure; it is about what is happening at the school and the whole program. But there are definite flexibilities. We have partnerships between different schools. Our trade training centres are an example. With commonwealth investment and some support from the directorate in the schools in the Belconnen area, including Hawker and Belconnen High School, they are working together. We built some infrastructure. I think it was hospitality at Hawker College—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, it is. There is also hospitality at Melba Copland.

Ms Joseph: Those schools work together. You do not have to be a student at the school with the infrastructure; you can travel between sites. There is also the linking of technology that we are doing through our Google apps for education platform. Language teaching, for instance, has always been a difficult area in terms of getting the expertise to make sure kids can access a broad range.

MR DOSZPOT: That is exactly where I am driving at. You have got colleges like Narrabundah and Erindale, Tuggeranong, which are at capacity, basically, because

they have built up such a reputation. Is there an opportunity to talk to the students who are at the low enrolment colleges? It is the high schools, really, that you have to be looking at. I am wondering whether there is any opportunity for the high school students to determine what their interests are and where they intend going to better utilise the less used schools at the moment. Is there an opportunity for you to do that at the moment?

Ms Joseph: There is always an opportunity for student voice and finding out where they want to go and what they want to do so far as their education is concerned. It is more about the educational opportunity rather than the management of the infrastructure. Let me give an example: Calwell High School. We have done a bit of infrastructure work around there to improve the frontage of the school. We have done some painting, carpeting and so forth. A new principal and a new leadership team have come in. The principal there has absolutely with great intention gone to the students in years 7 to 10 and asked them what they want in their school. He is building up the reputation of the school primarily through student voice and running a whole-school assembly where kids are actually talking about what their priorities are—not around the infrastructure but around their programs.

Then there are the intentional strategies. I will use the example of Belconnen High School—principal Dave McCarthy at Belconnen High School and the work he is doing. He is working with his primary school colleagues by going to primary school board meetings and P&C meetings to talk about the opportunities at Belconnen High School. His staff are visiting the local primary schools to talk to the students. Those students then go into Belconnen High School for different experiences. The primary schools and Belconnen High School are talking to the colleges as well.

Another example is Kaleen high. We have a new principal in there this year. Again, it is through the partnerships in the local area that is a solution. It is around the programs and the educational opportunities as the primary focus rather than the infrastructure.

MR DOSZPOT: Kaleen high has a special rapport with the University of Canberra, I understand. Can you elaborate on how that is working out?

Ms Joseph: The University of Canberra High School Kaleen and the University of Canberra Lake Ginninderra college have a collaboration partnership. I think it was signed up in my first year here. That partnership, again, is around: what are the educational opportunities for our students; what is the professional learning opportunity for our teachers; what are the professional learning opportunities for the university staff and what are the research opportunities? The collaboration model between the three entities, if you like, or with the education directorate and the University of Canberra has been around building the partnership, building the pathways of learning for teachers and students and, backwards, for teacher education students into the system. Where we are at with that collaboration model is looking at how we can leverage from all those opportunities and learnings to other parts of the education sector. How do we extend the collaborative opportunities to all of our schools, not just two schools that happen to have the brand name?

THE CHAIR: Mr Hinder has a supplementary and then Ms Burch.

MR HINDER: We have just had a discussion about excess floor meterage. Earlier this morning when talking about primary schools we had a discussion about pressures on the floor meterage. Is there any capacity, given it is one directorate, for the use of that meterage perhaps for some of your specialist units—intensive English and those sorts of things? Is there any capacity to use, at least in the short term or medium term, some of that excess meterage as a regional solution for some of those specialised learning units, or is that too strange?

Mr Rattenbury: We certainly should be open to that sort of innovation. There are sensitivities around the age groups of children. It is about making sure that you get the right mixes and those sorts of things. In my mind there is a long-game picture on a school, which I see as a 20, 30, 40-year cycle. Melba Copland is probably one of those at the moment which are down on capacity, but we know that over the next 15 to 20 years there will be significant population growth in north-west Belconnen through Riverview coming on stream. If the CSIRO go ahead with their land development, we are going to see that school potentially pick up a lot of population as well. We need to keep it there, in my view, so that as those swings go through the cycle we have the capacity. We have an example at the moment at Maribyrnong school in Kaleen. A specialist unit has been in there for some time, that is, non-teaching staff and programs. They are now moving out because, with the population growth in Bruce and that sort of area, we need the capacity back as a primary school. So they will move out and go somewhere else. That is exactly your example. Those options are around.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a sup to the sup, and then we will go to Ms Burch.

MR DOSZPOT: Looking at the learning support units at ACT colleges, what is the difference between an LSU and an LSC in definition?

Mr Rattenbury: I will ask Ms Evans to come forward on that because it is quite important that we get the definition exactly right.

Ms Evans: The difference between the settings relates to the number of students and the ratio to teachers and support staff, but it also relates to the students' capabilities. In the learning support units there are a smaller number of students in relation to the staff that support them. In the learning support centres there are a larger number of students, usually more academically capable.

MR DOSZPOT: Learning support centres have capacity for 16 and LSUs have eight. Is that difference in unit numbers in respect of student capacity? Is that relevant to the physical size of the rooms that are allocated or is it the learning requirement or the number of students in that particular area?

Ms Evans: Clearly if there are more students in a room, the room would need to be somewhat larger. But it is not to do with the behaviours of the students or anything; it is around the physical size of that number of students in a room.

MR DOSZPOT: Are students enrolled in an LSC or LSU at a particular college there because of geographic enrolment area or particular course availability?

Ms Evans: We take into account their being in their closest appropriate setting. Not every college may accommodate them in terms of not all of them have a unit or a centre. Parents generally have a bit of a look and talk to their young person about what suits them best and what course they may be looking at. If it is vocational, that might appeal to them in a different school. It just depends. There is a fair bit of flexibility in the colleges around what the best support is for those students.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned also that the teachers in those areas have to have particular skills. What is the teaching resource requirement for each of these units—LSC and LSU?

Ms Evans: The basic requirement is a teacher and a learning support assistant. However, depending on the students' level of need, there may be additional teaching staff attributed to that particular class.

MR DOSZPOT: In terms of the number of students allocated to each of the LSUs and LSCs, is that operating at normal capacity or is there an issue there either under or over?

Ms Evans: I think every year we have some challenges around where we fit students. If a unit gets full and then another student turns up and they would like that unit, we have to talk with the parent about what is the best available option for them. Some are not fully full at the beginning of the year, for instance, and then more students move into the area. It is very much something that we take on an individual basis. We look at the best possible outcome for that student, what units are available and what works for the family in terms of where they live and that sort of thing.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, a new question.

MS BURCH: Looking at closing the gap in terms of Indigenous students, there is one budget line around supporting Ngunnawal culture. I would not mind some information on that. In your budget statement F on page 5, for example, it looks at the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public students receiving a year 12 certificate. If you roll over to page 11, there is another series of indicators around outcomes for Indigenous students. Is there any link with the program line of Ngunnawal culture and an impact or a positive flow-on effect in improving those stats?

Ms Evans: Ms Burch, thank you for that question, because there definitely is a really strong link between the level of support that we are giving to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the opportunity for culturally appropriate opportunities for them to do their learning in a way that is really meaningful for them. The budget line that relates to understanding Ngunnawal culture and Ngunnawal country is another really good opportunity for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to feel that they are valued and that they can achieve in a learning sense but in a way that is very culturally appropriate to them.

There is, of course, a range of strong supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our schools that range from our scholarship programs through to our aspirations programs, which are primary and high school programs and which

give students acknowledgement for things like excellent attendance and great academic results—those kinds of things. Students are constantly being encouraged and it is a really positive narrative instead of looking to the closing the gap-type narrative around these students.

MS BURCH: This budget line is in addition to the other range of supports you have for Indigenous students?

Ms Evans: Yes, that is a new program.

MS BURCH: That is good. If I go to budget statement F and some of these stats—for example, indicator 3.2—recognising the small numbers of students and how that can impact on percentages, how do we stand nationally with a target of 80 per cent for our Indigenous students having year 12?

Ms Joseph: We have the highest targets and the highest retention rate across the country. That fluctuates depending on the number of students, as you have noted, Ms Burch, when we have got a small number completing year 12. Ultimately that figure should be 100 per cent across the country. We had recent feedback from the commonwealth around closing the gap. It is about working on every single student around the data, around their learning plans, and that is really the focus of our schools.

MS BURCH: What are our numbers? What is the percentage of Indigenous students? Is it reflective of the community at two to three per cent, or are Aboriginal students predominantly in the government system as opposed to the non-government sector?

Ms Joseph: The majority of Aboriginal students are in the government sector. I have a wonderful table here. I cannot find it.

Mr Gotts: The percentage is 80 per cent.

MS BURCH: If we are looking at a target of 80 per cent, we could almost assume that is a good chunk of our Indigenous younger generation achieving this—

Mr Gotts: That is correct.

MS BURCH: with a positive impact more broadly. If I go to table 12 on page 11, a number of those lines are looking at our Indigenous students. Given it is 80 per cent for the year 12 certificate and then there are various elements of attainment or retention, can you walk us through how those numbers change? Is there a story behind that?

Mr Gotts: Would you like to talk about year 12?

MS BURCH: It is around how they are exiting year 12, with what skill set, and then what journey do they start? Is it into employment? Is it to further ed? How do we make sure that they are prepared to do what they choose to do?

Mr Gotts: In the past year we had 71 Indigenous students—36 females and 35 males—who achieved a senior secondary certificate. The completion rate there

was 70.6 per cent. So out of that 80 per cent, 70.6 per cent went on to achieve that level. That is an improvement on the year before where the rate was 59 per cent. Of those 71 students that I mentioned who completed year 12 in 2015, 17 of those received a tertiary entrance statement, which was up from nine in 2014.

MS BURCH: If you look at table 12, reference is made in indicator e to the percentage of year 12 students who receive a tertiary entrance statement as being 50 per cent. Yet, for our Indigenous community, the target is 20 per cent. Is there an aim to stretch that to 25 per cent, to really chisel that commitment in stone? As Ms Joseph said, it should be 100 per cent?

Ms Joseph: Yes, there absolutely is. My firm belief is that it is about all students in this day and age completing school irrespective of their backgrounds, their circumstances, the school they attend or the classroom they happen to actually be in. I think this is what underlies the whole Gonski approach. The work we are doing this year and next year is really to look at how we are putting a loading in for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

That is the technical work but, importantly, there is also the policy work behind that. What are our expectations of our schools in how they are going to use those resources to support schools? Really, what are our accountabilities for outcomes for each of those students. Each of our schools has targets around their individual students, be they in college, high school or primary school.

My expectation as director-general is that when I visit those schools I have a conversation with the principals to talk through every single one of their students. I expect the principals to know all those Aboriginal students, what their goals are and how they are actually meeting those goals. We have just over 1,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our schools. We have 87 schools. They are spread across our schools. At the moment our funding model, our historical funding model, has not directed the resources—

Ms BURCH: It has not followed the students.

Ms Joseph: to the student. We have got some work to do over this year and next year in the implementation in making some sense and some transparency in that regard, but also the accountability back to the individual student, their family and community in making sure that, in the future, we do not have a measure so much lower than we have for every other one of our students.

MS BURCH: Thank you, Ms Joseph. It goes back to what either you or Ms Evans said, that our education system here has the highest level of achievement outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Whilst you may look at these numbers and think we need to do more, we are doing better than anywhere else?

Ms Joseph: We are, but on a very low measure.

MS BURCH: Yes, with that aside. Going back to the budget line, what does that look like? It made me think of Duncan Smith who was recently recognised in the Queen's awards. Do you bring those significant community members into your schools to

make that stronger connection? It is not just schools; it is around community as well.

Ms Joseph: That is a very important part of the whole strategy. It is about connecting with community, connecting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative committee, connecting with the elected body and connecting across government on the whole-of-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement. It is bringing everything together and holding us all accountable for the individual outcomes for students.

We are acknowledging the history, culture and the traditional custodians and bringing that together with educational expertise and a genuine partnership and respect and acknowledgement. We have recently launched our directorate reconciliation action plan, because it is also about our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and how we make sure in the Education Directorate that our schools are a place of choice for employment. We support employment pathways as well. It is about bringing the whole picture together: the use of the data; the expert teaching team; the accountability of principals and network leaders; and the director-general. It is about how we work in partnership with families and community and across government.

MS BURCH: Mr Bray came to the table.

Mr Bray: Yes, I thought I might be able to add a little more information to what the director-general has just spoken about. As part of the student resource allocation program and the review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs-based loading, we are just commencing the consultation phase to look at the policy and the data around that needs-based loading. We have established a reference board, which is three leading community representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander area. We also will be engaging with a broad range of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives as part of that review over the next two to three months.

MS BURCH: You go through that process linking with community and it goes back to your student resource. Instead of an artificial allocation of X, whether you have one, two, three or 30 Indigenous students, the resource will apply where it is needed?

Mr Bray: That is correct. What we are trying to look at is: what are the key factors that might affect how that funding should be best targeted to meet their particular needs? We have engaged a private consulting firm, Deloitte, who are working with us at the moment looking at the data. They have interviewed nine schools and we hope to interview students as well as part of the process—both students that are currently at the schools and even students that have already graduated from our schools—to get their feedback about how they see we can support their needs better going forward with the new funding model.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot had a quick supplementary.

Mr Whybrow: Can I add one point? Ms Joseph has identified the importance of engagement with the local community. I should note that during the consultation process for this budget, the Ngunnawal elders council made a suggestion around this actual initiative. It is in direct response to that. So it is working together and that is

very positive to see the submissions from the community resulting in budget initiatives.

MS BURCH: Very nice to hear. Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a couple of questions regarding the descriptor, if you like, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their needs-based learning and their needs-based information that they need to have. I understand that there is a bit of controversy within the community about whether Ngunnawal represents all of the areas. Are the majority of the students that are classified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander of Ngunnawal descent, or what is the mix?

Ms Evans: Thank you for the question. It is a mix of students. The ACT has a very mobile Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. We recognise the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the land. So that is the space that we are working in. But, in fact, all students who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander can access. They have a really very positive approach to that. Where the customs or the approaches that the Ngunnawal people take are different from their own, they have the opportunity to share what is different about that in their own traditional way of operating.

MR DOSZPOT: How do we engage with these students? Do they have special classes about cultural aspects?

Ms Evans: In terms of that new budget line, yes, that will be a very specific vocational-type opportunity for them to engage around that learning about land and culture. But, in general, within all of our public schools the students are in the mainstream classrooms and may be withdrawn to do some cultural activities with an Indigenous education officer. But that is a student choice to engage in that.

MR DOSZPOT: This is a difficult one, but do all students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds want to be recognised as such or do they want to be part of the school community overall?

Ms Evans: We are respectful of the family's choice around that.

Mr Rattenbury: What we are seeing though, Mr Doszpot, is that the number of identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is going up. There is a sense that people are more willing or they are happier to identify. The increase is beyond the population growth. I think there is some cause for optimism there that people do feel more comfortable to identify and that the inclusion is working in that regard. I am sure it is not universal but it does seem to be improving.

THE CHAIR: I refer to your strategic objectives on pages 2, 3, 4 and 5 of budget statement F and specifically to strategic indicators 1 and 2. Of the 11 categories, only three were met as being on target or better than expectation for 2015. You do calendar years. For 2016 only one of the indicators has actually increased. Strategy or strategic objectives are delivering your plans. I note that we cast a long way back to 2012, but there is nothing beyond 2016. Is that a deliberate choice rather than forecasting for, say, 2017-18? Budget statement B, for instance, goes out to 2020 for some of their

strategic indicators. Why are we taking what could be described as such a short-sighted view?

Mr Gotts: It is a deliberate choice to put these year on year rather than forecast out into the future. They are there as stretch indicators and they are meant to be aimed at. That is why they are fairly stable over time.

THE CHAIR: But that is not an indicator, then; that is just a history.

Mr Gotts: It is a target.

THE CHAIR: No, these are strategic objectives.

Mr Gotts: Yes.

THE CHAIR: You have got a target for the current year.

Mr Gotts: Yes.

THE CHAIR: But there is no strategy or expectation beyond the current year?

Mr Rattenbury: Not in these documents, no. But across the directorate there is a range of other places where those—

THE CHAIR: Why not? It is the case if you go to any of the other budget papers. For Treasury we are going out to 2019-20; for tourism we are going out to 2018-19; for sport and rec it is out to 2016-17. For most of the other strategic indicators, “strategy” means delivering your plan, not delivering the history of your plan.

Mr Gotts: Yes, these are—

THE CHAIR: Can we assume, therefore, that there is no strategy in place to improve the outcomes?

Mr Gotts: No, I do not think that is a safe assumption. These are forecasts—

THE CHAIR: I hope not.

Mr Gotts: and the nature of forecasts is that they are looking for something out into the future. But meeting those—

THE CHAIR: This is not out into the future; this is the current year.

Mr Gotts: Meeting those forecasts is dependent on a wide number of factors that contribute to achieving the particular outcome. Unlike some things where it is a plan where you can indicate that at this stage of the plan we will achieve this, and then this, and then this, where it is a strategic objective like this, it is set as a stretch objective. The achievement of it is dependent on multiple activities within the directorate. You would have to look at each one of these individually and then look at the factors that go into achieving it.

Ms Joseph: Mr Smyth, we—

THE CHAIR: No, just a minute. It is hardly a stretch, though, when you are looking at the next six months. That is not a stretch.

Mr Rattenbury: I think we will take it as feedback, Mr Smyth, because within the directorate there is a range of things that do look further into the future. They are not in the budget papers. Your observation is they should be, and I am happy to take that on board for next year.

THE CHAIR: All right. Could you—

Mr Rattenbury: You may want to put it in the report as a recommendation.

THE CHAIR: It may be in the report as a recommendation, subject to colleagues' agreement. Could we have what your targets are—appreciating you run on calendar years—for each of the sub-indicators? Could we have what your target is for 2017, 2018 and 2019, please?

Ms Brighton: Mr Smyth, could I address a couple of those matters? Some years ago the directorate had a number of years forecast in its budget papers. But it has been year on year for at least the past three, if not five, budget papers.

THE CHAIR: Again, that is history.

Ms Brighton: Yes, but what I am saying is that your observation is correct, that we used to provide a forecast. With the change in the budget paper format, it went to annuals, which is why it is presented in that manner. But we have a range of internal mechanisms we use.

THE CHAIR: That is an explanation of what is here, and I get what is here.

Ms Brighton: Which I understand is what you asked.

THE CHAIR: But I am making the comment that that is not strategic. If this is an indication of what you want to achieve in the long term, it is a very poor indication. Ms Joseph?

Ms Joseph: We accept your feedback, Mr Smyth, and we will consider—the next director-general will take that on board.

THE CHAIR: The best bit of buck-passing all day long.

Mr Rattenbury: She will be here on Monday. We will pass it straight on to her.

THE CHAIR: Members, it is 12.30 and we have now used up our time for output class 1.1, 1.2, 1.3. We will resume at 2 o'clock when we will move to output class 1.4, disability education, and output class 2, non-government school education.

Sitting suspended from 12.30 to 1.59 pm.

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to day 5 of the 2016-17 estimates committee for the ACT. We will recommence with education. Members, between now and about 3.30 we are going to look at disability education, output class 1.4, and output class 2, non-government school education. Minister, the Shaddock—

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry, just before you do start.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, my apologies. The minister has a correction.

Mr Rattenbury: Just a correction from this morning, this is just an evidence correction. I will pass to Ms Joseph.

Ms Joseph: We incorrectly said about the school condition assessments they were annual. That needs to be corrected. They are actually every three years.

THE CHAIR: You were right. That was low on the spectrum. I guess one cannot talk about disability education without talking about Shaddock. Could you give the committee an update on what has happened since November?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes I can. There are several elements to it. Firstly members will have seen that I published the first quarterly report from the oversight group. That only reflects the first three months of work. A lot more has happened since then. I will go into some of those details but it is my intent to continue to publish those quarterly reports. They reflect the work that is happening across the three schooling sectors in the ACT. What I can tell the committee is that the directorate has set up a project management approach to this. There are the 50 recommendations. They have been bunched into related groups. There are 10 project teams implementing the elements of the report and that work is rolling out both through the directorate but also in partnership with the Catholic Education Office and the independent schools.

That said, I also want to be careful not to focus too much on the 50 recommendations. We must, of course, seek to deliver them but it is not only delivering the 50 recommendations. It is also about the culture change that sits within that. The recommendations, I believe, are one tool to get us there but it is also about an overall approach to changing this; a range of approaches as to how students with special needs and complex behaviours are supported in our schooling system.

The other perhaps big picture issue I should draw to the committee's attention, although you have seen them in the press, is that Professor Tony Shaddock stepped down from the schools for all program oversight group. Professor Shaddock approached me and indicated that he felt that he was not using his skills most appropriately on that group because in some way it is almost an audit group. And through a discussion he and I agreed he would essentially become, I guess, almost a special adviser to the directorate and play the role of critical friend or strategic adviser. He is now available to the directorate to provide advice in a more proactive way rather than being an auditor at the other end of the process and I think that is a really good use of Professor Shaddock's skills. And he has been happy with that. I do not want to

speaking for him, he can make his own comment but he has indicated to me he feels that is much more of a reflection of where he can value-add in this process. I am pleased we have moved him in that role. He was replaced by Mr Ian Claridge.

That is, I guess, the big picture. There are a whole series of steps that have been taken and I am happy to go into some detail. But why not stop there and see if we are sort of going where you wanted to with your question.

THE CHAIR: When the report was released it had 50 recommendations. The government responded by saying there was \$7.2 million of immediate funding. How much of that has been spent and what has it been spent on?

Mr Whybrow: To date approximately \$900,000 has been spent. The majority of that, in the order of \$600,000, has been spent in relation to capital expenditure. That was about changes to the sensory spaces. The remaining \$300,000 is around project management costs to date and work of the team and the oversight group.

THE CHAIR: What projects are they managing and what has it achieved?

Mr Whybrow: Sorry, I mean in relation to our having contracts with Professor Shaddock and our having contracts with the oversight group. We also have in relation to that the redirection of resources in the directorate in undertaking this work the minister has talked about—a significant response and teams of people in the directorate undertaking that work. That is the basis of the costings to date.

Mr Rattenbury: And what you can draw from that is that a lot of the work so far has been getting things geared up and some policy changes have not been overly expensive and I expect to see a lot more expenditure where we start to take off from here.

THE CHAIR: The \$300,000 on project management was to pay for Professor Shaddock after the report not for producing the report?

Ms Joseph: Yes.

Mr Whybrow: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: And the \$600,000 for sensory spaces?

Mr Whybrow: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: How many spaces has that delivered?

Mr Whybrow: There are a number of spaces where work has occurred or in a number of schools where work has occurred. My understanding is that there are eight schools that have received work.

THE CHAIR: Minister, for such an important issue \$900,000 since November does not seem to be a big spend given the 50 recommendations and the immediate injection of \$7.2 million. Why has more not been spent?

Mr Rattenbury: As I indicated, a lot of the work so far has been either policy oriented or in project establishment terms and there are a large number of things that have been done. We have seen the development and implementation of a new online referral process for network student engagement teams to support timely responses and provide clearer data that can be used to identify future needs. Additional disability education partners have been engaged in the INSET teams. We have seen initial steps taken for the recruitment of speech pathologists and occupational therapists in the INSET teams. Six scholarships have been offered to teachers to undertake qualifications related to students with complex needs and challenging behaviour, with more scholarships to be offered throughout 2016.

We have seen the implementation of positive behaviours for learning in four ACT schools with two PDL coaches now working with schools to roll out the approach across all schools. We have seen the publication of the safe and supportive schools policy and guidelines. We have established a whole-of-government restrictive practices oversight steering committee which is progressing changes to legislation, principles and definitions to guide work across the ACT and there has been a publication, a quick reference guide to support schools to improve the education, participation, enrolment and attendance policy and the development of a functional brief for new schools for all space guidelines incorporated.

The project working group has been established, as I have touched on, with the directorate, the Catholic Education Office, the AIS, the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University participating. There are other steps but that gives you a feel for the sort of work that has been taking place and that is all publicly documented in the oversight group report.

The next oversight group report is due to me quite soon, I think probably within a week or so. It is due on 29 July. It is a bit further away than I thought. I expect that to be published much more quickly this time. The first one took us about four weeks to get published just because I was reading it and we were getting systems up to publish it. I expect them to become publicly available more quickly in the future so that there is transparency around the progress that is being made.

THE CHAIR: The review into SCAN was listed as an urgent requirement. Has that been commenced?

Mr Rattenbury: That is funded in this year's budget, \$200,000 in terms of the commencement of the work.

Ms Evans: That actually comes within the student resource allocation project. It is a piece of work that is considering the needs of all students with disability, including the methodology used to fund those students, which includes the SCAN process. That work actually commenced last year. In fact it was underway somewhat prior to the report and continues this year. There will be consultation around it in the near future.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hinder has a supp and then Mr Doszpot.

MR HINDER: The 50 recommendations in that schools for all report, can you give

us a rough time line about the implementation and do you have any idea of how many of the 50 you are planning on implementing: all of them—or?

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of the time line, it is identified as a three-year project. Some will come quite quickly, others will take a lot longer. There is not a one size fits all, obviously, in that context. I sense a lot of these initial changes will have been made perhaps in the first 18 months but then there will be a period of bedding some of those things down, making sure they become systemic changes. That is where I think the three-year time frame kicks in.

MR DOSZPOT: I accept the report you have given about which aspects of it have been attended to but with \$7.2 million allocated and 50 recommendations there needs to be a little more clarity as to the other projects that you have not started yet, when they will be started and how much is allocated to those areas. These recommendations obviously come with some cost.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: The \$7.2 million is supposedly going to cover all that but how is that \$7.2 million determined? Is there a set budget for how to address each of the recommendations?

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is worth just reframing the question slightly, in the sense that that \$7.2 million was the initial allocation identified by the former minister as an immediate response at the receiving of the report. That was the initial work. Since then we have moved through a budget cycle and further planning has been done. And you saw the allocation that was made in this year's budget, in the order of \$21.4 million, which I think is probably an updated sense. The \$7.2 million was very much that first flush of years, what we need to start with, and that work has been further developed and refined and budget cabinet has agreed to further support it.

You can ask the questions you wish but I would prefer to focus on the \$21.4 million because that is, I think, the more thorough understanding of what we are rolling out here. Just to be clear, that incorporates that \$7.2 million that is not being spent as part of that package as well.

MR DOSZPOT: So the \$7.2 million is part of the \$21.4 million?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: So it is not additional money?

Mr Rattenbury: What I am trying to convey is that—

MR DOSZPOT: There is a big difference, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: What do you mean?

MR DOSZPOT: Is the \$7.2 million included within the \$21.4 million?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes it is.

MR DOSZPOT: So it is \$14 million or thereabouts that is additional money?

MR HINDER: Less the \$900,000?

Mr Rattenbury: I guess you can get into a conversation about what is additional.

MR DOSZPOT: I am just trying to understand.

Mr Rattenbury: That \$21.4 million is the money that has been allocated by the government to do this work over the forward estimates.

MR DOSZPOT: We have had a number of double announcements. I am simply trying to make sure this is not one of them.

Mr Rattenbury: I am not trying to double-announce it. I feel what I indicated in the budget is the money we are spending over the four-year forward estimates.

MR DOSZPOT: From my point of view I need some clarity, and thank you for clarifying that. The SCAN review is listed as urgent. You did not mention that when you announced the initiatives that you have been looking at. That was not part of your explanation, I do not think.

Mr Rattenbury: I did not keep going with the whole list.

MR DOSZPOT: So you did not give us the whole list?

Mr Rattenbury: I would be happy to give you an update on the SCAN process.

MR DOSZPOT: I think we have got the update now.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I have, if you like, a more consolidated list of what has been addressed with the dollar values that have been spent so far?

Mr Rattenbury: I have published the oversight group report.

MR DOSZPOT: Within the oversight group report, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. That is published. It is publicly available on the internet. The next one will be out in four weeks time and that will contain a much more thorough update because it will have three months more work in it. So that is probably the best time to provide that if you wish, if you are comfortable with that.

MR DOSZPOT: What changes have been made to, I guess, the school in question that was the catalyst for this report? Has an appropriate sensory space been created there?

Ms Evans: The school that was in that first incident, along with all our schools, was part of our initial audit that took place immediately to consider all the spaces in all public schools. And then that particular school has been supported to provide an appropriate sensory space just as every other public school has been.

MR DOSZPOT: And what about the six scholarships the minister mentioned that have been handed out? Are any of those scholarships related to that school?

Ms Evans: No, they are not related to that school, Mr Doszpot; they are related to teachers who wished to take on more skill development in the area of complex needs and challenging behaviours. It is not necessarily from any specific school; just members of staff from across the directorate.

MR DOSZPOT: My question relates to the problem that existed there where apparently people did not have sufficient training. I would have imagined that some of the scholarships would be given to a school that, as I understand it, possibly still has the same issues it had to contend with before so—

Ms Evans: The scholarships were given on merit for the staff that applied rather than according to what school they were at.

MR DOSZPOT: I wish you had not used the words “that had merit” because I would have thought there would be some merit in attending to the issues within the school that had the problem initially.

MR HINDER: Given “on” merit I think is what she said.

Ms Evans: On merit.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, that is what I am saying.

MR HINDER: It does not mean the others do not have merit.

MR DOSZPOT: What I am asking is: the school that initially had the problem, obviously the staff have some needs that need to be addressed. Why has that not been done?

Mr Rattenbury: That school has been provided with a large amount of extra support. I do not think necessarily giving a scholarship to a staff member at that school is the sole answer.

MR DOSZPOT: That is what I am asking.

Mr Rattenbury: Additional capacity has been provided at that school because they clearly needed some support. I think it is fair to say they have had quite a bit of focus since that time. Ms Joseph, do you want to add something on professional development?

Ms Joseph: The scholarships we are talking about require extra study and extra commitment above and beyond the general professional learning we expect of all

teachers. That is a specific initiative; hence we call for applications across the system. We also have an expectation that our teachers share their knowledge across the system in different ways, shapes and forms.

That school in particular and every school have access to teacher professional learning funds. The directorate funds that to the tune of about \$1 million per year. That is distributed to the schools to utilise and develop professional learning opportunities in line with what Ms Ellis was saying earlier this morning—accredited teacher professional learning around the priorities. We have made it quite clear to our schools that, in prioritising what they are going to do with the funds that are allocated to schools for professional learning, schools for all is a priority.

There would be resources at the school level as well to determine priorities in upskilling and doing some accredited learning. In addition to that we have our NSET teams and our network student engagement teams. Part of their role is capacity building at the school. We have been quite deliberate and intentional in making sure that that particular school, as well as all of our schools, knows what is available through the expertise we have and knows what resources are available as well.

We are also rolling out through Jacinta's area some professional learning run centrally. We will get different experts in at different times and anyone from across the system can apply. Funding for the teacher professional learning fund is not reflected in the schools for all funding per se, but it has a priority for addressing particularly the capacity building in our schools.

MR DOSZPOT: What amount part of the \$600,000 capital expenditure that went into enhancing development of sensory spaces was spent at the school in question?

Mr Whybrow: My understanding was the creation of a new outdoor play area and learning support unit. The expenditure at that school was \$12,000 of physical change.

MR DOSZPOT: So that is an outdoor—

Mr Whybrow: The information I have is that it was around creation of a new outdoor play area for the learning support unit.

MR DOSZPOT: I am trying to be sensitive to the issue; I am not trying to highlight it.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure, that is all right.

MR DOSZPOT: But if the issue was a lack of a proper sensory space, I am trying to find out what has been done to address the particular issue which caused all this. You are saying an outdoor area has been looked at.

Ms Evans: Mr Doszpot, there is a range of ways in which we support students that do not always require a physical change to the environment. Certainly with that particular school the supports that were put in place were more than looking at and needing to invest money in a change to the environment.

As the director-general has indicated, there is a range of supports to the school around

behaviour management as well as looking at some outdoor space that gave that particular student and all the students within the unit the opportunity to have a safe sensory space when they needed to be outside of the classroom. But, as I said, in all of our schools, individual spaces are not always the answer to how we would support those students.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand all of that. What I am trying to understand is how has the specific problem been specifically addressed?

Mr Rattenbury: There are two answers to that: one is a new outdoor space has been created, as Ms Evans just outlined. The other is there has been a range of professional supports to assist the school to be better capable of working with the student in question and other students with similar needs. That is the answer: for that school they are the two steps that have been taken at this point.

MR DOSZPOT: There are other questions I would like to ask, but I will not ask them in such a public forum.

Mr Rattenbury: I am happy to set that up.

THE CHAIR: We have a supplementary from Mr Hinder—I am sure Mr Doszpot will have questions following it—and then I have one final question.

MR HINDER: Can you explain the safe and supportive schools policy guideline? How does that temper the need in certain circumstances to restrain students for both their own safety and that of their peers?

Ms Evans: Thanks for the question. The safe and supportive schools policy picks up on the safe schools framework that is a national framework. It addresses a whole range of issues that schools deal with around bullying, support for students that have those kinds of complex needs and behaviours that require some level of management to make a safe school environment.

The policy has been updated and there are two areas in it that are new. One is around the social and emotional learning programs. That is around schools having a very positive and very upfront approach around how we support students with particular needs—and, indeed, all students—to be in touch with their social and emotional learning needs. The second part of the policy that was updated is around restrictive practices. It is a recommendation within schools for all and it is around making sure that all schools that are using in any, way, shape or form a restrictive practice have a pathway by which they may report that to a more senior person—the school network leader—and that that information can then be gathered and monitored.

MR HINDER: Children who have challenging behaviours but do not meet the disability criteria, how are their needs addressed?

Ms Evans: The policy is relevant for all students; it is not applied just to students with disability.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whybrow, to go back to this morning, the funding was to be found

within the department and you gave us a number. How much was that?

Mr Whybrow: The offsets?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Whybrow: When we were talking about the budget initiatives? That is what we were talking about at that stage?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Whybrow: We worked through those five things. It was something like \$600,000 in the first year. I would have been answering from that context when I went through each of those numbers—year one, rather than talking about a four year position. But the concept of the size and how it related to the overall budget would still hold given that you would add other years of the total budget.

THE CHAIR: At page 98 of budget paper 3 there is \$21 million for the better schools, schools for all.

Mr Whybrow: Yes, that is correct.

THE CHAIR: The offset there, though, is \$9 million.

Mr Whybrow: The redirection of existing resources?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Whybrow: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: What is the total of the redirection of all the resources to initiatives funded in the budget?

Mr Whybrow: Over the four-year period or the first-year period?

THE CHAIR: Both.

Mr Whybrow: I do not have those numbers in front of me, but going through them one by one in that order, for the 2016-17 year, in total you would be talking about, in the order of \$5 million, rather than \$600,000.

THE CHAIR: So \$5 million is distinctly more than \$600,000. Where does that \$5 million come from, because I am sure that is not just lying around.

Mr Whybrow: No, most certainly not. So of those components—

THE CHAIR: Or if it is I am sure the minister would like to know where it was lying, as would we.

Mr Whybrow: No. Again, we talked about changing of priorities, so the most

significant component of that \$5 million offset is the upgrade of sensory spaces. The minister's press release on budget day gave a detailed breakdown item by item of the total \$21.4 million and what that was being spent on. The element that is offset that is the most significant is the upgrade of sensory spaces, which is \$3 million of that \$5 million in the first year. That comes from changing of priorities in relation to our capital upgrade program and use of our repair and maintenance budget. I think earlier on I spoke about our repair and maintenance budget and capital upgrade programs. That is the highest priority for that work and that is where we are changing priorities in that space and that is how it is being met.

THE CHAIR: So the offsets in this case are mainly capital?

Mr Whybrow: The offsets in this case, from that funding, are coming from two components. Sorry to be an accounting nerd, but one is R&M, which is not capital, and the other is the capital upgrade program, which is.

THE CHAIR: Could we have a split across the four years of capital and non-capital, and can you tell us what projects are delayed or what programs have lost funding to meet this need?

Mr Whybrow: The capital upgrade program is established each year and given priorities. I refer you back to budget paper 3. In that capital upgrades program each year there is a—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, what page are you on?

Mr Whybrow: Page 361 gives an overarching framework of capital upgrades. That is produced each year, so each year we get established the priorities of the capital upgrade program and publish them within that. There is not a list of what were the projects that are now not being funded because this is the highest priority.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I have a supplementary in a minute?

THE CHAIR: Yes. Can you provide us a link between recurrent funding and capital funding?

Mr Whybrow: There are two components. The other part of it is—as I mentioned earlier—we spend in the order of \$13 million a year, centrally, in the directorate on R&M. If I incorporate schools-based activity, that goes up to the order of \$20 million a year on R&M. We are reprioritising that spend in this space but also reprioritising our spend in the capital upgrades program for the sensory spaces component.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Whybrow, a little bit of clarification: Mount Stromlo high had roof repairs announced in the 2015 budget and again this year, both from existing resources. The original was not done so—

Mr Whybrow: There was a roof upgrade program.

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct, yes. Were there two roof upgrade programs?

Mr Whybrow: The roof upgrade program was announced and funded from the capital upgrade program. There were two roofs—Melrose high and Mount Stromlo. In the first year—the one we have just been in—we have progressed with Melrose high. But I am probably best to hand off to the director of capital works who will take you through that.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I have some clarification, because the information I have is that Mt Stromlo had one announced in 2015 which was never done and then it was re-announced in this fiscal year. So I am trying to understand—

Mr Whybrow: No, the original announcement was a roof program over two years to be funded for two sites—the first year being Melrose, the second being Mount Stromlo. This budget is the second year of that, which is Mount Stromlo.

Mr Wynants: Mr Whybrow is correct. When it was announced in last year's budget it was announced that the first year—2015-16—would be Melrose. It was very clear that the second year—2016-17—was Mount Stromlo, and the school was aware of that.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch with a supplementary and then a new question from Mr Hinder.

MS BURCH: As a supp on the schools for all report, you made mention I think of the positive behaviour program that has commenced. From my memory of the report, that was seen as a significant investment to have that cultural change because you can put new rooms in, you can do all of that, but if you do not come to the heart of positive behaviour practice within a school you are missing the point in some ways. Do you want to talk on how that is being implemented and the response to date?

Ms Evans: Yes. Positive behaviour for learning is the title we have given our positive behaviour support program in the ACT and we are implementing that with support from New South Wales who are a little way ahead of us in this area. It is an evidence-based approach that is a universal way of supporting all students in schools, not just students with complex needs. The benefit of the program is that students have a very strong understanding of what the expectations of them are in every area of their school—within the classroom, within the canteen, walking in the corridors. The positive behaviour for learning framework gives schools a way in which to implement this positive behaviour support. It is very, I guess, supportive of schools. It gives them a clear way forward. They do not have to be guessing because it is implemented consistently across the entire school. We had four schools initially sign up that they wanted to get involved immediately and we have since had another 11. We are at 15-schools now in the positive behaviour for learning area.

MS BURCH: Out of the 87?

Ms Evans: Out of the 87. It is a great start in the first few months of the program. We employed two positive behaviour coaches. They are employed to work with each of the schools, to go around, explain the framework, give the schools the support they need. And we have a further two positive behaviour support coaches coming on board

out of this new budget initiative.

MS BURCH: The focus is on students with a disability but it also goes to those with challenging behaviours. It could be those experiencing trauma as well. So the same applies for that?

Ms Evans: Yes. It is definitely a broad and universal approach, and it has been used really consistently. When used really consistently there are very, very positive outcomes. There is data to support that. Certainly schools in places like western Sydney and the outskirts of Victoria are using this approach very successfully with all students in their school. I think that is the biggest benefit: the focus is not on particular students; it is on all students.

MS BURCH: You would imagine the ripple effect, then, across the whole—I will not use the word “behaviour” because it is not the right word—school and it really is enhancing a more positive response to those challenges?

Ms Evans: Absolutely. And it is not relying on a diagnosis or a student being identified as having particular needs. I think that is an area that schools really want to improve in so that they have that positive support for all students, not just a select few.

MS BURCH: Finally before we go to Mr Hinder’s substantive question—and it is linked—we heard this morning from Ms Ellis and the connection from Ms McAlister around professional training. Whilst you have appointed two coaches, I think you described them, are there underlying opportunities within professional development, whether you are a coach, just to be skilled up in this?

Ms Evans: Yes. In fact, all of the 15 schools will attend the tier 1 training for two days next week. We have a large group of our staff being trained up in the tier 1 of positive behaviour for learning next week, which is really exciting. That will, as you said, have a flow-on effect. As those 15 principals get very excited about the data they are collecting and the positive outcomes, we expect there will be a lot more schools that become involved.

THE CHAIR: I have a final question before I go to Mr Hinder. It is called schools for all, and there is \$21 million. How much of that \$21 million goes to the non-government sector?

Mr Rattenbury: That is the allocation for the government sector.

THE CHAIR: Where would I find the allocation for the non-government sector?

Mr Rattenbury: The way it works is that, under the national funding agreement, each sector receives an increase in funding each year. The approach for the government sector is that we are using part of our three per cent increase in funding for this year to fund this work. We have chosen to prioritise in that sense and allocate some of that increased expenditure.

For the non-government sector, for the Catholic schools, this year they have received, through that formula, an increase in funding of \$11.5 million. The Catholic education

system can use that funding to fund this work in the same way that the government system has. Similarly—

MR DOSZPOT: That is across all non-government sectors, though, is it not?

Mr Rattenbury: No, that is the Catholic system. The independent schools have received a 4.1 per cent increase in funding across the group of them for the year, which amounts to \$4 million. There are two ways, and I want this to be seen very much: it is work we are doing across all the school sectors. Both the independent schools and the Catholic schools are involved in the governance board, they are involved in a whole range of policy development. In terms of actual resources, that is expected to come through each sector's increase in funding this year and in future years, of course.

THE CHAIR: Call it \$15½ million dollars for non-government schools. Where do we find that in budget?

Mr Whybrow: If you look at page 9 of budget statement F and if you look at the grants—

THE CHAIR: Is that in the ACT government grants or the commonwealth grants?

Mr Whybrow: It is a combination of ACT government grants and commonwealth government grants.

THE CHAIR: How much of that \$15½ million is in the government grants?

Mr Whybrow: I am sorry, I do not understand the question: is in the government grants?

THE CHAIR: What is the split between the ACT and the commonwealth for that \$15 million?

Mr Whybrow: If I go back to those discussions earlier this morning in the context of a funding framework and about it not being useful looking at an ACT versus commonwealth split in this because we have an overall resourcing standard, the breakdown is there. You can see the difference line by line where there is an ACT component and an increase and a commonwealth component and an increase. What I am trying to say is that taking it out and looking at it in isolation of the share—ACT is broadly 25 per cent of the government funding to non-government schools and the commonwealth is 75 per cent of government funding to non-government schools—that is not a very good way of looking at that share when you have within the government funding support for public schools 86 per cent being the provider from ACT government and 14 per cent from the commonwealth. It is the overall funding pool which is the basis of the school resource standard and something, if I can quote what Professor Shaddock had in his report, particularly in the chapter on funding—

THE CHAIR: That is okay but you can specify that this is \$21 million going from the ACT government to ACT government schools?

Mr Rattenbury: Over four years.

THE CHAIR: From the ACT government to the non-government schools over four years, how much is going towards better schools for all?

Mr Whybrow: Again, if I bring that back, there is a decision from government of \$21 million. The component of that, part of the funding to the directorate, comes from increases in commonwealth funding as well.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to your question is: that is for them to determine. The government—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, for whom to determine?

Mr Rattenbury: The Catholic Education Office and their member schools and the independent schools. Those grants to those schooling sectors are untied. The government does not specify how those sectors must spend their money. If they would like us to specify how much they should spend on schools for all, I think that would be an entirely different discussion.

THE CHAIR: The \$15.5 million that you spoke of is a relativity if they seek to apply it the same way you have applied it, but they may choose not to?

Mr Rattenbury: Correct.

THE CHAIR: But you just told us the Catholic system picked up \$11.5 million and the independents picked up \$4 million for schools for all.

Mr Rattenbury: No I did not say that. If I did say that, you misunderstood me or I misframed it. But that is the increase in funding that they get this year full stop overall. They have to make priority allocations out of that additional funding they receive about how much they will spend on—

MR DOSZPOT: That is funding over a whole host of issues which they already have addressed with that funding?

Mr Rattenbury: Just as the government sector has to. Each sector each year receives an increase in funding and each sector must choose how much of that they are going to prioritise into schools for all implementation. The government sector has done that, and that is what is outlined in the budget. This is where I believe the articles we saw in the *Canberra Times* last week were not a fair representation of the situation. I have now met with both the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools to confirm where the government's funding came from, and I have written to both those schooling sectors to the same effect so that there is absolute clarity that this is not about the government only funding the government sector.

MR DOSZPOT: And they have accepted your explanation?

Mr Rattenbury: You will have to ask them that. No, what they actually said was,

“That’s fine. We understand the NERA formula but we’d also like some additional support, thank you.”

THE CHAIR: Is the government’s \$21 million based on the NERA formula?

Mr Rattenbury: The money that we are spending comes from within the growth envelope that is available to government schools, yes. In terms of a ratio, the money that the government has allocated to the public school sector is an assessment of how much money we need to spend.

THE CHAIR: Of the \$21 million, what is provided by the commonwealth and what is the split there?

Mr Rattenbury: Fourteen per cent.

THE CHAIR: Fourteen?

Mr Whybrow: On a broad funding formula, we, like all resources, make the decisions on our overall package but, in total, the commonwealth contribution is 14 per cent of our costs. That is correct.

THE CHAIR: That is just a straight relativity?

Mr Whybrow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: You might want to check *Hansard* about what you said. I thought you actually said—

Mr Rattenbury: And if I did, my apologies. I meant that that is the overall increase in funding, and within that they must decide how much they will spend on schools for all. Thank you for clarifying that if I did get it wrong.

MR HINDER: I have got a question about that. When the money goes to the Catholic Education Office, there must be some transparency about where it goes from there? Surely each school must know what it is getting from the Catholic Education Office?

Mr Whybrow: Just as the ACT is managed as a system under that school resourcing standard—and, as the minister has identified, we set the priorities of that and identified that in our budget papers and distributed individual allocations to ACT public schools—the Catholic education system is considered a system as a whole and it distributes funding to their individual schools.

MR HINDER: The territory’s money is going into that pool, is it not?

Mr Whybrow: The territory’s money is going into that pool.

MR HINDER: Do they have to acquit to us what they—

Mr Whybrow: There is an acquittal basis for that. We have a deed of guarantee with the Catholic Education Office. Like all our schools in the non-government sector, that

deed of guarantee for our contribution, if you want to look at it as a subset of the overall total, is restricted to their education operating costs, which is a very broad and flexible component that could, for example, pick up things like interest costs on a capital loan. It could pick up elements of depreciation on their buildings. So it is very broad and flexible.

MR HINDER: My substantive question is: have the private schools and the Catholic schools engaged with the schools for all program? Have they made any commitment as to the implementation?

Mr Rattenbury: It has been a very positive engagement so far. It is quite clear—and then Minister Burch, in her beginnings of the work on this, set this up very strongly, I think—that all three school sectors are seen very much as part of the response to the schools for all report. Both the Catholic education system and the independent schools indicated their support and participated in the program, which I think is great from an ACT-wide perspective. We cannot just do this in the government sector.

As I indicated earlier, they have been very involved in a number of the facets of work, including participation on the project board and participation on the working group. They are involved in some of the policy development issues that are going on. I think there has been a very constructive relationship. I was a little caught by surprise with the post-budget reaction, if I am perfectly honest.

I will add that the oversight group report covers all three systems. I see this as a very joined up project. This discretion of funding has perhaps been the first gritty point around that and one that requires—

MR HINDER: My committee has been corresponding with you about that first report.

Mr Rattenbury: That is right.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, of course I have. The Shaddock report requests that the evaluations of the early childhood schools and Koori preschools be released once completed. Have they been completed yet?

Ms Wright: The report was expected to be delivered from the Western Sydney university to the directorate in its final form by this point in time. There have been some delays due to some additional data analysis, and we are still in the process of that report being finalised. The commitment to release the report once it is finalised, along with a response to the report, has been made as part of the response to schools for all.

MR DOSZPOT: When was the report expected?

Ms Wright: In April.

MR DOSZPOT: Last April?

Ms Wright: April this year.

MR DOSZPOT: So it was expected in April this year.

Ms Wright: This year, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: When is it expected now?

Ms Wright: I expect it will be within the next three months that it will be finalised.

MR DOSZPOT: As you say, you have made a commitment to publish that?

Ms Wright: Yes, it is in the government response that it will be made public, along with the response to the evaluation.

MR DOSZPOT: Why the continuing delay?

Ms Wright: It relates to, I suppose, the level of complexity in the data analysis when we are looking at the range and scope. The scope for the evaluation came out of the Auditor-General's report and we are making sure that all aspects are fully addressed in that evaluation. There have been additional data requests along the way from the university. Access to that data has been provided, along with ensuring that as the report is drafted and advice is provided back to the university we are making sure that it is very comprehensive.

MR DOSZPOT: I am sorry, I could not quite hear you. Did you say it was Macquarie University?

Ms Wright: Western Sydney university.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any reason why it is not being looked at locally?

Ms Wright: The request for tender went out to undertake that evaluation. So it was a procurement process. The successful tenderer was the University of Western Sydney, but it was open to—

MR DOSZPOT: Would it have given our economic institutions, being local, an advantage to study what they needed to look at?

Ms Wright: Procurement processes follow a competitive tender process.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand; thank you. The Shaddock report also says that there should be an immediate review into the qualifications, experience and professional learning needs of all staff working in learning support units and centres. Has this review been done?

Ms Evans: I have commenced some work around that. What we have been looking at is a tool that has been used in Victoria that allows teachers and LSAs to indicate the level of qualifications that they have but also their perceived future learning needs. We are taking quite a holistic view around that and definitely looking to get that piece

of work completed quite quickly. Obviously, aside from that more formal approach, it is a matter of how do we support staff in units on a day-to-day basis. Ms McAlister—or maybe it was Ms Joseph—referred earlier to the level of professional learning support that is available at all times to those staff and how we engage with our staff around professional learning.

MR DOSZPOT: You have identified the staff that have to be included in this for the review? How many staff are we talking about?

Ms Evans: We are actually taking a very holistic approach to all staff within the directorate—

MR DOSZPOT: So it is all staff within—

Ms Evans: feeling free to take part in this survey of their skills and attributes; yes.

MR DOSZPOT: It is not an audit; it is a survey?

Ms Evans: No, it is not an audit.

MR DOSZPOT: Will this have any public release when you have completed it?

Ms Evans: To be honest, I had not considered that. I think it is probably something that I would have to discuss further and see what the material would be.

MR DOSZPOT: Getting the commitment from people to respond to things like this, to get the full effect, will you get that from a survey? Is it something that could not be part of the process of understanding the requirements of your staff to really just get an assessment of all of those staff as a prerequisite to their conditions?

Ms Joseph: I think the answer is that it will be a strong indication. I think our staff will participate, and staff sectorally as well. One of the strengths of the schools for all report was the consultation, and part of that consultation was a survey instrument with staff, which ended up with this very recommendation.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you tell me the staff numbers we are talking about there?

Ms Evans: In terms of all staff in our schools?

Ms McAlister: We currently have 6,200 staff. I will quickly break that down for you. We are looking at about 3,500 teachers, 700 school leaders and 2,000 support staff.

MR DOSZPOT: To clarify or confirm the question I asked you: all of those staff will then be taking part in that?

Ms Evans: The schools for all recommendation was around staffing units. That would clearly be my priority within the program that I am running with. The conversation I would be having with Coralie, as the director of people and performance, is how valuable it is to use the tool more extensively.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you have an exact or an approximate number of students that the Shaddock report is intended to address, given that many of them do not have formal diagnosis and are not in receipt of SCAN funding?

Mr Rattenbury: The advice I have, Mr Doszpot, is that the report is about all of those students in all of our schools. It perhaps goes to the discussion earlier about the positive behaviour for learning program, which is really targeted at every student in the school. We seek to provide that positive support. What has become clear to me in the time that I have been in the portfolio is that across our schools there are students with a whole range of social and emotional wellbeing issues. The Shaddock review particularly focused on—of course, it came out of a particular incident and a particular focus, but what is clear is that students have a range of trauma issues, mental health issues and specifically diagnosable issues. All of those things undermine their ability to learn. Therefore, we need to try to provide support across a range of spectrums.

MR DOSZPOT: 48,000 children or thereabouts. You are saying all of them have a requirement? I thought Shaddock was looking at a specific area of need. The amount of money that has been allocated is hardly sufficient to cater for the whole school population.

Mr Rattenbury: That is not quite what I am saying, but I will let Ms Joseph pick up the point.

Ms Joseph: It is about the cultural change in all of our schools. It is about the whole environment—it is all kids, all teachers, all staff working in schools—right from how we implement behaviour management approaches for different kids in different circumstances. It is a holistic approach. At the centre of it is: how do we make sure children with complex needs and challenging behaviours can work within the whole system? That cannot be looked at in isolation from the system, from the 45,000 students in our schools and the 6,000 staff who work in them. There are particular things within the report that focus on responses around different practices, as Jacinta Evans outlined, in the safe and supportive schools policy. But it is about all students being able to reach their potential.

MR DOSZPOT: I accept your explanation somewhat in those terms. But as to the complex and challenging behaviours, I cannot accept that every child has complex and challenging behaviour.

Ms Joseph: I am not saying that.

Mr Rattenbury: We are not suggesting that.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand the explanation. What I am saying is that there is a need to address those children specifically. To do that—that is all I am asking—do we have any idea of what numbers are in that critical group?

Ms Evans: One of the things that make this a complex and challenging area is the fact that for these students the behaviour that is being exhibited could be there today but it might not be next week. There is no way of actually quantifying the exact number of

students who are having a particularly difficult time and will need additional supports at any given time. What Professor Shaddock and his team were really seeking to do was to look outside of the boundaries of diagnosis and look at behaviour. Behaviour is a changeable thing for students and children as they grow. We see different behaviours all the time. You put a good support in place or a behaviour management plan and that student may no longer have that behaviour. So it is a movable thing. We seek to look at every student as an individual and to support them as they need it at the time that they need it for the length of time that they need support.

MR DOSZPOT: The complex and challenging behaviours are not going to disappear overnight, and that was not part of Professor Shaddock's analysis. His recommendation was that there would be more attention paid to how we deal with those complex and challenging behaviours. I am trying to get an understanding of what your understanding of it is. Are we talking about 5,000 children who are exhibiting these traits? Is it 10,000? I am trying to see what your figures are on that.

Ms Evans: If we are looking towards a diagnosis or if we are looking at the nationally consistent collection of data, we get a sense of numbers. But it does not tell us what the behaviours are, whether they are complex and challenging or whether they are just a student who happens to have a particular label or diagnosis. Unless I went through school by school and counted them, which we do not, because each school is equipped to support a wide range of students—

MR DOSZPOT: Is that not part of this whole Shaddock review, to understand? Wouldn't the principals in each of the schools be able to give you the information fairly quickly as to where most of their time is taken up with some of these—

Ms Evans: On any given day they could tell us the students that they are having some struggles with.

MR DOSZPOT: I think they can also tell you who the ones who frequently exhibit these traits are. Anyway, I am asking questions; I am not trying to tell you how to do your job. That is your job.

Ms Evans: I am not trying to say there is not a group of kids who have particularly challenging behaviours at all; I am not saying that. But I think the further that I move along in this program of work and try to understand what Professor Shaddock's particular vision was, it was that ACT public schools take an approach that does not single children out but takes a view that every single individual student has particular needs, and some are more complex than others, absolutely. But the approach we should have is to have that vision. I think the term that he has used in the past is that if we put things in place, it is a tide that rises and lifts all boats. It is not about we pick out 10 kids and we fix them; it is about we look at having a system that is fully supportive of all students.

MR DOSZPOT: Changing tack for a quick moment, you mentioned that Professor Shaddock's terms of engagement are different. In the past I had access to Professor Shaddock. I should imagine that access would still be there if I want a briefing from him?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, subject to his availability.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Mr Rattenbury: Just on that, Mr Doszpot, there is a real intent with this project to be transparent. I think a lot of the community found the incident that started this process last year very difficult. Many people found it very distressing. I think the community was quite disturbed by the reports that appeared. I think it is very important that we are as transparent as possible in this process because the community needs to know that we are taking this seriously.

MR DOSZPOT: That is the reason I am expressing the points of view I am expressing to you.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure. It is also a contested space in the sense that people do have a range of views about how we should respond. They even have a different interpretation of Professor Shaddock's report. People draw different emphases out of it. One of the things that we have done is establish a group that so far I have chaired of key stakeholder groups in the city. We have had a couple of meetings with them so far where we have presented updates and talked through some of the phases we are up to so they can also act as a bit of a peer oversight group directly to me and the directorate about some feedback. Those parents and stakeholder representatives have not been shy in telling us their views, and I very much value the commitment they have given to us in those discussions as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, a new question.

MS BURCH: It is not just about diagnosis, because you can have a child in a school with a diagnosis of disability that does not display any challenging behaviours, and once you accommodate disability access the child has a productive and engaged time at school, whereas for those with trauma or experiencing trauma—separation or family anxiety—halfway through their primary school years it can make a big difference.

There are a couple of things I want to touch on. You mentioned the NSET team. How does the NSET team fit into the broader picture, whether it is the therapy services, the change within the child development service or care and protection? How do you keep an eye on that, because a child's life is not just between nine and three o'clock in the afternoon? You have to think outside the school gate on these things.

Ms Evans: One of the really important aspects of the schools for all response is to consider, across government, how we best support students. So it is working closely with the Community Services Directorate, with Health and with our community sector partners as we consider kids' lives outside of the school gate. That is one aspect that is picked up in a number of recommendations.

The key strategy for us within the directorate is to use our network student engagement teams. The network student engagement teams have both very experienced teaching staff and allied health professionals—school psychologists, social workers. With the recent increase of staff we are also going to be including

speech pathologists and occupational therapists. The value of having such teams is that schools are very well equipped to support the vast majority of their students and they have a great deal of skill. But every now and then they come across a student and they think, “I really could do with that extra bit of input,” whether that be a one-off consultation or longer term. It might be an assessment of need. Whatever it is that they are seeking the school can put in a referral.

We have developed just this year an online referral form. So that is a nice, easy process for schools to say what the need is that they are seeking support for. The NSET team can then determine who are the most appropriate staff to address the need and how can they support the school. That can be a range of things. You touched on care and protection and other issues for these children who may come from quite difficult backgrounds. The NSET role is also to make sure that families are linked in and that children, therefore, have a wraparound service.

MS BURCH: So something may be evident or observed through the school system but, in actual fact, the problem is outside the school system; it is just being exhibited within school. So schools or NSET could be the referral agency into others on behalf of families, is that what you are saying?

Ms Evans: Absolutely, yes. We are increasingly working with our community sector partners to look at better ways to support families in those hours of the day that schools are not available, giving some level of consistency. Families do not want to have five caseworkers or five social workers; it is better to refer to an agency that is currently involved. Some of our work this year in response to schools for all is looking at how we best set those systems up to make it easy for schools so they do not have to search around to find who is the right person, what is the right thing. They can make their referral and we can support that for that family.

MS BURCH: This goes perhaps to some discussion around support into non-government schools, given the expertise within the government sector, when you develop a policy or an approach or information, through the project oversight group you would provide that skill and information, pro formas, networks. However you solve the problems, do you offer that information on to the Catholic schools as a system?

Ms Joseph: We certainly do. We do not wait until the oversight group has got it; it starts right at the teacher to teacher, expert to expert level, in working groups, in the program board. There are a number of different streams. The Catholic Education Office has divided up the 50 recommendations to eight or nine different streams. We have 10 streams of work in our project across all of our schools. But the collaboration is probably even stronger than we had on the Australian curriculum implementation.

The AIS—the independent schools—whilst they will do it differently per school, we are now seeing the AIS as an association bring those schools together and share policies and learnings, doing combined professional learning and so forth. I think it is a really strong cross-sectoral response, and we are learning from each other all the time.

MR DOSZPOT: I have three supplementary questions on—

THE CHAIR: You can have a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: What additional professional learning and online complex needs training has been offered to teachers since the report was published?

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr Doszpot. We have six online training courses: autism spectrum disorder; dyslexia and significant reading difficulties; understanding hearing loss; motor coordination difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; and understanding and managing behaviours. We are looking at some additional modules but they, of course, take some time to develop. In the meantime we have also been running some non-online—face to face—training. Recently 35 of our school staff attended a full days training with Tim Dansie, who is a clinical psychologist from Victoria. He came up to present to the independent schools, and the association told us he was coming and asked, “While he is here, would you like to put on a day of training with Tim Dansie,” which was really well received. We got fantastic feedback from those staff. We will continue to look at meeting the need through those kinds of training opportunities.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Smyth said I have to move on. How many teachers have taken up the offer? You have had 35 do it, but do you know any further numbers?

Ms Evans: No. Every time we offer training it has been fully subscribed. On that occasion I think Mr Dansie had said he would take 30 and we asked if he could go to 35, because we had 35 ask straight up. I think if we ran it again we would find similar numbers. Part of the challenge for schools is often they have committed their professional learning for the year, so as these things come up, they will just go, “Oh, yes, we could get an extra staff member into that one.”

MR DOSZPOT: Would you offer the opportunity for non-government teachers to take part in this?

Ms Evans: We share those professional learning opportunities all the time. As I said, it was actually the Association of Independent Schools who was bringing that particular man here.

MR DOSZPOT: My final question: minister, when will the actions listed in all the 50 recommendations be completed?

Mr Rattenbury: As I said earlier, I do not have a definitive time frame on that. I expect the bulk of them to be delivered in about the first 18 months or so. I am plucking that number a little bit, but I expect a lot of them to come in the next 12 months—six months of build-up, a significant phase of delivery. There will be a few outliers at the end probably. But when I use the word “completed” there, I expect them to have been put in place, but I think the follow-up process over the next year or two will be a really important part of that to lock the practice in. But that is my broad sense of it.

MS BURCH: I might have a new question but then a supp on another area. We have spoken a lot around disability. Before I get to non-government schools planning, I will

finish on NDIS. So, whilst you have the schools for all for challenging children, you have a one-year line around special needs transport while you go through those negotiations. Again, with inside the school gate, NDIS will not apply for all. It is around ensuring that—this is more of a statement so you can give a very quick answer—that work continues. So whatever needs to be done with inside the school gate, NDIS or not, we have got the wherewithal to do it.

Ms Joseph: We have. I presented recently at a national conference, and because ACT will be at full scheme on 1 July we are very well placed in leading the inside the school gate response.

MS BURCH: Good. Another budget line on page 99 is trauma understanding and sensitive teaching. Will that have a link in any way to schools for all, given that it is about supporting and teaching and trauma?

Ms Evans: Thanks, Ms Burch. Yes, it is definitely one of our universal approaches. The idea is that the program is rolled out across schools to give them an increased understanding of the kinds of issues that students with trauma are facing and what trauma-sensitive teaching practices look like. We had four schools last year in the trust program and an additional two this year. Each of those schools has been presenting I believe on a national stage around the outcomes of the program. It definitely is a universal platform for all schools and all students.

MS BURCH: Is that expertise within ED? It is called a project, or have you got a partner with that?

Ms Evans: Yes, we have a range of partners, if I can find the right page. But as we go along with these kinds of programs, we increasingly try to make sure that our staff have sufficient understanding that becomes self-generating. We do not want to always get experts in; the more schools that are engaged, the more expertise we are developing in that space.

Ms Joseph: And it was Charles Conder and Cranleigh that presented nationally just two weeks ago.

MS BURCH: On non-government schools, it was raised earlier this morning about how they plan their own infrastructure and skill development. Perhaps it is more of a question for the Minister for Planning, but we have Molonglo that will grow. We know that, however fabulous the growth is in the census data that shows you are clawing back your numbers of students, there is an assumption that 25 per cent of kids will always be in the non-government sector. This is linked to this morning's capacity conversation. How do you realise that in your forward planning?

Mr Rattenbury: I think the best way to describe it is that across government there is a discussion between, as you rightly say, the planning directorate, the Land Development Agency and Education collaborating to identify demand to make sure that land is set aside. There is a discussion going on at the moment within government about how to better allocate those opportunities. Historically it has been whoever knocks on the door at the right time—

MS BURCH: First in, best dressed, which is not the right way.

Mr Rattenbury: No. There is a consideration going on of a fairer, more equitable and transparent way to provide those opportunities for schools to obtain land from the government.

MS BURCH: Would that also be a number of community groups getting concessional access to land? Would that apply to non-government schools?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you mean in the sense—

MS BURCH: “Concessional” is probably the wrong word.

Mr Rattenbury: Historically the land has been given to the non-government sector for free.

MS BURCH: That is a good concession.

Mr Rattenbury: Quite recently John Paul II College in Gungahlin was given the land. That has been the way the government has made a significant capital contribution to the non-government schooling sector.

Ms Whitten: Ms Burch, as you mentioned, it is a matter for another part of government, but as part of the indicative land release program 2016-17 to 2019-20 there is a statement on page 2 around community and non-urban land release—the release to the community of non-urban land area. As part of that we are working across government in terms of how land can be allocated to non-government schools. At the moment we are looking at developing an expression of interest process as part of that process to make it a bit more transparent. We are currently commencing what that would look like, so we do not have a lot of detail.

MS BURCH: It was raised with AIS when they were in on Friday, you would be aware.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. And that statement specifically identifies west Belconnen and north Wright in the Molonglo Valley as the two locations that are, in the broad, being considered.

MS BURCH: And then there are other groups like Riverview, and as that comes on it would come through, yes. Is there any word on COAG funding in the outyears? Most of us know there was a six-year agreement that was chopped down to four years and that the non-government schools would be significantly short unless those outyears were funded. Is there any word through COAG or your other colleagues about how that is going to work?

Mr Rattenbury: No, certainly the discussions I have had with the Chief Minister and the reports he has given after the national level meetings are that it really is determined by what happens at the federal election next weekend. As it currently stands, the current coalition government has indicated only the four years of funding. The Labor Party as alternatives has indicated the previous six-year funding package

that had previously been identified. The uncertainty sits there.

MS BURCH: There was some talk about renewing the funding formula because the agreement ends in 2018 or 2017?

Mr Whybrow: 2018 is when the four years is up to.

MS BURCH: Yes.

Mr Whybrow: So the end of 2020.

MS BURCH: So we are now in the middle of 2016. What I hear from independent schools is, just as you need five years to plan for a school, they probably also need five years to plan for a school. Is there any advice about arrangements for commonwealth funding?

Mr Whybrow: The most recent update in the commonwealth budget papers had a similar story to the previous year, which is that there are estimate numbers in the outyears beyond 2018, but they are subject to negotiations with jurisdictions and the non-government sector.

MR DOSZPOT: On what you just mentioned, Ms Whitten, regarding the dialogue you are having with non-government schools on new schools and the registration of new schools, under current guidelines, when a non-government school applies for registration, the Association of Independent Schools, Catholic education, unions and key parent bodies are advised and can comment. Who assesses these comments and what legal status do they have?

Mrs Stewart: Mr Doszpot, I can respond to that. I am the registrar for non-government schools within the directorate. As you have stated, there is a process around registration, including initial and provisional registration as well as ongoing registration. We invite comments from the community around those registration processes, and those include significant changes to current schools as well.

Once those comments are received we respond where it is necessary. For example, if stakeholders raised a question, we are able to respond to the question and provide them with information. We then collate that material that has come in from stakeholders, as well as a range of other supporting materials, such as demographic information, and that is provided in a case around the registration or provisional registration of that school.

MR DOSZPOT: Do people put in submissions? Do you call for submissions from people who are in the area? Is that what you do?

Mrs Stewart: Broadly across the Canberra community. They can and often do make written responses to that, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: There have been a couple of recent examples, Mr Doszpot, that have just gone through, and they were advertised I believe in the *Canberra Times*. So that level of inviting of public commentary.

Mrs Stewart: And on our website.

MR DOSZPOT: What sort of exposure do the submissions get, the ones that come in? Are they posted publicly?

Mrs Stewart: No, we do not make the stakeholder responses available publicly. That is something they could choose to do if they wished to. But we compile the information into the case around the school's application.

MR DOSZPOT: Would the school that is being considered have the opportunity to be made aware of any objections that people would have?

Mrs Stewart: We have not done that as a matter of course, no. We do not often get specific objections around a school. We get input provided about general community concerns or sometimes support for the school. As a matter of course, we have not passed those on to the school.

MR DOSZPOT: I am just trying to understand the process. If you have some people concerned about certain aspects, would you then give the about-to-be-new school or the proposed new school an opportunity to respond to some of the objections or otherwise? Would you give them the opportunity to address those issues?

Mrs Stewart: If we got comments of a specific nature like that, I would expect that we would pass those on. In the time I have been there, I have not received such comments. But my view would be if we had comments of that nature, we would give the school an opportunity to address those.

MR DOSZPOT: Who then makes the final decision? Is it the head of the directorate? Is it the minister? Who makes the final decision?

Mrs Stewart: Under the legislation it is the minister's decision.

THE CHAIR: It is a very long-winded supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, last ones. When the ACT government is considering new schools in new areas, what consultation is held with non-government schools from that point of view? Is there an opportunity for them to respond to a new government school being put into an area?

Mrs Stewart: We do not go for consultation around new—this is probably outside my area—public schools. We make that decision based on demand and the need for a school in an area. We do have a process around non-government schools, but not around public schools. It is a demand-based—

MR DOSZPOT: Would it not make your job somewhat more clear to the community by giving the opportunity to schools that are not currently there to be aware that there is a new school being considered and that they should be aware of it?

Mrs Stewart: I am sorry, I do not understand your question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: The question is: when a government school is being considered for a particular area, should that information be shared with the independent schools, non-government schools, so they could have input into whether they would also be in a position to put a recommendation for their own?

Mr Rattenbury: I think they are two slightly different processes in that, as a new part of town gets built, there is a strong expectation that the government will provide a school. I think that is just done as a matter of course through the budget papers et cetera.. In respect of the process of then adding non-government schools—I touched on this before—I think the process of allocation has been a bit murky in the past. That is why we are trying to improve that. It will be more of an expression of interest process when a site becomes available rather than just who gets on the list first.

MR DOSZPOT: It is more—

THE CHAIR: No, you will have to finish the sup, otherwise this will be classified as your question. Your supplementaries do go on.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

THE CHAIR: How many applications for new schools have been rejected each year in the past three years?

Mrs Stewart: I would need to take that on notice. I am not aware of any, but I will take that and double-check.

MR DOSZPOT: My substantive question—

THE CHAIR: A new question, but it will have to be quick, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, the previous minister abolished the non-government schools education council. I have had a lot of feedback from all sources, all representatives on it—government and non-government schools—and the entities that sat on it. Would you reconsider reinstating the NGSEC?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not at this stage, Mr Doszpot. As you recall, when the minister removed the role of that organisation, she replaced it with a mechanism for establishing issue-based groups. At the moment I am giving consideration to establishing the next of those because I think that is a really interesting model and one that we can use to bring in the right people for a particular issue. That is that part of the process.

In terms of the broader issue, it really comes down to effective consultation. I guess it is a matter of opinion about whether you need a standing group or whether you build particular groups around particular issues. In respect of the schools for all implementation, we have a number of groups that we are consulting with on that. So far, we have had quite positive feedback on that. So, no, not at this stage, not as a standing body at this point in time.

MR DOSZPOT: The feedback I have received is that most of the organisations who were represented on it from both sides felt that that previous body was very useful. They certainly would like to be considered for the same sort of setup to be re-implemented. You answered my question on that basis. Would you take some recommendation from the non-government sector on whether that would be a useful way to go or not?

Mr Rattenbury: I would be open to it. I might say that in the four-plus months I have been in this role, not one organisation—I have met almost every stakeholder in the sector, I think; I have made a very deliberate effort to meet everybody—has raised it with me. That is why it is not on my radar. I accept that you have had that feedback, but—

MR DOSZPOT: I will refer the next one to you.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure, please do.

MR HINDER: My question is about the kidsmatter and mindmatters initiatives of the federal directorate, I believe. Is it federal? I think it was federal?

Mr Rattenbury: I think so. Anyway, go on.

MR HINDER: Can you give me a bit of feedback about what that is and how it works within the ACT education system?

Ms Evans: Thanks for the question. Yes, the kidsmatter and mindmatters programs are actually picked up also in the schools for all report as a recommendation. The recommendation was that schools consider implementing kidsmatter and mindmatters. I think we have had really good uptake within the ACT, within the public and Catholic and independent systems. The programs are online based and deal with matters of mental health issues. Kidsmatter is designed for primary school students and mindmatters for high school students. The resources are very kid friendly where they need to be, but there is also access for parents and teachers.

They cover a whole range of things. The most recent modules that have come out are around things like self-harm, for example, what would a teacher maybe see when that is happening, how could they approach that issue? If you are a high school student and a friend is exhibiting mental health symptoms, what can you do as a good friend to support that person? It is that sort of thing. It is all evidence based. All evidence is listed within the program. You can actually click down further and see studies that have been used and drawn on to provide that information. It is a really fantastic resource. We have the principals association actually sitting in our directorate. Four of their staff are delivering training around the use of kidsmatter and mindmatters within our schools.

MR HINDER: And the numbers; do you have any idea how many schools?

Ms Evans: I do know.

MR HINDER: While you are looking it up, I will say that the Assembly has recently released a report on youth suicide.

Ms Evans: Yes.

MR HINDER: It largely identified the role of teachers and health professionals in identifying people at risk. We certainly heard from a lot of people giving evidence that the work done in the Education Directorate around that was a valuable input to keep those numbers at zero, ideally.

Ms Evans: Yes. It is very topical. I think that within the directorate we are acutely aware of it obviously because of our responsibilities to young people. We definitely take it very seriously and make sure that all of the staff who have responsibility for young people have the skills to assist them if they are making that kind of cry for help that might precede a suicide attempt. I am still looking for the numbers. Do you want to go to another question while I am looking?

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch has a supplementary.

MS BURCH: It is in regard to mindmatters. It may relate more to the mental health of some of our students. The safe schools initiative that we put in place created a little commentary not so long ago. Have we committed to continue with a safe schools approach?

Mr Rattenbury: Absolutely. I have had very strong feedback from a lot of students, interestingly, in going around the schools at how positive they are about the program. Many teachers have indicated to us that they consider it a very valuable program. I am hopeful that the outcome of the federal government review—there is still some uncertainty about exactly what that will mean practically. If we can keep working with the federal government, that will be terrific. If we cannot, the ACT government will support that program nonetheless. We consider it so important that we will keep it going.

MS BURCH: The feedback from the kids is around their health and wellbeing. This is what they want to see for themselves?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS BURCH: And their peers.

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is working in the sense that I have, again, had feedback that for students with gender identity issues, sexuality issues, in some cases they find school perhaps the safest place. That is because there is in our schools a culture of acceptance and a culture of understanding, and we must keep that going. It is very positive, I think. I am not saying it is universal; there will be pockets of problems. But overall the feedback is very positive. They see something like the safe schools program as an essential part of that.

MR HINDER: I understand there was an excellent motion moved in the Assembly in support of it and in condemnation of the federal government's withdrawal of funding.

Mr Rattenbury: You are right, Mr Hinder.

THE CHAIR: Ms Evans, you might want to take that on notice.

Ms Evans: I think I will have to take it on notice. Although Ms Brighton very quickly came up with the stats, it was only for mindmatters, not kidsmatter as well.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Smyth, if I can, I need about two minutes at the end, in terms of your planning.

THE CHAIR: A couple of quick questions on the non-government sector: when does online NAPLAN start in ACT schools?

Ms Joseph: From 2017.

THE CHAIR: Will there be assistance to the non-government schools to help deliver NAPLAN online or are they expected to provide that?

Ms Joseph: We are working cross sectorally in assistance. It is the expectation that the infrastructure—computers and so forth—is provided by each of the systems respectively.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whybrow, on page 9 of the budget statement, you pointed us to table 9, grants paid to non-government schools. The note to ACT government grants says that the increase is mainly due to indexation and the impact of rollovers. For the year it is an increase of \$3.86 million. How much is rollover and how much is indexation?

Mr Whybrow: I will take that on notice and give you the breakdown. The notion of indexation—the school resourcing standard has an indexation base to it as well. As I said earlier, there is a component of—it is remeasured each year. The latest component of that is indexation. The rollover amount there relates to the rollover of the interest subsidy scheme, but I will get the exact figures and take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a vague idea of what the split is?

Mr Whybrow: I would prefer not to guess in that space and give you the exact figures if I can.

THE CHAIR: All right. It would appear the commonwealth increases are mainly indexation, which is about six per cent. Is that the index that you talk about?

Mr Whybrow: In relation to that, it comes back to what I was saying earlier: it is the increase. There are different indexation rates under the school resourcing standard, and the other component is for schools below the SRS, being the Catholic systemic system. But there are also three independent schools that are below the SRS. There is a one-sixth transition to the SRS over that six-year period. That is also part of the increase.

THE CHAIR: You will take that on notice and give us the rundown.

Mr Whybrow: Yes, most definitely, I will provide you with that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, we have two minutes; go for your life.

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Mr Smyth. The first thing is that earlier today there were some questions taken on notice. I already have some of the data; so I will table now the special settings capacity in public schools in 2016; the breakdown of the satisfaction survey by sector; the \$70 million election commitment question—a breakdown of the figures there; the non-government high schools to ACT college numbers and vice versa—so students moving between the two sectors at the year 10-year 11 point; and the percentage of out-of-area enrolments as at February 2016, including a page of explanatory notes which identify how the data is calculated and the like. I will table those now for the committee. There will be a few others that will come later.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for the prompt answers.

Mr Rattenbury: With the committee's indulgence, Ms Joseph would like to make a few concluding remarks.

Ms Joseph: Thank you. I wanted to acknowledge the comments that were made earlier. It really has been an absolute privilege to work with Ms Burch as minister, Minister Rattenbury, Minister Bourke when he was minister and also the Chief Minister as education minister. I have had 6½ years in the territory, the past 4½ years as director-general in working with the government, members of the Assembly and ministers and their staff, to serve the government and the people of the territory.

I thank people in this room for their support and I thank members of the committee today for their acknowledgement and for the opportunity to showcase the great work of the many, many people in the Education Directorate. Thank you.

MS BURCH: We wish you all the best.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Joseph. On behalf of the committee, we formally put on the record our thanks for all your efforts. We may not always agree with what everybody does, but I think people here would acknowledge your work.

Normally I would not do this until the end of the day but, given that you are not coming back, Minister for Education, anything else that you have taken on notice, the committee would like a response to in five working days, starting as at tomorrow. When a transcript is available that will be provided for any correction or additional information that you may seek to prove.

I am going to take a punt and say that we are not going to get a better offer for the chair's award between now and the end of the day. I am going to give Ms Joseph the award. Most people on their last day of year 12 would not turn up to school with an attitude of doing more tests.

MR HINDER: It used to be muck-up day.

THE CHAIR: They would have let their hair down, worn some daggy jeans and done something outrageous. I think your stoic efforts in the face of the estimates committee today are to be commended. So you can have the chair's award for the day.

Ms Joseph: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: With that, we will break and resume—

MR HINDER: She may have dived into the fountain at the front.

THE CHAIR: She may well have done. There are still a couple hours left in her last working day. The committee will resume at 3.45 with higher education and the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Sitting suspended from 3.31 to 3.55 pm.

Appearances:

Fitzharris Ms Meegan, Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research,
Minister for Transport and Municipal Services and Assistant Minister for Health

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Dawes, Mr David, Director-General, Economic Development
House, Mr Jeff, Deputy Director-General, Enterprise Canberra
Cox, Mr Ian, Executive Director, Innovate Canberra
Miller, Mr David, Director, Skills Canberra
Hartley, Ms Laura, Senior Manager, Small Business and Skills, and Study
Canberra, Innovate Canberra
Keogh, Mr Geoff, Senior Manager, Innovate Canberra
Ogden, Mr Paul, Chief Finance Officer

Canberra Institute of Technology
Sloan, Mr Craig, Chair, CIT Board
Cover, Ms Leanne, Chief Executive Officer
Grayson, Ms Carolyn, Deputy Chief Executive, CIT Brand and Business
Development
Kay, Mr Shane, Chief Operating Officer, CIT Corporate Services
Stenlake, Dr Nicole, Executive Director, People and Organisational Governance
Maslen, Ms Sue, General Manager, CIT Student and Academic Services
Ryan, Mr Paul, General Manager, CIT Solutions

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
Carter, Mr Glenn, Chief Executive Officer
Service, Mr James, Independent Chairman, Authority Board

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the final afternoon session of the Select Committee on Estimates for 2016-17. This afternoon we are looking at higher education as it is in economic development, output class 9; the Canberra Institute of Technology as in budget statement B, pages 160 through to 193, output class 1.1, provision of vocational education and training services, and CIT Solutions, which is also there; and then the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority statement of intent.

Please be aware that proceedings today are being recorded and are to be transcribed by Hansard and then published by the committee. The proceedings are also being broadcast as well as webstreamed. On the table in front of you on the pink card is the privilege statement. Could those at the table and those who come to the table please read the privilege card and confirm to the committee that you understand the implications of privilege.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So done. Thanks very much. Minister, we are little behind, but if you want to make a quick opening statement, that is your prerogative.

Ms Fitzharris: Thank you, chair and members. I do apologise very much. This is my first estimates appearance, and it is not a great start to be late; I do apologise for that. I would like to make an opening statement. I am happy—I am in your hands; I know you have had a long couple of days—to stay a bit longer if you would like.

As you know, in May last the government released confident and business ready, building on our strengths, which committed to bringing a strong economic development focus to our relationship in particular with the higher education and research sector, which value-adds \$2.7 billion per annum to our economy and creates 16,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

To deliver on this commitment, the government agreed to create a higher education and research sector champion to promote the sector across government and to act as a focus point for implementing the government's agenda. As Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, I am now the sector's champion, and I am committed to working with the sector to drive the diversification of Canberra's economy.

The ACT government has a long history of proactive engagement with the sector, which I can talk about in more detail throughout the hearings. In addition, over the past few months I have attended a number of events to promote Canberra's capabilities and areas associated with our higher education and research institutions. For example, in April I attended the Locate 16 spatial industry conference in Melbourne. Just recently I addressed the defence and industry conference held here in Canberra for the first time, usually held in South Australia. Next month the Chief Minister and I will host the Vice-Chancellors Forum, which has a key role in working with the government to implement our commitment to pursue a strong economic development focus in our relationship with the higher education research and now training institutions. At each event, I see it being vital that I promote the strengths of Canberra's higher education research and training sector. Many of those in the room at events that I have been to may be Canberrans themselves but often comment to me that I have revealed some of the strengths and capabilities in the sector here that they were unaware of.

In addition, the 2016-17 budget provides \$750,000 to progress sector building projects across the sectors the government and our stakeholders have jointly identified as wealth creators. Set out in the 2015 strategy, the sectors including defence and cybersecurity, space and spatial, allied health and sport, digital and ICT, agriculture and environmental sciences, and renewable energy.

As the committee knows, innovation and entrepreneurship are the key to the government's business strategy to continue to grow and diversify our economy. There are a number of initiatives in the budget which I believe you might have covered in some part with the Chief Minister in his capacity as Minister for Economic Development, but I am also happy to talk with you about those. One in particular that I want to note here is a research activity that sits not within the economic development portfolio but within the health portfolio, the \$7.3 million investment in genomics research, which also means cutting-edge research at the ANU and also benefits ACT Health and, in particular, Canberrans in the health system here.

Of course, the committee is aware of the high quality of our higher education and research institutions, in particular ANU, UC and UNSW Canberra. Data61 is now building on the NICTA legacy and has been given a central role by the Prime Minister in the implementation of the national cybersecurity strategy. With our strengths in this area across the ACT, we believe that a collaborative approach to cybersecurity from ANU, UNSW Canberra, UC and Data61 will see a large proportion of this industry grown in Canberra. In addition, we have two of Australia's renowned research institutions, CSIRO and Geoscience Australia.

Members of the committee may be aware of the recent renaming of the training and tertiary education group and its movement to the economic development directorate. It has now been renamed Skills Canberra and sits within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, in recognition of the close links that vocational education and training have with industry and its importance to the portfolio that I now hold.

The diversification of Canberra's economy relies on a high-performing VET sector that allows our skilled community to contribute to the economic prosperity and social engagement of our city. This requires improved collaboration both within government and with our business and industry stakeholders. The move of Skills Canberra into my portfolio will enable greater alignment of our vocational education and training services with other areas of economic development.

As the only public provider of VET in the ACT, CIT is a key player in our sector and enjoys the trust and respect of the Canberra community. The success of CIT is best reflected in its 2015 student satisfaction rate of 93 per cent, employer satisfaction rate of 87 per cent and graduate employment rate of 83.5 per cent compared to 74 per cent nationally.

The introduction of the CIT board on 1 July 2015 has driven significant internal change. A major reform—and I would like to acknowledge the previous minister, Ms Burch, for her leadership in this significant reform—is to position CIT well and to advocate for and see the potential for CIT to establish a campus in Tuggeranong. I welcome the CIT people, Mr Sloan and Ms Cover, to these hearings this afternoon.

I believe that our commitment to a highly skilled workforce combined with our performance in innovation and entrepreneurship, our deep capabilities in areas of strategic interest such as cybersecurity and space and spatial technologies, our world-renowned education and research institutions, our commitment to skills development, and the young age profile of the city will see the higher education, training and research portfolio having a central role in continuing to diversify Canberra's economy.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. The committee also welcomes Mr Sloan, the chair of the CIT board, to estimates this afternoon. We do not often see board chairs anymore at estimates, so welcome.

Thanks for that, minister. As you have said, it is a \$2.7 billion industry. It is very important to higher education. It is very important to the future of the ACT. In the strategic objectives and indicators for this, which of the strategic indicators relate to

higher ed and what are the outcomes that are expected?

Ms Fitzharris: The strategic indicators relating to higher ed and output 9.2, innovation and trade investment, are the accountability indicators you will find on page 41.

THE CHAIR: No; that is the output class. In the strategic indicators, which ones pertain to higher education?

Ms Fitzharris: The strategic objectives?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: It is in strategic objective 9, I believe. It is in economic development, strategic objective 4, I believe, economic growth and opportunities, social inclusion and an attractive and livable urban environment. You will find further detail in the output classes in the accountability indicators.

THE CHAIR: If we could stay with strategic objective 4 on page 6 of budget statement B, where does it actually refer to higher education and the university sector, and what is the objective?

Ms Fitzharris: In key sectors.

THE CHAIR: Sorry?

Ms Fitzharris: In key sectors. It says:

The Directorate will support leadership and collaboration in key sectors that have the capacity for long terms wealth creation and employment.

As I indicated in my opening statement, the confident and business ready strategy recognises our key sectors. Not all of them are listed there, but that is where I see the higher education research sector.

THE CHAIR: I do not believe the words “higher education” are there, or “universities”. In the strategic indicators, 4a is tourism, 4b is innovation and 4c is participation in sport and physical education. If it is such an important sector to the economy and to the government, why is there not a strategic objective and why is there not a strategic indicator?

Ms Fitzharris: The strategic indicator in growth and innovation, trade and investment is where the responsibilities for this sector now lie within the directorate. As I mentioned, key to this is that the policy drivers are all in competent and business ready, and you will see in there that the higher education and the university sector are very much a key part of that. I will certainly take that on notice as something to consider for next year’s budget papers.

THE CHAIR: But again, strategic indicator 4b, “Growth in innovation, trade and investment”, talks about the business environment, business investment, business

innovation. It does not actually mention higher education or the university sector so how would one know that was the government's intention?

Ms Fitzharris: As I say, they would look to our signature policy document, which is confident and business ready here, where you will find, I think on about page 3, that it is very clear.

THE CHAIR: That is okay if you have that document, but if you are looking at the budget documents and you are looking at the government's commitment to the higher education sector, where would you find them?

Ms Fitzharris: As I say, it is in other parts of this; and as I say, I will certainly take it into consideration to include that in next year's budget statement. Our signature policy document and policy documents are not always in budget statements. On page 7, it says, "Our research institutions are renowned for their research and commercialisation outcomes." Our economic journey, the first part of this policy, says "education and research". So please be under no illusion that this is not a very important sector for the ACT. It is very much a key part of all our innovation, trade and investment activities. As I say, it is a reasonable point, and I will certainly consider it for next year's budget statement.

THE CHAIR: In terms of the output class that is on page—

Mr Dawes: If I may, one of the key things as we are going forward is that higher education is seen as an important plank. I take on board your comments and will ensure that that is highlighted separately. But this also goes back to a number of initiatives that we are doing. When you look at our CBR network, the higher education facilities in Canberra, CSIRO, the ANU, UC and the University of New South Wales, and CIT has also joined that group, there is a greater emphasis that that is how we are working to broaden the economic base. If you look at the investment the government is making into UC in the public hospital there, that is certainly taking into account the importance of higher education as we grow that to become a training hospital. We will ensure that there is a separate line item in future but, obviously, with the \$2.7 billion contribution to the territory, it is a key plank of our innovation in the Canberra business bold and ready initiative.

THE CHAIR: If we can go to page 40, the accountability indicators, which are the accountability indicators referred to for higher education and the university sector?

MS BURCH: Looks like it is h and i to me.

THE CHAIR: I am not asking you the question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Sorry, I was just reading page 41.

THE CHAIR: Where are the accountability indicators for the university sector that is worth \$2.7 billion?

Ms Fitzharris: "Support development of key industry capability in the ACT innovation ecosystem", and there are two there: "Deliver targeted programs to

support development of key industry capability” and “Satisfaction on the effectiveness of ... programs and initiatives to support ... industry”. As I say, not all industries are specifically named within. So within our—

THE CHAIR: But, with due respect, that is mainly about CBR, the innovation network and the community forums.

Ms Fitzharris: “Deliver targeted programs to support development of key industry capability”.

THE CHAIR: Okay; there are four programs to do that. What are the four programs?

Mr Dawes: Mr Cox will take you through those.

THE CHAIR: The question would be: of the four programs that you are going to deliver, are any of them for higher education in the university sector?

Mr Cox: The four programs mentioned in b are the CBRIN program, Data61, CollabIT and ScreenACT. Of the first two, CBRIN is a coalescence and consortium of ANU, UC, CSIRO and UNSW, who collectively come together under that framework to further their commercialisation and IP.

THE CHAIR: It is very unclear from the documents that that is about university-based programs.

Mr Cox: Data61 is the other related one.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Mr Hinder, a new question.

MR HINDER: My question is around your opening statement and the importance of the territory’s tertiary education sector. The portfolio brings higher education and research together with the training portfolio, vocational training. What are the benefits of establishing that consolidated higher education portfolio, and how can this assist to deliver an economic development agenda for the government?

Ms Fitzharris: As we have noted through the confident and business ready strategy there are some key sectors that we are focusing on, amongst them, for example, defence and cyber security, space and spatial. With the combined portfolio that has our higher education and research institutions as well as our vocational training institutions, the skills and knowledge that is built up in both those post-secondary school institutions is key to the success of these sectors.

For example, there may be a number of local firms that have been established by people with very specific technical skills. Ian and David may be able to provide more detail on this, but often they have very specific technical skills which they have been able to commercialise into firms that are able to sell their products both within the Australian market and export overseas.

The skills that people will need within those new businesses are not just skills that can be learnt in universities but often are supported by skills that come through our

vocational sector as well. A number of diplomas and certificates are undertaken in our vocational sector really go to supporting our small and medium sized businesses to grow, particularly grow to export their products overseas.

Mr Dawes: There has been a very good example of this, and we can elaborate a little further on, as we have gone through and looked at attracting some of the major environmental suppliers, whether it is solar or wind, here to the territory. CIT is working with one of those successful consortiums to develop a training package for that. The training will be done here in the ACT for that as they look at expanding nationally as well. That is another reason why we are trying to link up right across the whole of government a number of different initiatives—to ensure we are able to create employment but also training opportunities.

Mr Cox: Another example is in the area of cyber security. In Australia and, indeed, globally there is a major cyber security skills deficit, and it will not be addressed through tertiary and post-tertiary training outcomes. The need is to start almost at school level, which is done in Israel. In the curriculums in Israel, for example, they have compulsory cyber security content. Bringing students through a curriculum to train the next generation of cyber security analysts is something that needs to start in schools, which I think is widely recognised. A lot of the cyber issue is around the pathway issue—where one starts and moves right through the system.

There was an announcement today at ANU, in fact, to put an element of the Australian Signals Directorate capacity on campus at ANU, which will be, if you like, a hack environment for undergraduate students to work with ASD staff to build very early high-end skills that can be moved through the workforce as necessary. It is a very strong skills pathway.

Ms Fitzharris: There is a range of benefits of bringing the different components together particularly as recognition of what a key driver this sector is within the broader ACT and regional economy as well. I believe we will be moving to CIT more specifically later, but I invite either Ms Cover or Mr Sloan to comment on that as well, if they would like.

Mr Sloan: One of the real advantages of having them all together is the connection, as Ian mentioned, creating those pathways and our ability to be able to understand where the university sector is going and for them to understand where the business of CIT is at and what it is trying to achieve and how we then link that pathway to create the workforce of the future. That is the real advantage we have in a jurisdiction the size of the ACT when you can get all institutions working together to create that future workforce and to position our economy to know where that future workforce and future industries are going to be and to make sure we capitalise on those growing industries to help stimulate and grow our business economy.

MR HINDER: We have a long history of very good ideas eventually winding up in Silicon Valley in the US or somewhere. Is this a move to try to retain some of that knowledge into commercially viable product?

Ms Fitzharris: You can certainly still have them percolating throughout Silicon Valley, but they may well be based here. Many of our highly successful exporting

firms now—

MR HINDER: As the IP state.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. The most recent data shows a significant growth in services exports. To give an example of what this looks like in practice, CIT is both a part of the CBR Innovation Network and is also now represented on the Vice Chancellors Forum as well. There is recognition on a number of fronts of the importance of all the major institutions in this sector coming together. Probably the portfolio and administrative arrangements change has been the most recent one, but it is really strong recognition of the connections in the sector.

MR HINDER: It was not so long ago that UC was Canberra College of Advanced Education, so all learning is good learning.

Ms Fitzharris: It is.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what are the current numbers of students enrolled in electrotechnology courses?

Ms Fitzharris: I would be happy to answer that, chair, but I believe we are still on output class 9 and would move to CIT later. I am in your hands about whether you want to move between them.

THE CHAIR: I did say we would range across all of the classes given the limited time. Members can ask what questions they want.

Ms Fitzharris: Sure. I will ask Leanne to respond.

Ms Cover: Are you referring specifically to the training packages in electrotechnology for Australian apprenticeships?

MR DOSZPOT: I am asking for the current students enrolled in electrotechnology courses.

Ms Cover: There are currently 516 students as of June this year.

MR DOSZPOT: And what are the current staff members?

Ms Cover: We will take that on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: The next question is to you, minister, regarding CIT: have all appropriate actions been taken or will they be taken to satisfy the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs in respect of students who may not have been appropriately trained during the period of unrest following Electrogroupp's collapse as an RTO and the subsequent transfer of their students to CIT?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. I appreciate this has been a longstanding issue and I have underway a response to the education committee's final report. I look forward to tabling that on the first day of the August sittings. At the moment the response is

being collated within government, but I can reassure you, Mr Doszpot, that I take this matter seriously. I am very reassured, based on the outcomes of the ASQA report which were tabled in the Assembly some time ago, that our national regulator has come in, had a look and worked with CIT and has given CIT endorsement of this course. But we will respond to the committee's report on the first day of the August sittings.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, as you are aware, the committee criticised the perceived resistance of CIT in responding to concerns and recommended the minister should not be satisfied just with CIT's response. We are still waiting on any response, as I understand.

Ms Fitzharris: As it has been raised I will take this opportunity to say—again I am in your hands, chair, as this relates to another committee and, like I say, we will be responding to that—that it is my understanding that for some time now the committee has been advised that it has a single point of contact it should come through to make requests of CIT, and that is through the minister's office, and now that is me. There is no resistance to CIT responding to comments. If there has been a difficulty in that it is from the committee in asking one point of contact for a response. We would be very happy to provide that information. If there is any outstanding correspondence to the committee I am happy for you to let me know and we will find a way to respond to that as quickly as possible.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I am simply quoting the chairman's tabling notes on that so—

Ms Fitzharris: I have read the report; I have got it here. I am happy to answer questions on that but, like I say, there is a response underway and it will be tabled on the first sitting day of August.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand, and I do not want to get into committee activities on this.

MS BURCH: I should hope not.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I am not but this is something in the *Canberra Times* today, so I am quoting from the *Canberra Times*. The committee has been wanting answers which the committee did not get. That is why, according to the article, the report was delayed and we are still waiting on things to come back from them.

Ms Fitzharris: On the response?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: And like I have indicated, that is underway. It will be tabled, as the committee has asked, on the first sitting day of August.

MR DOSZPOT: I take your point; this is another committee matter, so I will move on from there. The accountability indicators on BSB, page 171 under "Student outcomes" a graph shows fewer CIT graduates employed or in further study after training. Can you elaborate on that?

Ms Cover: Sorry, Mr Doszpot, which part—

MR DOSZPOT: Page 171, figure 1, student outcomes.

Ms Cover: Employed or in further study after training.

Ms Fitzharris: The most significant in this one for me is “Employed after training”. CIT graduates are performing better than other government providers across Australia. “Employed or in further study”, but more are employed. I note your point, though, which I think is that it is slightly below the national average on the other—

Ms Cover: The minister is correct; the important point is that while it does appear to be slightly down, it is a very high benchmark to start with. We think this is a really good outcome for CIT in that space in terms of employment after students have completed their CIT qualification.

MR DOSZPOT: Moving on to page 172, still in that accountability indicator, why are program enrolments down both from target estimates and future targets.

Mr Kay: The targets are down because activity is down in CIT in our profile-based enrolments. As I am pretty sure you are aware, there is a skilled capital program in the ACT which has been implemented as part of the national partnership agreement on skills reform. We have seen a bit of a move away from our profiling enrolments to more contestable environment enrolments. Obviously as this part of the business has contracted slightly we have picked up in more contestable enrolments.

Ms Fitzharris: My understanding, Mr Doszpot, is that while this may be a reduction for CIT, it is not a reduction in vocational training allocations across the territory at all; it is just a shift in the mix. Mr Miller might like to add further to that question.

Mr Miller: Further to the point from the minister and Mr Kay, it is not unexpected. I suppose that when we have introduced an additional program, as we did through skilled capital at the start of last year, there is a potential shift within the market itself about where students will choose to go. Where there is that competition CIT continues to remain the premier provider and continues to be the dominant force across VET delivery in the ACT. But you will have seen some of that shift away from the profile delivery of some of the activity that is funded through training profile and into the contestable programs.

MR DOSZPOT: Why are module pass rate targets at only 75 per cent and program completion rates below target? What is the national benchmark for that?

Mr Kay: The 75 per cent is the national benchmark.

MR DOSZPOT: It is the national benchmark?

Mr Kay: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: And it has been exceeded in the 2015-16 estimated outcome module

pass rates.

MR DOSZPOT: Also employer satisfaction rate targets sit at 80 per cent. Is that also national?

Mr Kay: Yes. We benchmark ourselves against national targets and national benchmarks and continuously over the years overachieve against those.

Ms Fitzharris: There is an overachievement there of 87 per cent against an 80 per cent target.

MR DOSZPOT: Good to hear.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes it is good to hear.

MR DOSZPOT: Just on the courses that are being offered through school holidays, I know that there is an advertisement out, I think today, “Do you know an aspiring young vet?” Do you know what I am talking about?

Mr Kay: Yes. This is for high school students to come and learn about companion care for animals, I think it is.

MR DOSZPOT: It is a school holiday program. I have a couple of questions on that. How widely has this been advertised? Is this Canberra only?

Mr Kay: As far as I am aware it is only Canberra, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: When did the promotion start?

Mr Kay: Within the last week I believe.

MR DOSZPOT: Who is the target market for it? Obviously it is for vets.

Mr Kay: From what I know about the program, which is not a whole lot, it is targeting high school/college students in the ACT, mostly high school students, I believe.

MR DOSZPOT: Where has it been promoted? In Canberra or elsewhere?

Mr Kay: As I said, in the ACT as far as I am aware.

MR DOSZPOT: How many students can the course take?

Mr Kay: I think we have worked on around 10, a class size of 10.

MR DOSZPOT: And how is the fee structure calculated? \$650 seems quite a lot for a student to pay in their school holidays. Can you expand on that a little?

Ms Fitzharris: How many days is it for?

Mr Kay: I think it is five days across holidays, a five-day block.

Ms Fitzharris: For a school holiday program, as a parent of primary school children, that actually sounds fairly affordable. They have been to school holiday programs. I am obviously not sneezing at \$650 but—

Mr Kay: It is a really comprehensive program with a lot of excursions and a lot of touchy, animal-y sorts of things. There is not a technical term. I would like to also add that we have to be pretty mindful of our responsibilities of being financially sustainable in the industry as well. We are not going to give something away for nothing when we are trying to run an organisation on a financially sustainable basis. It all needs to be weighed up.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that. What makes up the cost structure for the \$650?

Ms Fitzharris: Perhaps we could take that one on notice.

Mr Kay: It is mostly teacher time. Carolyn knows more than I do.

Ms Grayson: The program is very much a school-based program for 14 to 16-year-olds—that is whom we have targeted—to give them an opportunity to actually have a taste of being trained, if they are interested in being trained, to be a companion animal assistant or work with a vet further down the track. Of course younger students—all students and ourselves possibly—are interested in working with animals, and companion animals are a very key part of a whole range of care for people as well.

The program has been costed on staff time of course. We have a ratio of 1:15 staff being involved. As well there are excursions to the wombat rescue centre or a number of facilities where of course they learn very valuable skills and understanding of the native animals as well as companion animals.

MR DOSZPOT: You said the cost is staff cost. Is it an on-staff member who is delivering this, or do we have a vet on board at—

Ms Grayson: In regard to all of our programs that we run in this particular area, we do have staff who come in as casual teachers and they are veterinary trained. We have appropriately qualified staff in the veterinary space as well as staff who are skilled and of course are contracted to CIT to provide more generic educational purposes as well and care for the younger students who would be participating in this school holiday program.

MR DOSZPOT: And materials to practise with, as Mr Kay pointed out, hands on?

Ms Grayson: Sorry, the materials that they use?

MR DOSZPOT: Animals and—

Ms Grayson: Within CIT we do have doggy day care. I am sure some people use that program. But we do have a number of animals that are cared for by appropriately trained staff, technical staff, that are on campus. Yes we have animals on campus. We

also have the opportunity to go into the rescue centres and have the students being exposed up close and personal.

MR DOSZPOT: I also note the fee includes entry to the National Zoo and Aquarium. Students are not being exposed to any of the wild animals there, are they?

Ms Grayson: I am assuming the fences will still be there. Not any more than any of the broader public would be exposed to them.

MR DOSZPOT: I have one final question. You mentioned that this is for students, I presume, or would other people who may be interested in becoming a vet in older age categories be able to come into this course as well?

Ms Grayson: Absolutely, yes. We are not restricting the age. We have got a minimum, as in the lower target, of 14 years, but adults would be welcome to participate in the program, a very valuable program, to learn some basic skills and yes, to taste the opportunity of being able to learn some first-aid skills with animals and some basic care of animals, yes.

MS BURCH: Welcome everyone. I start by saying I think the CIT is a fabulous institution and I think that industry in town should have no question whatsoever about the skills and competencies with which the apprentices come out. Maybe David Miller might come back. My question is about trade training—and it goes to CIT which is a fabulous institution—and it is around how we get people engaged. We had Education and Training earlier today say that 60 per cent of our year 12 grads leave with a vocational skill. Perhaps doggy day care could be part of that. How do the trade training schools then fit within CIT? I will declare an absolute interest with that connection in Tuggeranong CIT.

Ms Fitzharris: I want to reiterate your point, as you know very well, about the quality of CIT and let the committee know that I did attend a ministerial advisory council meeting some months ago with my counterparts responsible for vocational training in other jurisdictions. The reputation of CIT, we know here but that group of ministers from other jurisdictions is also looking in on the ACT, having had a very substantial public provider with a strong reputation for many years.

MS BURCH: We stand alone, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: I do not think I quite appreciated how few jurisdictions now have left a high quality public provider that has not been gutted from the inside, I must say largely by Liberal governments at the state level, where VET fee help has made an enormous impact on the community as a whole, particularly vulnerable members of the community who sign up for vocational training because they know that that is a great pathway into employment. They have been hung out to dry by organisations that have taken advantage of VET fee help, have signed up to tens of thousands of dollars of training packages, indebted for life, only to find that they turn up at the door and no-one is there.

MS BURCH: Victoria had to de-qualify thousands.

THE CHAIR: Is there a question? It is not a conversation. Is there a question and is there an answer?

Ms Fitzharris: It is an important point that our vocational sector is very well served including by having a well-regarded, well-trusted community, a public sector provider that CIT is and the connection into the schools. A vocational training sector that has been decimated cannot provide that link back into schools where you do have trade training taking place, providing a pathway for school students. I will now hand over to Mr Miller to explain how that works.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for the statement, minister. If we can have an answer to the question, that would be kind.

Mr Miller: I think it is a really important point in terms of the promotional activity that needs to occur to encourage the initial engagement of school-age children in looking at trade opportunities as future pathways and it also demonstrates the importance of collaboration between the various institutions involved in providing advice on educational services to students from a very young age, and that clearly involves CIT in a very big way.

It is interesting, I think, that Skills Canberra, have recently moved, as part of the machinery of government change, out of education into the Chief Minister's directorate. It is so beneficial to have had such strong relationships within education and to know that the relationships exist between schools and the administrative part of the education directorate that also oversees the delivery of VET in schools programs and administers and oversees the trade training centres programs that Ms Burch referred to. They are all really well established. I think there is an increasing amount of work occurring in the VET in schools space that is making best use of the sorts of facilities that have been developed through the trade training centres and certainly engages with CIT in a whole range of avenues as well.

The important point to note is: when it comes to the traditional trade areas, CIT is by and large the heavy lifter in the ACT. The traditional trades are covered through the Australian apprenticeships program, which is a program that we have oversight of and administer, but the vast majority of the funding that goes out through a competitive process goes to CIT. That is demonstrative of the fact that they do a lot of the work in the traditional trade space, which is typically the more expensive qualifications to deliver.

On that, I guess it is worth acknowledging that one of the things that we do to continue to promote the engagement and training occurring in those traditional trade areas is about really defining what the skills needs are for the ACT. Obviously a lot of those traditional trade areas will continue to feature very highly on the skills needs. We have got a really detailed process to identify the skills needs in the ACT and how that links to relevant qualifications, and that then informs the amount of subsidy that we pay for registered training organisations to deliver training in those areas.

It is one way of providing that support and demonstrating the ACT government's investment in training in areas of skills needs by offering up a higher proportion of subsidy for training in those traditional trades, and that is where CIT, like I said before,

really does the heavy lifting in a lot of those trade areas.

MS BURCH: With the trades training centres, they are broader than just carpentry, electrical and plumbing because there is hospitality in there as well.

Mr Miller: Beauty and all sorts of things. They cover a whole range of things.

MS BURCH: So I can get my hair cut at the local trade training centre?

Mr Miller: Yes. The main trade training centre has been established down south and there is another one, where funding has been agreed, that is being built up north.

MS BURCH: In the Belconnen network; is that right?

Mr Miller: That is right. The idea is that they provide a fantastic facility that can be used by a range of different schools and providers to provide training across a range of different industry areas. There is varied history involved with a lot of the schools, in particular networks that have a relationship with industry and training providers to deliver training across certain areas, but it is certainly not limited just to those nominal traditional trade areas. Horticulture is another one, I think, that features on the south side as well. So there is lots of variety about what can be delivered.

MS BURCH: If you could, through CIT, explain what that would look like practically when you have a public provider but an RTO within a school and partnerships with local industries?

Ms Cover: Maybe I can just give some examples. We are really proud of the new trade training centre that is over in Tuggeranong at the moment and the link that it is going to have to our new facility that is opening up next month, CIT Tuggeranong. Due to launch next month, it is a really great example of where CIT is offering the provision of vocational education and training into schools that is beyond the traditional trades.

We have already got really strong links with schools in that space, but what members may not know is that around the growing areas of health, community services, hospitality and ICT, by way of example, our staff are working very closely with the Tuggeranong trade training centre and the colleges in the south. We have got staff embedded into their governance framework—so conversations about collaboration of course development, collaboration with teachers in developing how those subjects are being taught and, most importantly, sharing the new spaces that are available.

When you look at the government facilities that are available across the south side, by way of example, and you add the new Tuggeranong CIT campus to that space, students are going to have a fantastic opportunity to engage in vocational education and training from high school through to college and then on to post-school with CIT in that space. I was at the facility yesterday and it is looking absolutely fantastic. It is simply across the road from Lake Tuggeranong College. The collaboration that we are developing in that trade training centre, by way of example, to lead across the ACT is outstanding.

MS BURCH: You made mention of high school, college and beyond. Vocational training can be many things. It can be a beginning and a destination of training, but it can also be skill sets that you piece together, whether you are young or not so young. Is that linked in also with the trades training centre, so if are in high school you do not just start on a linear course of vocational training?

Ms Cover: Absolutely. We know that students have lots of variety in their interests. We are making sure, working with the high schools and the colleges, that we can offer what suits students when it suits them. Some students enter into broader training programs at an early age, so there might be a certificate in child care that a student in year 11 and 12 might start and actually complete while they are at school or college. Other students might dip in and out, if you like, of vocational education and training, either with their college as an RTO or with a high school student working with the college or working with us to complete units of competency, to build their qualifications as they are going through their school journey.

The amount of training they do can be quite flexible. How they do it can be quite flexible. We have students, as I say, who are coming whilst they are at school to CIT. We have students who are doing it of an evening. We have students who are with us completely doing vocational education and training in programs like the pathways colleges. There is a really large degree of options for students to engage in vocational education and training.

MS BURCH: Just on page 41 of budget paper 2—and I think it was going to how you account and measure—you have got 30,000 students undertaking vocational training qualifications. That is a large number. Is that just CIT or is that vocational training?

Mr Miller: That is the target for next year. Again, apologies for the confusion, but part of the result of the transition through the machinery of government changes—

MS BURCH: Half of it is there.

Mr Miller: means that the performance is reported in one of the other sections. That is the target for next year. The actual figure is less than 30,000, but that does include both CIT students and students undertaking subsidised training through other training organisations.

MS BURCH: Have you seen a growth in that as a result of different opportunities? Again, it is about that flexibility. People are increasingly becoming aware, either through CIT or other providers, how you can come in and move out as you desire.

Mr Miller: In terms of the total shift in recent years there has been a decline in total students engaged in government subsidised training. There are a number of reasons for that. The apprenticeships one, which I think has been fairly well reported, is a significant contributor to that. It is really important to acknowledge that what is not captured here is also what occurs in the fee-for-service market. In terms of people dipping their toe in and undertaking different forms of vocational education and training, there is substantial training activity that occurs in the full-fee-paying market that is not subject to government subsidy.

What we are seeing through some national developments in data collection and reporting through total VET activity which is recently coming to fruition demonstrates that there is—I think the figure that I saw for total students undertaking some form of vocational education and training for the past year was well over 50,000. It is really about flexibility within the vocational education and training system within both government subsidised and non-government subsidised, whether it be full qualifications, training package qualifications, non-training package qualifications or other forms of vocational education and training, so that people have a wide range of opportunities to really dip their toe in and try different things. Then hopefully we put them on a pathway to obtaining further qualifications.

MS BURCH: With the total VET activity, have you mastered the unique student identifier? With that can you track how people are moving in and out of CIT to help you strategically plan around your demand, once you start to get that tracking?

Mr Miller: That absolutely will occur. It is one of those fortunate things where it is a great success to have the USI actually in place as well as the TVA. Combined, the two will be an extremely powerful source of information for training organisations and policy setters alike. The idea of being able to follow student pathways to see the training opportunities they undertake in what order is absolutely vital to be able to better plan policy and training responses.

MS BURCH: I think you stole Mr Sloan's thunder.

Mr Sloan: That is a brilliant answer.

THE CHAIR: Do you have anything to add, Mr Sloan?

Mr Sloan: Definitely not, Mr Chair. There is lots of thunder. I think at the end of the day there are a lot of really good things here. Certainly, Ms Burch, as you know, one of the key reasons we have an independent board at CIT is to grow that whole training space and not have it so reliant on the public purse and public funding. I think for Canberra to grow, as we know it has to—and the opportunities are enormous for this community and in fact the region—we need to make sure we have an institution that is able to get out there and actually identify the training needs. We need the vocational education and training sector to be stronger than it is now and to actually fill that gap that is currently there and allow people to have the flexibility to dip in and out of training courses as they see fit. It is about being far more flexible and really changing the way we have operated in the past as CIT. That is one of the great challenges, but boy, it is one of the fantastic opportunities that we have here. CIT remains such a critical asset for this community moving forward.

THE CHAIR: I might go back to higher ed, minister, particularly student accommodation at UC. Arscott House; what is happening with the house?

Ms Fitzharris: I am not currently aware of what is happening with Arscott House. It is a University of Canberra asset, as far as I understand, so you probably need to ask them.

THE CHAIR: You are the minister for higher ed.

Ms Fitzharris: It is a University of Canberra asset, and I am not familiar with every University of Canberra asset that they have on their campus or within their management.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Dawes, do you know?

Mr Dawes: No, I cannot add anything further to that, minister. That asset has been transferred to the UC and I have not had any update for some time.

THE CHAIR: Could you seek some information for the committee?

Ms Fitzharris: I can certainly find out for you.

THE CHAIR: That is very kind. Regarding the hospital, the government is leasing the land there but is paying for the construction of the hospital?

Ms Fitzharris: You will have to ask the Minister for Health that question specifically, but certainly the government is paying for the hospital.

THE CHAIR: The UC Sporting Commons: did we contribute to its construction?

Ms Fitzharris: I will have to take that one on notice. Mr Dawes might be able to answer that.

Mr Dawes: Yes. With the sports common, the ACT provided \$5 million as part of that particular construction. As you know, the university had other partners and they contributed to that.

THE CHAIR: The Brumbies and the commons; did we assist the Brumbies into the commons?

Mr Dawes: No. That was a particular transaction between the university and the Brumbies. All we provided was \$5 million and that was around the contribution for community sport.

THE CHAIR: Was ACTSport meant to go into the commons?

Mr Dawes: ACTSport were there before they went into administration.

THE CHAIR: Part of the move, I understood, on the commons was to assist groups like ACTSport. If we paid \$5 million to assist with that move—

Mr Dawes: Next week when we appear—

Ms Fitzharris: Perhaps when we have the minister for sport—

Mr Dawes: Yes. Next week when we appear before the committee we can answer all

of those questions. I just have not got that exact detail with me at this time.

THE CHAIR: So you would rather do that in sport than higher ed?

Mr Dawes: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE CHAIR: In regards to the Brumbies move there, what other contribution did we make?

Mr Dawes: The only other contribution—that, I think, was reported at the last hearings or a hearing some time ago—was that the government provided \$1 million for the Brumbies to spend and upgrade the oval at Griffith. But with them selling that particular asset, we allowed them to move that \$1 million over to the UC as well. So there was \$5 million plus that \$1 million.

THE CHAIR: What was the \$1 million spent on?

Mr Dawes: That was for upgrades to the grounds as well. They were putting that into some of the ground upgrades and facilities at the UC.

THE CHAIR: What is the return obligation to the territory for this assistance?

Ms Fitzharris: Chair, the responsibility for assistance to the Brumbies is not my responsibility and not within the Higher Education, Training and Research Portfolio. I understand that it is in the venues and events portfolio—I am not sure if you have heard from that—and/or linked with the minister for sports regarding the commons as a whole.

THE CHAIR: What does the Minister for Higher Education do with the University of Canberra then?

Ms Fitzharris: I refer back to my opening statement. It is to work with all the institutions. It is not about the—

THE CHAIR: That sounds like a very pat statement. What does it actually mean?

Ms Fitzharris: It is not about the management of a number of different contracts. Many activities are whole-of-government activities. If it is a sporting activity, it may well have interest in and responsibility with the minister for sport. Some of our national elite sporting teams have a contract which is, I understand, handled within the venues and events area with the Chief Minister. Many activities are whole-of-government activities and ministers work closely together all the time. But in terms of the Higher Education, Training and Research Portfolio, a relationship with the Brumbies is not my responsibility.

THE CHAIR: What contribution for higher education do we make to UC?

Ms Fitzharris: This is about fostering the higher education research and training

sector, which is all of our institutions. The UC has a number of different linkages and connections with other portfolios that other ministers hold.

THE CHAIR: Again, what do we specifically do to foster what you have just said in UC?

Ms Fitzharris: In UC? You have mentioned the public hospital, the University of Canberra public hospital. The Minister for Health, who I believe you are hearing from, is responsible for that. We have the innovation network, we have some innovation hubs which some firms that are supported through the innovation network are involved in. There is a range of relationships with different parts of the ACT government that are held with ANU, UNSW Canberra and with the University of Canberra as well.

Mr Dawes: Minister, Mr Cox will be able to provide some other information, but also what we have to not underscore when you look at the investment the territory is making in the public hospital at the UC, that has also allowed it to have other allied industries looking at establishing and setting up. Moran Health Care, for example, are actually putting in a major headquarters laboratories there. Ochre health have got some facilities there.

These are wonderful things which will leverage off that particular public hospital. That will really provide great career paths and also it will assist with what CIT is doing in some of their training. That will create those pathways from CIT to the university. That has all been quite well connected.

THE CHAIR: With all due respect to Mr Cox, because I know he is across his brief, we are going to run out of time. Is it possible to have a summary of what activities the ACT either sponsors, undertakes or coordinates with each of the five universities that exist in the territory?

Ms Fitzharris: We can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: We are going to run out of time. Members, a chance for one more question. Mr Hinder, with apologies to Mr Cox. I know he is briefed on it.

MR HINDER: Maybe there is something in my question. Can I echo Ms Burch's comments about our appreciation for CIT, the product you create and the commitment of all of your staff to the high standard of quality education that you deliver to people here in the territory. I have probably unique experience with CIT, having been both an apprentice and having attended, I think on at least four campuses of CIT in its various forms over the years, some time ago.

THE CHAIR: And I am sure there is a question in there somewhere.

MR HINDER: There is somewhere in there.

THE CHAIR: As fascinating as your life history is.

MS BURCH: The enrolment for—

THE CHAIR: No, Ms Burch, stop!

MR HINDER: Then as an employer in the automotive industry, it also gives me cause for concern about skill shortages in the trades. Is any work being done or are there any plans in place to assist employers to take on first-year apprentices to get those people into that stream where they can attain those sorts of skills that are in short supply and that everybody seems to acknowledge will be in short supply in the coming years?

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly.

MR HINDER: See; there was a question in there somewhere.

Ms Fitzharris: Mapping pathways, Mr Hinder. Yours would have been a very interesting pathway to map, Mr Hinder. From CIT and here you are.

Ms Cover: Just from CIT's perspective, I can tell you that in the auto area this year we have actually got an increase of interest in our apprenticeships in terms of that skill shortage area.

Mr Miller: It is one of those questions that we are constantly trying to respond to in terms of making sure that we are doing everything we can to support training that occurs in those areas of identified skills needs and where we anticipate skills shortages coming in the future to make sure that we do provide appropriate incentive and supports for all parties, I suppose, to the training contract to engage in training in those areas.

You referred specifically to supports for employers. Historically, a lot of employer incentives were those that were paid from the federal government. A lot of publicity that has occurred over probably recent years around decline in apprenticeships has often been linked to changes to the way employer incentives have been paid from the Australian government. This has had a bit of an impact on some of those apprenticeship numbers.

Some of the things that we do within the territory to try to provide are some things I referred to earlier in terms of identifying those qualifications that are responding to those skills needs and to make sure they are appropriately subsidised to encourage the training organisations to move into that space—that certainly includes CIT—so they are appropriately funded to deliver training in those areas and to provide that sort of encouragement.

One of the other main initiatives that we have enacted under the skills reform national partnership has also been a set of field officers who go out and engage with apprentices and employers across all industry areas to talk about issues, to identify any areas of concern, so that everybody is well informed. I think it is fairly well known that the biggest problem you have with apprentices is keeping them in their apprenticeship over the duration and getting them to complete their qualification.

You have a very large dropout rate that occurs in the first six months or so of the

apprenticeships. So the field officers whom we have enacted over the past 12 months or so target all new apprentices and employers for training within the first three to five months of their training contract to make sure that any issues that have been identified, any concerns that they have, can be immediately addressed so any relationship issues or misunderstandings about either their rights or their obligations under a national training contract are well understood and you do not have any unfortunate cancellations and dropouts occurring.

The other form that the information from field officers takes is also that level of intelligence, about understanding from employers about whether or not their needs are being met; do they have enough apprentices in that space; are there concerns about the way the apprenticeship process operates that is hindering them from taking on apprentices? There are a whole lot of things that we do at the state level that work directly with employers as well as providing that support for training organisations and gathering that intelligence about what is happening in the area.

CIT also has a lot of established relationships with industry areas to identify any particular concerns. In automotive they have got particular relationships established with some providers like Toyota that enable them to deliver a particular product that specifically meets the needs of Toyota dealerships across the ACT. There are certainly things well and truly in place that allow us to respond to identified issues.

Ms Cover: Could I add a couple of examples to expand on what Mr Miller is saying? At CIT in the apprenticeship space, there are a couple of things: there is embedded literacy and numeracy support for students when they get to us if they need some assistance. Perhaps they need to refresh some of those basic skills and gain their confidence to be in the classroom. We have also just won a grant to do some training on healthy eating. Sometimes we find apprentices do not particularly have the best practices round healthy nutrition and food choice.

MR HINDER: They still call it smoko.

Ms Cover: We are doing some work in that space as well. I think the other really important thing that CIT does in partnership with the CIT student association is work hand in hand with the student association so that we can refer any student who may need other services across the ACT. It might be financial assistance, it might be counselling. Those services work almost to wrap around the apprentices once they get to us. As Mr Miller said, we can work in with the employer and work in with industry. We have got a pretty good handle on what sort of services students need and we can respond pretty quickly to assist to try to keep them engaged with us and support them both in the job and also in training with us at CIT.

MR HINDER: The commonwealth schemes that come in and go, are you positioned to be able to pass that information on to employers and employer groups so that they are aware of the incentives available to grow your numbers?

Mr Miller: Absolutely. Again, it is certainly a role that the field officers play and it is also a role within the apprenticeship space that the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers also play. They are organisations that are effectively responsible for the sign up of a national training contract, which is required for an apprenticeship,

that is set up and established by the commonwealth government. Part of their role is also to make sure that employers and apprentices are also aware of what entitlements they have by entering into a national training contract.

Ms Fitzharris: A question that was raised in the ministerial council that I went to from the other state and territory ministers was the enormous uncertainty that had been coming from the commonwealth government with four ministers in three years. That was raised across the board, regardless of which government was in at the state level.

There has been an enormous amount of uncertainty—changes, floating ideas, shifting from east to west very quickly. I endorse Mr Miller’s point about the field officer program as a new program that will really bedrock over the next 12 months and we will really see more impact that it is having because that allows people to be on the ground with apprentices supporting them. The apprenticeships are there; it is a matter of finding the best way to support the people doing those apprenticeships so that they stay in them, they can sustain their training over a period of many years in sometimes quite difficult circumstances. I do not know if there is anything else you wanted to add about the field officer program?

Mr Miller: No, just that I think it has been an absolute revelation for us. It has been something we have been wanting to introduce for a long period of time. The skills reform national partnership enabled us to do that. But the direct source of intelligence that we are able to get from both apprentices and their employers around things that impact on them, their relationship and their progress in training, we get good intelligence about their happiness or otherwise with the registered training organisation providing training to them as part of their apprenticeship as well.

It also allows us to do those sorts of promotional activities to make sure that employers are aware of the various opportunities that exist. So field officers do not just go and meet with employers and apprentices, but they meet with industry groups. They do a lot of work going out and visiting schools. They had a really strong focus after establishment to get out to certainly all schools—certainly all colleges as well as high schools—to promote the benefits of a vocational education and training pathway and talk about the various options that exist to make sure that it becomes far more accepted as a really fantastic pathway for achievement in life and career development.

THE CHAIR: Members, we have six minutes. Mr Doszpot, you have got three; Ms Burch, you have got three.

MR DOSZPOT: In regard to BSB page 167, dot point 3, what are the implications for establishing new local, national and international markets? In particular, what new local markets are possible or feasible?

Ms Fitzharris: For CIT?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes. CIT Solutions can fall into this as well.

Ms Cover: I will start talking about CIT and then our general manager of CIT Solutions, Paul Ryan, might join us to talk about CIT Solutions. We have been

working very closely with the board on trying to identify where those areas of growth are within the ACT, within the region, nationally and then internationally. As the minister and Mr Dawes alluded to earlier, it is really around particularly the merging opportunities in health—particularly around aged care, child care by way of example—and cyber security. As the minister said earlier, we have just joined the Canberra cyber security network, along with our higher education partners, to explore opportunities there. The other area that the board is working on to promote with us is renewable energy: wind turbine training, solar and battery as well. They are probably the three that stand out.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there potential in the new markets for collaboration with ET providers located outside the ACT as well?

Ms Cover: Yes. In fact we are currently working with a provider interstate around our wind turbine training, as an example, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: I recently attended an event that was part of an assessment for CIT students in one of the hospitality courses, raising funds for the RSPCA. I was able to wear two ministerial hats but, of the five members of that particular team, four of them were international students at CIT. We are also about to embark on some advertising for our education sector and also utilising in the lead-up to the beginning of the—

MR HINDER: Singapore.

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Hinder is one step ahead of me. The massive opportunities that come from international direct flights from Singapore and Wellington also open up enormous opportunities for our post-secondary students as well. I think CIT is very well placed to also pick up on that. Hopefully at the airport and soon at the international airport in Canberra you will be able to see some advertising promoting Canberra as the education capital of Australia.

MS BURCH: How is CIT growing? What sort of market are you developing? It has been going now for some time and the search for new markets has been part of your flexibility in many ways. How is CIT going? What is on the horizon?

Mr Ryan: CIT Solutions, as members may know, is the commercial arm of CIT, and part of CIT's growth is through the company. We are continuing to expand locally, nationally and internationally both in delivering programs overseas and expanding markets for bringing inbound international students. On a national front we are delivering significant national programs, mainly in collaboration with commonwealth public sector agencies and departments. We are having substantial growth in those markets.

Ms Cover: And our international students are solid, and that is really good to see as well in terms of those opportunities.

MS BURCH: You are fully commercial. I was just looking at your balance sheet. What goes in, goes out pretty much.

Mr Sloan: Absolutely. I think one of the challenges that we have got is making sure we remain commercial or we remain sustainable. I think one of the opportunities we have really had over the past 12 months is to try to explain to people what CIT is. We are far more than just electrical trades, as the *Canberra Times* might think we are. When we are educating well over 20,000 people across a broad range, and that is only getting broader, we need to make sure that we are fit for purpose and really delivering quality on all of it. But it all has to be with a commercial end, and I think that is where certainly CIT Solutions has been and where CIT as a whole is moving. We will be releasing our strategy and our vision in the coming month or so, which will certainly set a clear pathway to how we are hoping to achieve that in the near future.

MS BURCH: From looking at your operating statement, out of revenue of \$20,000, non-ACT government is \$16,000. That is user pays, predominantly your fees for service?

Mr Ryan: That is for the company and their minions?

MS BURCH: Yes.

Mr Ryan: The company does operate on a surplus, is budgeted to, is achieving that and is able to use some of those surpluses to inject money back into CIT for it to use for strategic initiatives. Yes there is money in and out in the statement, but it is run at a profit.

MS BURCH: It is a very simple way of putting it.

THE CHAIR: We are hoping there is money coming in.

MS BURCH: With the connection between CIT and CIT Solutions—and I understand the different mechanisms—does an opportunity in one then lead to another? If, say, you get a demand for a course, you deliver it through CIT and then you might think, “Strategically that should be in another arm of CIT”? Have you seen that or is that possible?

Mr Ryan: Yes it definitely happens. And it is one of the powerful reasons for having both entities in that an opportunity can present itself and we can choose which one is better suited to reply to the opportunity. Sometimes that is done in partnership and sometimes we just pick the best entity for that.

MS BURCH: And that could go both ways? There could be an offering originally in CIT but it is better delivered under more of a commercial arrangement?

Mr Sloan: And because we have got very different cost bases sitting within both entities, it allows us to be able to be far more flexible on how we take advantage of maybe a CIT Solutions offering where we can keep the costs down and be far more competitive out there against other private sector providers.

THE CHAIR: With that, your time is up.

MS BURCH: Okay. That was a long three minutes.

THE CHAIR: I am very sorry; we are behind time. I apologise for cutting people off. Mr Sloan, thank you for attending today. You are the first chair to attend so far in estimates; I think the second chair—

Mr Sloan: I would not have missed it.

THE CHAIR: I am sure you would not, and you will be no doubt booking your kids into the elementary vet science course for the holidays. Minister, thanks for your time. Any questions taken on notice, the committee would appreciate an answer within five working days, and that commences tomorrow. When it is ready, a transcript will be forwarded to you and your officers for scrutiny. Any suggestions or corrections you would like to make, we would welcome those. With that, we say thank you to higher education and the Canberra Institute of Technology and call the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority to attend.

MS BURCH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to this, the final part of hearing on the fifth day of public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017. Welcome to Mr Service, the chair of the training authority, and Mr Carter, the CEO. Please be aware that proceedings are being recorded and will be transcribed by Hansard and published by the committee and that proceedings are also being broadcast as well as webstreamed.

On the table in front of you on is the pink card, a privilege statement. Could you please confirm for the committee that you have read and understood the implications of privilege?

Mr Service: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Service: Not particularly, only to note that this past 12 months has been a particularly interesting 12 months in that in the previous year we spent on training more than we had ever spent in our history. Most of that was driven by the asbestos awareness courses. The value of that training saw a reduction in expenditure for the same period of this year of \$1.7 million, which is quite an interesting outcome. Otherwise I think it is pretty much business as usual for the authority. I have been coming to these hearings for quite a few years now, and I think we continue to fulfil the objectives of the government and the legislation since we were established. That is all I would really like to say.

Ms Fitzharris: Very much, I do agree.

Mr Service: I never miss this opportunity.

THE CHAIR: You were joined by Mr Sloan. For the record, Mr Service is the only chair that always turns up. In your statement of intent on page 4 under program for research and development, what research and development has been done or is

currently underway?

Mr Service: Mr Carter.

Mr Carter: Current research that is underway is the research through both the Electro Group peak body under the electrical training sector and the Construction Industry Training Council to determine the stakeholder feedback and consultation to put forward the annual training plan.

THE CHAIR: In the Electro Group, in particular, what is happening there?

Mr Carter: We have not got their reports yet but there is and has been some interest in training for off-grid PB installation, and we are starting to see and have provided several rebates to employers of employees to have that training undertaken.

Mr Service: We have had those two organisations advising us pretty much since inception. It is fundamentally because it is better for us to take, disseminate and understand the information directly from the industry and the industry groups than us trying to go out and find it. It has been quite a successful program. We have engaged with the CITC since inception, and we have engaged with the Electro Group I think since about three years after inception. So it gives us direct access. It ensures that that information and the other programs that we can fund are independently advised to us. We do not just go out and seek it ourselves. That gives us a much better slant on what is actually happening out there and where we can best apply funding.

THE CHAIR: Is the Electro Group activity in relation to some of the concerns that have been raised about the CIT, or is that independent of that?

Mr Carter: No that is independent.

Mr Service: We use them effectively as an information gathering body, as we do CITC.

THE CHAIR: You said Electro, and the other was construction?

Mr Service: The Construction Industry Training Council.

THE CHAIR: What is happening in development of programs or research in construction?

Mr Carter: Different from previous years there has been significantly more feedback and training around the asbestos removal competencies. We offer and have funded training in the past 12 to 18 months in areas of removing non-friable and removing friable asbestos, supervision of asbestos. That was the ACT adopting some of the New South Wales WorkCover or Safe Work Australia competencies around that removal process. Previously we had other types of training programs in that area, obviously to align itself with the removal of the Mr Fluffy projects.

There are probably some significant increases in training in the area of tree control and plant and vegetation control and the training in the competencies that relate to that.

I guess that is, in the last 12 to 18 months, some of the key feedback we have received.

THE CHAIR: In regard to the asbestos training, what feedback have you had as to the effectiveness of the training, and since the demolition projects have started has there been any request for more training in certain areas?

Mr Carter: Not outside the competency standards that exist. The demand has increased, given the workload is increasing. As more and more projects are available for demolition, then that work load will increase but I guess the demand has not been to a point where businesses have been saying, “We can’t find people to do the work.”

THE CHAIR: How many have completed the asbestos course, are you aware?

Mr Carter: The competencies for removal as opposed to—

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Carter: In asbestos awareness last year we trained about 19,000 in awareness or provided rebates for training for those.

THE CHAIR: Which I am sure, therefore, took place.

Mr Carter: I have the figures here on the other training program in that area. Bear with me. I can take that on notice and provide it to you, if that helps.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: In the last session I asked CIT a question about subsidies for employers taking on apprentices, particularly first-year apprentices, to get them into trades that are identified as likely to have shortages in the future. Is the authority aware of any or does it provide any incentives to employers to engage first-year apprentices and those sorts of things?

Mr Carter: Under our annual training plan we have five training programs that we provide funding for. The entry level training program provides incentives on an annual basis paid quarterly in arrears to group training organisations that employ apprentices. We provide a subsidy program for those GTOs to also increase the workplace health and safety awareness, and we also provide on an annual basis nominated skill shortage trades as advised to us through consultation with CITC and industry for trades that they believe or industry have advised them are skill shortage trades, and we provide a \$4,000 incentive to employers of apprentices in those trades: \$2,000 is paid after three months of their training contract, with a further \$2,000 paid after the 12-month anniversary. This year we are currently offering that across 12 trade programs, and it varies each year. We will probably outlay this year in our budget about \$1.5 million directly for incentives to employers.

MR HINDER: Do you have any tracking as to how many of those complete their apprenticeships? It has been going long enough for that to happen?

Mr Carter: We have always had it as a key platform of our program. The department

and their statistics across apprenticeships would know best on that. We rely on that data from them to provide the incentive, because it is only paid at the first year. I do not have statistics to say whether they complete their trades, but we have been advised by industry that is the key time when it is expensive for them to employ an apprentice, and the rebate is very welcome.

MR HINDER: So you would not have a number about how many additional, as opposed to how many in total, complete your program who might have been incentivised?

Mr Carter: It is not so much about the completion from our point of view. The feedback we have had is that employers are more reluctant to put them on. This actually enables them to put them on.

THE CHAIR: To start.

MR HINDER: Yes.

Mr Service: The completion rates are driven in the first year certainly. The continuity rate is driven partly by the incentive. The completion rates in years 2 and 3 and beyond are really driven by opportunity, by the industry demand. Certainly in the last five to seven years I suspect most of the completion rates have been quite good. Will they stay that way in the next three to five years? I think there is some underlying weakness in construction. It has not probably come through yet, but my personal view is that construction will be a bit tough in the next couple of years. No doubt some large infrastructure projects will help underpin that but in the general construction sector we are not going to see much commercial construction because there is not much demand. We have seen a very solid residential unit market in the past few years. That I think has some weakness risk in the coming years.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question.

MR DOSZPOT: Good to see you here again, Mr Service. I think you missed last year, if I recall correctly.

Mr Service: I did, I missed it. I want to correct the chairman, but I did actually miss one. Last year was the first year I had ever missed.

THE CHAIR: You attended every year that you could.

MR DOSZPOT: In reference to your statement of intent at page 14, in terms of cash flow for each of the 2015-16 and 2016-17 budgets can you give us a bit of a narrative on how much you spent on, first of all, training providers?

Ms Fitzharris: I am sorry?

MR DOSZPOT: On training providers.

Mr Carter: Our rebate goes to the benefit of the individual, and if an individual chooses to do their training with a training provider, they apply to us directly to

receive the rebate. In certain instances we provide advanced places for RTOs that can then discount the payment made when a student enrolls. That is not done for all training providers but for some of the larger ones that give us a greater opportunity to see training progress and more people get trained. In terms of how much goes to a training provider, that can be done. I do not have those figures off the top of my head because the rebate is to the individual.

MR DOSZPOT: How much goes to the collective individuals?

Mr Carter: Collective upskilling training will be about \$1.7 million for upskilling of training and skills.

MR DOSZPOT: The payments to employers to provide training, how much is involved there?

Mr Carter: This year it is likely to be around the \$1.55 million.

MR DOSZPOT: Payments to building industry employees to obtain training?

Mr Carter: It is included in the \$1.7 million.

MR DOSZPOT: Payments to industry associations or unions, CFMEU or UnionsACT, for purposes of training procurement?

Mr Carter: There are no payments for the purposes of training procurement. Payments for the CFMEU would be for members' sitting fees, and we sponsor an award for the CFMEU for their members and across various industry sectors for their representatives, OH&S representatives, on an annual basis.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you elaborate on sitting fees?

Mr Carter: Sitting fees for members of our board, for the authority.

Mr Service: The CFMEU has one member appointed by the government and there is one employee representative, and there are two employer representatives.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that payment publicly available?

Mr Service: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Carter: It is in the annual report.

Ms Fitzharris: It is the standard payment to members of government boards. This board has a make-up of employer representatives, which is the MBA and the HIA, an employee representative, which is the CFMEU and the Electrical Trades Union as well. Recently I believe a letter was sent to the committee around board appointments.

MR DOSZPOT: I think we have spoken about this in past years but can you refresh

my memory on why the authority maintains an average cash balance of around \$3.2 million?

Mr Service: The authority since inception has modelled the security of its business so that at any given time it always has sufficient funds to run and pay for at least six months any pre-commitments in training and administrative costs of the authority. Even today we can only spend the levy to the extent that we have demand for it. So there are years where, in fact, we receive more income than we are able to spend. That is just the function of the way the levy is collected. But the authority has had a policy since its inception to always maintain six months reserves. It ensures that in a particularly difficult time or, in fact, in a disastrous period, we could, in fact, still train people and we could continue those contracts for training that are already entered into.

MR DOSZPOT: If my memory serves me right, it has been a fairly steady amount around that figure?

Mr Service: It has. It fell away a little in the previous financial year simply because of the number of people we trained in the asbestos space.

Ms Fitzharris: It is a set percentage of 0.2 per cent, the levy.

Mr Service: That is right.

Ms Fitzharris: It is 0.2 per cent of building and construction work for building approvals. It is a set percentage. That percentage does not fluctuate but the actual dollar figures might.

Mr Service: Yes.

MS BURCH: Reference is made on page 7 to 6,000 existing worker positions training in accordance with approved training programs. That is fairly consistent, but it would reflect, again, the ebb and flow of industry and the make-up of what is going on. You mentioned that sometimes in bad years you will continue training so that when construction comes back on or something comes back on, they have got the skill sets ready to go?

Mr Service: Yes.

MS BURCH: Whom do you work with to get your approved training schedule in the outyears?

Mr Service: We work with the CITC and the Electro Group. They are our conduits to each of the sectors in the industry. They run a number of information gathering sessions where they, in fact, consult widely. We try to consult well and truly in time before the training plan has to be considered by the minister.

We have also ensured each year that we consult in sufficient time so that we can actually go back and ask questions and be sure that the information we are getting meets industry needs. We can consult more widely if we so choose. I can only say, having been the chairman for a number of years now, that that has been the most

effective way for us to do it, as I said in my opening remarks.

MS BURCH: You mentioned earlier installation of off-grid panels. I would imagine that as the battery technology improves, we have to skill up our existing work force to accommodate that.

Mr Carter: Yes.

MS BURCH: Again, is it working with CITEA and those other industry groups about making sure that that happens?

Mr Service: Yes.

MS BURCH: So there is never a dull moment.

Mr Service: Never a dull moment.

Ms Fitzharris: That technology is moving very quickly.

Mr Service: It is.

Ms Fitzharris: From wind and solar to battery storage, yes.

MS BURCH: That is why, irrespective of whether you are one year in your trade or 10 years in your trade, it is a new skill you have to get.

Mr Service: That is very much why we maintain a very hefty budget for the upskill and cross-skill. The entry level is a great thing because it gets people into the industry. But it is having that capacity through their working lives for people to come back at 25, 35, 45, 55—people work longer—and re-skill or to re-skill when something falls away.

MS BURCH: Yes, on page 4, where mention is made of the five programs, is that for existing worker training and professional development?

Mr Service: Yes.

MS BURCH: If you had an employer group, an industry group or a worker that came to you and said, “For us, we need this little bit of training to get us up to the next level,” you could accommodate that?

Mr Carter: Absolutely. That is what the upskilling program is for.

MS BURCH: That is what you are there for?

Mr Carter: Yes.

MS BURCH: Yes. I could go on, but it is 5.30, chair.

THE CHAIR: We have them until 5.35.

MS BURCH: Well, in that case—

Mr Service: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: It is your annual appearance, Mr Service. I would hate to waste it.

MS BURCH: What do you see in the next 12 months that the authority has to keep an eye to? You mentioned that possibly commercial is not so strong.

Mr Service: I think our eye is pretty much set each year by the skills shortages that come to us through the industry. I think any downturn in the industry really has to be dealt with first in the industry. We do not really have any influence on that. Our job, were there to be some huge increase in the market or some decrease in the market, is to ensure that we have got sufficient funds to direct training at those areas which will require additions when they are really strong or supplementation when they are really weak.

Again, I think our approach to this has been to make sure that we remain very close to the key industry groups. I think the diversity of the members of the board ensures that we do that. I think that is one of the hallmarks of the legislation when the authority was first created. In fact, it made sure that at a governance level we actually had some more direct interaction and we could actually call on the members to use their knowledge of what was going on in their own sectors to improve the training that we did and improve the way we interacted with those that needed training.

MS BURCH: A final question from me. The building construction industry itself, is that a static thing or are there new ways of building, new ways of industry? What have you seen change in your time within the group that you service and support?

Mr Service: The work health safety part of the industry has been a huge growth area. That is nothing but growth for good. That has gone down to simply the way materials are packaged, the scale of the materials that arrive, the weight, the way they are stored. Some of the standard construction stuff is never going to change. You are always going to have reinforcement and concrete formwork and steel fixing. But, again, I think a lot of what we have seen is the simple improvement in safety. That is probably the biggest single change in the industry in the past five years. Working safely at heights is another one.

Ms Fitzharris: That connects your previous questions about the construction industry and the pipeline of work being so important for so many people in Canberra. There is a significant pipeline of infrastructure investment coming next year. There are alternatives to stop one of those massive infrastructure investment projects.

MS BURCH: Do tell.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, it is a serious point that the construction industry pipeline in this city is under serious threat from alternative proposals to not build the light rail, because that has been in our infrastructure pipeline now for a number of years. Without that going ahead, that significant infrastructure project over the next couple

of years, there will be an enormous grind in the construction sector that there is no alternative to fill. There is no prospect of any alternative to fill that in the same period of time. I hope that does not happen, of course.

MS BURCH: The ripple effect not only for those that are doing the job but it is where that money goes to, because it always seeps back across—

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. Infrastructure—

THE CHAIR: You two might have a conversation about this in your own time.

Ms Fitzharris: But I am sure you will agree, Mr Chair, that the infrastructure investment pipeline is vital to the building and construction industry. In the absence of a significant infrastructure investment that has no alternative replacement, this city could really grind to a halt in parts of its construction industry—

THE CHAIR: We will see. Mr Doszpot, you have about 30 seconds, if you have a final question.

MR DOSZPOT: How does the authority collect its levy? I will not pass any comment on the minister's remarks about light rail.

Mr Service: We collect it in two ways: where there are some direct payments to the levy for those projects which are not captured through the approval process, through the planning directorate; otherwise it is all captured through ACTPLA.

MR DOSZPOT: And the collection of that is pretty well automatic or—

Mr Service: The payment has to be made at lodgement stage and then we—

MR DOSZPOT: So do you get any bad debts?

Mr Service: No, because you cannot get your plans passed unless you pay your bill. That is one of the most reliable ways to collect funds.

MS BURCH: An effective tax, perhaps.

Mr Service: It is very effective way to collect a levy.

THE CHAIR: Like rates. We might leave it at that.

Mr Service: Mr Chair, can I correct one thing I said? I did say that expenditure dropped by \$1.7 million. It is actually \$1.27 million in this financial year.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that clarification. Mr Service, as always, thank you for your attendance. Same with Mr Carter. Minister, that brings us to the end of the day. I would like to thank witnesses and officials from both the Education Portfolio and the higher education, training and research section of Chief Minister's for attendance today.

Any questions taken on notice the committee would like an answer to within five working days, which starts tomorrow. That will assist us in our deliberations when we get to them. A transcript will be provided for your perusal. If you have any suggestions or corrections or extra information you wish to provide, that would be gratefully received by the committee. With that, we will now adjourn, members. Tomorrow we return for a day with the planning and environment minister.

The committee adjourned at 5.36 pm.