

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

Tuesday, 25 October 2022

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING

UNCORRECTED

The Committee met at 10:00.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Mark Latham (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg

The Hon. Scott Farlow

The Hon. Courtney Houssos

The Hon. Rose Jackson

MEMBERS VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Ms Abigail Boyd

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

The CHAIR: I declare the supplementary public hearing for inquiry into budget estimates for Education and Early Learning open. Before I commence, it is the custom of this Parliament to acknowledge the traditional inhabitants of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I do that with all due respect as well as acknowledging other important contributors to the history of this site, those who constructed the Parliament House building, very often working in a dangerous industry, and the parliamentary staff over many decades who supported MPs and made our work and representative role possible. We acknowledge and thank them all.

I welcome departmental officials to the hearing today. The Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Education and Early Learning. Before we commence, I will make some brief comments about procedures. Today's hearing is being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The proceedings are recorded and a transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available from Hansard. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, the House has authorised the filming, broadcasting and photography of the Committee proceedings by representatives of media organisations from many positions in the room and by any member of the public from any position in the audience. Any person filming proceedings must take responsibility for the proper use of that material.

All witnesses in budget estimates hearings have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. There may be some questions that a witness could answer only if they had more time. Those questions can be taken on notice—everyone knows the drill. If witnesses wish to hand up documents they should do so through the Committee staff. They are also free to pass notes and refer directly to their advisers seated behind them. Everyone should turn their mobile phones to silent—otherwise under Labor policy, the Hon. Courtney Houssos will confiscate them!

All witnesses today have previously been sworn in. Today's hearing will commence at 10.00 a.m. and conclude at 1.30 p.m. with a 15-minute break at 11.45 a.m. During this session there will be questions from the Opposition and crossbench members only. If required, 15 minutes is available at the end of the session for Government questions from the Hon. Scott Farlow if he avails himself. I thank the witnesses for their attendance. The hearing will commence with questions from the Opposition.

Mr MARTIN GRAHAM, Acting Deputy Secretary, Learning Improvement, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Ms RUTH OWEN, Acting Chief Operating Officer, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Mr MURAT DIZDAR, Deputy Secretary, School Performance—South, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Ms LEANNE NIXON, Deputy Secretary, School Performance—North, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Ms SIMONE WALKER, Group Deputy Secretary, School Improvement and Education Reform Group, Department of Education, on former oath

Ms GEORGINA HARRISSON, Secretary, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Mr CHRISTOPHER LAMB, Acting Chief People Officer, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Mr ANTHONY MANNING, Chief Executive, School Infrastructure NSW, Department of Education, on former affirmation

Mr PAUL MARTIN, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Education Standards Authority, on former affirmation

Mr DARYL CURRIE, Executive Director, Professional and Ethical Standards, Department of Education, on former affirmation

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for coming back again. I start with the idea that is being trialled in Leppington, Denham Court and Edmondson Park for a school board to determine which schools local kids can attend. I want to know who is on the board?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Thank you for the question. Before I answer that, if I could let the Committee know that we have emerging issues across the State, obviously, with rising floodwater still in some communities. It may be that, particularly Mr Dizdar or Ms Nixon, need to step out. We also have the HSC running today if there are issues arising. I will ask Mr Dizdar to talk about that shared enrolment model that you refer to, Ms Houssos, and provide you with some more information.

MURAT DIZDAR: I am happy to get you the full composition, on notice. But my working knowledge is that the principals are on there, of the three schools where we have got the shared intake area—that is, Denham Court, Leppington and Edmondson Park. It has got P&C representation, but I don't have the full composition in front of me. I can certainly get that for you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be helpful. If you can get it back to us today, that would be great. I understand and acknowledge the broader issues that are being dealt with by the Department of Education today, but could you get that back to us before Monday?

MURAT DIZDAR: I am sure during today's hearing, in between questions, I will have my office give me the full composition.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be great. My understanding is that the school board will allocate the children amongst the three schools. What are the factors that will be taken into consideration?

MURAT DIZDAR: We announced a shared intake area in a growth corridor, as you would appreciate, at Denham Court, Leppington and Edmondson Park. Our principals advised us of the three schools when we were meeting with them that this was the best way to go. Because of the growth corridor and the uncertainty of settlement patterns in a full State, they didn't want to lock in a firm boundary for each of the sites. We think that is a wise move to undertake. We will review those boundaries every 12 months, Ms Houssos, and when we get to a time where we feel as though the settlement patterns are a lot more concrete, we will certainly give firmer assurance.

In line with our enrolment policy, the factors that we'll take into account are, one, proximity of the residents to the school or schools in question. We will obviously be taking into account siblings and giving priority to keep families together at their request. They will be the two overriding factors. We'll also need to take into account any extenuating circumstances. There will always be, in public schools, applications for out of area, or in this case shared area, for a particular site, where another school may be even closer but the family want to attend a particular school because there are particular circumstances to take into account like family circumstances, AVOs, legal proceedings et cetera.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What will the appeals process be if, for example, a parent is unhappy with the school that they are allocated to?

MURAT DIZDAR: It is a very good question. Again, in line with enrolment procedures, if they are unhappy with the communication that is provided by way of the committee's decision, then they can appeal to the director or an executive director, and at times some of those appeals come to me as well in my role as deputy secretary.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that it's going to be renewed every 12 months?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When's the first review due?

MURAT DIZDAR: These shared enrolment boundaries for those three schools are now underway as of last week. We will review those in 2023 and communicate again to those three school communities whether we will continue that in 2024 or we're in a position for firmer boundaries. In what we have been briefed on by way of numbers in the area, families, enrolment applications et cetera, it will take a few years, Ms Houssos, to settle down with settlement patterns and firmer boundaries. Edmondson Park, remember, is starting day one next year, so it has not kicked off as a school but we're taking enrolments. It will take a few years to firm up, but we've committed to make sure we keep evaluating those boundaries every 12 months.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What's the capacity of Edmondson Park?

MURAT DIZDAR: My colleague Mr Manning will be able to assist, but initially we have capacity for 1,000 if I'm correct, Mr Manning? And then we can increase from there if necessary.

ANTHONY MANNING: It's a base new school, so the capacity is somewhere between 1,000 and 1,200.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can I just ask, Mr Dizdar, in relation to the decisions of the committee, are they done by consensus or is it intended to be a voting body?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get that detail for you when I get the composition. It's not a voting exercise; that is my understanding. It's an exercise in considering the applications in front of us and making as best a decision as possible by way of the two overriding criteria of proximity to a school. Obviously with primary schools, Ms Jackson, we like to encourage families to be able to walk to school. Families like to be able to take their young children to school by way of exercise and walks, so that's going to be an overriding factor. These schools also have the OOSH provision, which is going to be very important for working families. We're imagining there are going to be strong proportions of these schools where the children are dropped off very early. So, again, proximity is going to be very important. That's going to be the overriding factor. Then the secondary most important factor is siblings: keeping families together. We don't want families to be in a position where we communicate that one child is at one school and, from this committee, we're communicating that the other child will have to go to another school, because that's going to add to transportation and workload for families.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Obviously, it is clear that it will be preferable if all of the applications came in and everyone's top preference—and it all allocated fairly and evenly. Great, if that happens. Obviously, potentially that doesn't happen, and there are too many first preference requests for one, for example, of the schools. So decisions will have to be made about which families are allocated, for example, their second preference. I'm just interested to know, if there's a conflict amongst members of the committee, how that will be managed. You have taken that on notice, but that is what I am getting at: What happens if there are two applicants and one has to have their second preference, and some members think it should be applicant A while other members think it should be applicant B? That would be useful. As a follow-up, what is the process for managing conflicts of interest? Particularly for representatives from the school community—who may be P&C reps, for example—those people may know each other. How will we ensure that those decisions are made objectively and that conflict of interest is managed?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm very confident that that'll be the case. We've had this in other locations as well, so I can give you an example of that. Let me also, Ms Jackson, just go back to Ms Houssos' question, because I've got the answer for the composition, Ms Houssos. The panel will be the three principals of the three schools; three P&C members, one from each school; and a staff member from each school.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How are the P&C reps chosen? Are they elected or are they appointed?

MURAT DIZDAR: We'll leave it to the P&C of each school to nominate and use their normal procedures to give us a representative for this committee.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So there is a process for declaring a conflict of interest?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, there is. I mean, you might be on the committee and your own child's application might be coming forward to that committee, so there'll naturally need to be conflict of interest procedures. Georges River College is another one where we've had shared enrolments, and we've recently—this has been the first year where we've given families options across the campus, and that's a process that's worked really well. I've had no appeals in the entire 2022 school year. The school year is not finished, so I should cross my fingers that it keeps going really well as it has. Having also met with the principals myself, they're really driven by their system mentality of trying to get this optimally for each and every family that comes before them. They understand that they're there on that committee not for their own site but as representatives of public education for that entire educational area.

We'll continue to liaise with the schools and the committee. They've got a lot of work in front of them, because in term 4 we want to firm up all those enrolment decisions. We'll have a good radar on how that's played out later this term. The normal appeal procedures will be there if they're necessary as well. I think this is a very sensible move and a very wise move, given it's an expanding area. Having driven out there myself, I was quite taken aback by the growth in residential dwellings since I'd last been there. It's an area that can accelerate at a faster rate than the planners may have even thought, so not having firm boundaries locked in is really important to get it right in a longer state. I should add, since you might be interested, our communication to each of the school communities has been really well received. We've had no negative feedback. We've had it translated and, I think, well comprehended. P&C has been on board.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that there is one P&C rep from each school.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Edmondson Park is obviously a new school.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How is that P&C appointing its rep?

MURAT DIZDAR: I understand we've already got a P&C at Edmondson Park. They were involved in the merit selection of the principal. It's not unusual to stand up a prospective parent body for a new school. It obviously won't be in the strength and numbers of an established school, but my understanding is that we did have parent representation when we merit-selected the principal. That was a parent who was going to look to enrol their child at that school, so my understanding is that there is a working P&C that's already kicked off. All credit to them to get up and running that quickly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that there have been no appeals in Georges River, with a similar kind of school board structure in place. Is there a school board structure in place anywhere else in the State?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm just going into the annals of my working knowledge across my footprint. I'd have to probably take it on notice. If I think of, straightaway, Homebush, Strathfield and Concord—where we've had single sex and we've had co-ed provision—there's been provision for families who want to have a single-sex education as opposed to a co-ed or vice versa.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Dizdar, I'm asking you if there's actually a formal school board structure in place anywhere else in the State. You said that there is in Georges River. I'm interested to know whether there's a formal school board structure that is taking joint enrolments anywhere else.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me take that on notice and come back to you on that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. But off the top of your head you're not aware of any?

MURAT DIZDAR: Off the top of my head I'm certainly aware of shared enrolment structures. That's what I was unpacking for you as well at Homebush and Strathfield. But your specific question is around a committee that makes the decisions on the enrolments.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: So let me take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can come back to us today, that would be quite helpful. Ms Nixon, you obviously look after—

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll do my best.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand.

MURAT DIZDAR: If I can come back today, like I did with the committee composition, I certainly will.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that.

MURAT DIZDAR: If I can't, I'll have to come back to you on notice.

LEANNE NIXON: Ms Houssos, I'm not aware either. I'll come back on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay, thanks very much.

LEANNE NIXON: We'll do a consolidated response.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm interested to know, how was this decision taken to establish the school board?

MURAT DIZDAR: We consulted with the school principals of the three schools, like I indicated. We consulted with our Minister's office and with School Performance, where I'm responsible.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, could you say the first person? You said you consulted with the Minister's office?

MURAT DIZDAR: I should have used the word "briefed". We briefed the Minister's office on options for consideration that School Performance, which I'm responsible for in the south, alongside School Infrastructure had worked on at a senior officer level. Our director on the ground, our executive director and myself as the deputy secretary responsible there for schools worked with our infrastructure colleagues on options that we may consider. As you're aware, given the population limitation for the school at Denham Court, Ms Houssos, you're across the fact that it's legislated that we can only have 1,000 people on that site at any one time.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's because it's next to a gas pipeline. Isn't that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: That's my understanding, yes, and that's been communicated to all school communities in that area. Operationally, we've been monitoring the enrolments this year. About six to eight weeks ago we all sat down and started to consider the options, recognising that we were coming close to that population limitation at Denham Court. A number of options were considered. We briefed the Minister's office. Myself, our ED and DEL, alongside the Minister, consulted with the principals, and then we firmed up the recommended option, which was announced to the community.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sorry, Mr Dizdar, I had thought—perhaps I heard wrongly—that you suggested earlier that the principals were the ones who had proposed this idea to you.

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Jackson, when we were considering all options, our DEL—our director of educational leadership—for those local schools had been working with the principals because we've got a new school coming on board. Leppington was going for a capital upgrade and Denham was in its first year of operations, so I stand by what I indicated to you. The principals had already suggested this option of a shared enrolment intake area, and that was fed into the work that we then undertook around the options to consider and provide to the Minister. They had done some embryonic work around that, they had considered it and they had then provided that to us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is the way that this works in practice that everyone has the same enrolment form, or are parents told about it at the outset? How is it communicated to parents?

MURAT DIZDAR: This decision that we undertook?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The fact that if you're enrolling your child, how are you told? Do you receive an enrolment form that says that you could be allocated to any of these three schools? Or do you receive an enrolment form for Edmondson Park, Denham Court or Leppington, and then it's communicated with you afterwards?

MURAT DIZDAR: We did put out a communication to each school community. It was the same communication. I'm happy to get you a copy of that, Ms Houssos, because it goes into the detail of how to do it. It is one generic enrolment form, the system enrolment form. Obviously, we're capturing the residential address. Obviously, we're taking into account the preferred location for that family. There's an opportunity for them to express that. Then, if made clear in the communication, that will communicate that back to them from the committee's findings.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can provide that on notice, that would be helpful.

MURAT DIZDAR: Would you like a copy?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, thank you very much.

MURAT DIZDAR: We can get you one of those.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm interested in the media release. I understand Ministers' offices prepare media releases and the department would prepare media releases. Who prepared the media release that was dated 21 October 2022 that made this announcement from the Minister?

MURAT DIZDAR: I would have to take that on notice. What would have happened is that School Infrastructure NSW and School Performance, where I indicated I was responsible for, would have had input into its creation and its way up to the Minister's office.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: If I may, ultimately, a media announcement from the Minister is the responsibility and accountability of the Minister and her staff. We would provide input on the facts of those matters and we would at times attach a draft media release containing those facts, but we then would only see it once it had been released, generally speaking, in the same form.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The title says, "More school choice for growing South West Sydney community". It's not actually more school choice; it's actually just going to be allocated by a school board. You would accept that?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think we are the wrong people to ask the question of. I don't believe that that strapline came from us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's helpful. I just wanted to ask one final question before my time runs out. At Denham Court Public School there's obviously a restriction because it's next to a gas pipeline. Is this something that is common at schools, Ms Harrisson?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I will ask Mr Manning to provide further comment. What I would say is that our schools are in the middle of communities. Our school does not sit on an island outside the rest of the community. Those communities need services and those services include things like supply of gas. There are, at times, through communities and including impacting on our school, those supply issues we have to work around. But Mr Manning can provide you more detail in terms of the overall footprint.

ANTHONY MANNING: I think, from memory, we've only got probably three or four schools including this one within the 760-metre zone of the gas main. We have some that are outside of that and therefore not as impacted under the legislation, but I think we've got three or four that sit within. Some of them are historic but it's only in recent years I think that the legislation has been—everybody's been a bit more aware of it and been a bit more focused on the enforcement of it. It is something that we are aware of and we will continue to monitor.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you know those three or four schools, Mr Manning? Are you able to provide them?

ANTHONY MANNING: I can provide them to you on notice. I don't have that list with me, but I'm happy to provide them on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Good morning to all of you. I will start by asking about the announcement on the behaviour tsar. Where did that idea originate and where is that proposal up to?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Thank you for the question, Ms Boyd. We were asked to provide advice to the Minister in relation to the role a behaviour adviser could play across all school sectors, following a series of incidents involving students from independent schools as well as concerns about how that may be going across school boundaries in terms of school sectors and making sure we had consistency in some of those approaches. In terms of where it is up to, I can ask Mr Graham to provide you with some further detail on the progress we have made so far on implementation.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Certainly. Thank you. At the moment, we're working with the Minister's office around the appointment details. The chief behaviour adviser will be advising through the schools council, which consists of all sectors—Catholic, independent and government schools. They will be involved in the selection process. There will also be an international search that will be undertaken as well for the appointment.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you have a salary level at which this person is going to be paid?

MARTIN GRAHAM: No. We are currently looking at the roles and responsibilities and experience and so on that that role would need and also the amount of time that that role might take up. There are different models. The salary will be set according to those factors.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Ms Harrison, was the idea based on the UK Tory Tom behaviour tsar, as I think they are calling it?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I believe that is where the request came from in terms of research done by policy advisers into those models overseas. We were asked to provide advice on how such a model could work here in New South Wales.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Was any assessment made of the impact of that model in the UK? Why does it seem to be an appropriate model for Australia?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think that, following the issues that we had seen across sectors, as I indicated before, there was clearly a need across all sectors identified for there to be some consistency and a shared approach about how we might tackle some of those issues, especially as they work across school cohorts who mingle and socialise outside of school. As I said before, we were asked to provide advice on what that could look like here. We provided that advice, and the Government made its decision and announced the chief behaviour adviser that we were in the process of finalising the appointment of—well, the process for the appointment of.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Did you consider the different cultures within private schools and public schools and the different drivers for what is being seen as poor behaviour? Certainly in relation to those very public private school discussions, I think everyone was very shocked, but the idea that we would respond in such a way was something that they directed towards the entire school system. What was the logic there?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: As indicated in my previous answer, Ms Boyd, clearly, in those examples, there was a suggestion that the groups of students spanned a number of sectors and, therefore, as we look at the issues that are within young people's worlds, they are not bound by the school they go to. Students engage with each other outside the school gate, and so it is important, therefore, that in terms of setting the standards for that behaviour and those expectations around some of the issues that were raised in those examples that we seek to have consistency across the three sectors. Certainly, I want to thank the independent and Catholic sectors for the way they have come to the table on this issue, have supported it and signed up to the idea that we would maintain those shared high standards.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So we get this kind of high-profile case at a private school that smacks of elitism and privilege, and then we take the reaction to that and apply it to a bunch of other schools that are having lots of and lots of problems, of which this is probably not the top of the list. Did you consult with the unions before making this decision?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think as I have indicated, we were asked to provide advice to the Minister on these issues. We provided advice to the Minister on the issue, and the Minister and the Government made a decision on their policy position moving forward, as is their right as the Government of the day.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: This model in the UK has been particularly bad for children with disability. When you look at the huge teacher shortages that we have in New South Wales and the strain that our schools are already under, why on earth push and make a recommendation for some sort of behaviour tsar to sit across public schools when that is patently, on the evidence, not what is required? Was this just a kneejerk reaction to a problem at a private school?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, I'm not here to pass comment on the judgements made by others, but I think the thing I would say is I wouldn't want to pre-empt here the role that behaviour tsar will play in our system. We are different. I also don't want to presume the outcomes of the UK model as they would apply here on a model that is currently being designed. We are designing the role. We are in consultation with the other sectors. In public education, we are very clear on the agenda we have around the support for students with disability and on the progress we are making and want to continue to make in that area.

We have just implemented our new inclusive, respectful and engaging education reforms. We do not see those changing. But we do see our challenges at times for schools where having access to expert advice and having consistency around standards could very much be useful. I don't want to pre-empt the nature of the adviser we would have, the nature of their role, and assume it would be unhelpful when actually I think there is a good opportunity for us here to align around a clear set of standards and expectations, and a clear and shared way of working through these issues across sectors.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It has been suggested that this person will be paid of the order of \$300,000, \$400,000 at least.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, I think as Mr Martin indicated, we are currently doing the analysis around the nature of the role and the appropriate level of remuneration that would go with that. I don't

think it is helpful for us to hypothesise about what that could be. We are doing the work—the job will be evaluated, and we will set an appropriate remuneration scale from there.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure. But given that that is at the lower end of the scale for the usual government bureaucrat, you would expect it would be at least those amounts, wouldn't you?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think many of the staff in the Department of Education certainly would not agree that's the standard salary for a public servant. I note that we have a panel here.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But at that level?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: But at that level I think it would depend on the nature of the role we're asking the individual to play. I think it would depend on the number of days per year that they were engaged to do it. As I have indicated, we are working through those issues. Once we have settled on them, I am very happy for that to be transparent and to inform the Committee of the outcomes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Were you ever asked to create such a policy before it was an issue at a private school?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly I think the Government's engagement around behaviour policy over the last 12 months has been a consistent focus and priority and, actually, probably more over the two years.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So it's no, though.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: But specifically in relation to the adviser, this is the first time we've been asked for advice on it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, so it's a knee-jerk reaction then to what happened in a private school. That would be correct, wouldn't it?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think that's an assertion rather than a question that I'm in a position to answer, Ms Boyd.

The CHAIR: Secretary, how can you say you've got no expectations of what the behaviour tsar is going to do by way of their role and hopefully their achievements? Are you running the education system or are you a passive observer to what these people do? Surely you must have in your mind a clear outline of what behaviour should be in every single classroom in New South Wales and what the behaviour tsar should achieve.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Thank you for the question. I think, as I indicated in my answers to Ms Boyd, this is a chief behaviour adviser for all school sectors to provide support around a range of issues, some of which do go to some very complex behaviours or societal issues that we want to work through. As a public system, we do have a clear statement of our expectations of behaviour in our public schools. We have a clear policy in place that starts from a premise of high expectations for all students at all times. That's what we're currently in the process of implementing.

I welcome the opportunity to bring the ongoing building of evidence around these issues for our schools to the heart of the public policy debate on these issues. I welcome the opportunity of having an expert in the field available to support schools, should they need it, and available to support the development of professional learning and other engagements with our staff. I don't accept the premise that we're a bystander. We are, however, only two or three weeks after the announcement was made, and we are working through the details of the appointment process and we're working on that role description. We're doing so in consultation with the other two sectors.

The CHAIR: Have you seen the evidence in *The Australian* newspaper today from the Monash study saying the vast number of teachers who think about leaving teaching do so because the classroom is a jungle? They're sworn at, they're disrespected and they can't get an orderly, disciplined learning environment in which to use their skills to teach. Isn't that just a dreadful reflection on how you've been running the system?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Firstly, I would note that's a national study. I would also note that the number of issues that were raised in that study around the behaviour teachers experienced went beyond the classroom and went to the behaviour they experience from parts of the public debate and from parents. In New South Wales we've been really clear on those issues. We have a parent code of conduct. We have support in place for our schools around those issues, and we do have a clear behaviour policy. What we now have, as a result of the work we have done in the department, is a team around a school available to support interventions around individual students and around certain behaviour issues to ensure that we can address them at source and that we can do so in a way that ensures all students continue to have access to high-quality education.

The CHAIR: But isn't there a prototype of what discipline in a classroom should be? Can I just get you to reflect on this? It is almost like no-one's ever been to school. Even if it's 40 years ago, in my case and others',

we all remember that the only way you can concentrate, learn and absorb information is an orderly, disciplined and structured learning environment, not people climbing in and out of windows, swearing at teachers and walking in and out of the classroom. Isn't there a prototype for the sort of discipline that we would want in New South Wales schools and examples of the very few number of schools that actually achieve it?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Alongside the policy I mentioned before, we also have the "What works best" in managing behaviour from CESE. We do have that very clearly articulated for our schools. My experience, Chair, in the number of schools that I visit is that I see students very much engaged in learning. At the times when explicit instruction, which we know is critical, is underway, I see that students are sitting and focused for their teacher. But we also encourage collaborative exercises and work. I think it is one of the loveliest things when you walk around a school and see students engaged together in their learning around certain activities that they're doing. We see both of those things in our schools. We recognise the need to support our schools with behaviour. As I said, we have developed a team-around-the-school model to help schools manage where they need additional support. We are really invested in ensuring that the best practice we have available to us is implemented.

The CHAIR: What is the best disciplined school in New South Wales?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think that would depend on your definition, Chair, but if you had a definition in mind—

The CHAIR: My definition is where it's orderly, it's structured and students who want to absorb information can do so without interruption, which is the foundation stone upon which any classroom and learning should be based.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I have seen examples of that in every school I have visited across the State. I'm sure my colleagues at the table have as well. As we look to implement the new behaviour policy, we have targeted the support for those schools where data around suspensions and other issues have indicated to us that there are more challenges. They are the schools getting the most support to implement the new policy. We are very much targeting that work in line with the School Success Model, where, if we see that a school needs extra help, we are putting in the resources alongside them to make sure we address those issues.

The CHAIR: You mentioned earlier that the behaviour tsar model comes from the UK. Have you noted that the strictest, most disciplined, regimented school in the UK, Michaela, has just been announced as having the highest value-added results? By measurement, you could say it is the best school in the UK. Do you think that is something more than a coincidence and a model that we could adopt here?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Firstly, I would congratulate that school on its success. I think that leader stands with incredible courage around their school and the methods that they use. There are things that are articulated around that school which are very valid for us to consider. It's also only one school of its kind. I note the amazing success, but at this stage we haven't seen in any system that being replicable. I think that's an interesting question for us to look at. I'm very interested in the—

The CHAIR: What about Marsden Road Public School?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'm very interested in seeing the ongoing evidence around that. Marsden Park Public is a fantastic—

The CHAIR: Marsden Road.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Marsden Road Public School is a fantastic school, and we do see great results from that school. We also see great results from other schools. One of the issues around finding the evidence and making sure it's replicable is the context of that school, the community it is working within and the choices the parents in that community have made to send their students to that school. They're all relevant factors. We need to understand that a bit more. I say that without wanting to take anything away from the incredible achievements of that school, and I think that evidence is something we need to keep a watchful eye on. We need to see whether or not that does continue to deliver benefits over a sustained period of time and across different contexts.

The CHAIR: Where there's evidence of these disciplinary methods achieving great school results, why do you say passively that we just need to keep an eye on that? Why don't you just implement them across the system?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: That would suggest that we have a scale of issue across our system in relation to behaviour impacting on student learning. It is not our evidence that's the case. We are very much working at the improvement agenda in our system, and we are seeing progress from the strategies we are putting in place.

The CHAIR: Are we? How do you explain Jennifer Buckingham's research in the past week that there are 19,000 New South Wales students who start high school semi-illiterate?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think the work you are referring to is from the Australian education and research office.

The CHAIR: No, it's Jennifer Buckingham's work at MultiLit. She put out a report as part of a series of reports that I'm going to go to. This has been spoken of in the past at 17,000. It is now up to 19,000 leaving year 6 semi-illiterate. How can that be? If schools can teach reading and you say there's improvement in a disciplined classroom environment, how can 19,000 students start high school semi-illiterate?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are very clear in terms of the research around what works best in our schools to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills. We too have seen the decline in writing that I think that report referred to.

The CHAIR: No, that's AERO. That's a separate one.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We have put in place specific interventions—

The CHAIR: Why are things going backwards? How do you feel that these are mostly disadvantaged students from a disadvantaged background and your system is keeping these poor kids poor?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I don't accept the premise of the question. We have teachers hard at work every day in our classrooms, focused on—

The CHAIR: I'm not after hard work. I'm after results.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I hear that, Chair, but I think one—

The CHAIR: Not excuses; results.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: —leads to another.

The CHAIR: And why aren't you angry about it? Why aren't you worked up about it and doing something about it? These are poor kids who will be stuck in the intergenerational poverty cycle, seemingly forever, because they go to high school semi-illiterate. They go to high school—let's go to AERO: year 9 kids at a year 7 writing level, and punctuation at year 3.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I note the progress that we have made on things like the HSC minimum standard, where we have ensured and continue to ensure we see the progress towards that minimum standard being achieved earlier in high school. It is not that I think those standards are where we are aiming for. What I want to do, sitting here today, is make sure that I do applaud the work our staff are doing across the system to make the progress that we are seeing while remaining committed to that further ambition beyond that.

The CHAIR: Where's the progress when we get these results week after week? You said "the HSC". Your own Daniel French, Director, Capability Implementation and School Excellence, in April wrote that 36 per cent of schools are on track to achieve their HSC target; 64 per cent aren't. Some 38 per cent are on track to achieve NAPLAN reading and numeracy targets; 62 per cent aren't. Isn't it just delusional to keep on saying progress is being made when we get all these indicators from Buckingham, from AERO and from Daniel French saying the system is going backwards? Poor kids are being kept poor.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, in terms of the HSC targets, what we know from the strategies we are implementing is that the schools that have engaged with the central support around HSC and achieving high results for the top two bands have seen a 17 per cent increase in their HSC results as a result of that intervention. That's why I say we're making progress. I accept that there is a time lag to seeing that across the system, but the interventions we are putting in place are having the desired impact. That's what I'm referring to when I say we are making progress and we need to continue to. The thing that I would be very concerned about is if we were to lurch to an entirely different strategy at the point we are implementing—and implementing things well—in our schools. Sustained, focused effort to deliver improvement is what we need. We are really clear that the interventions we are making are showing results within them. We need to make sure that we remain focused on that and can sustain our delivery of them over time.

The CHAIR: Well, the Government's chosen curriculum reviewer said we've got the fastest falling school academic results in the world. We've got data showing that 19,000 kids start high school semi-illiterate. We've got this AERO result showing that in year 9 the writing skills are at a year 7 level and punctuation is at a year 3 level. Your own Daniel French has said that a heavy majority of schools aren't meeting their targets. On behalf of people who care about education in New South Wales, aren't you just delusional to keep on talking about

progress? When are you going to face up to these tragic failures, which hurt disadvantaged kids more than anyone else?

PAUL MARTIN: Mr Latham—

The CHAIR: I don't mind someone admitting to problems, but surely there has got to be some reality here to actually confront them and deal with them. What have you got to say, Mr Martin?

PAUL MARTIN: I was just going to say that I don't think historically our teachers have been as well served as they should have been by some of the syllabus documents of the last 25 years, and that some of the issues that have been raised about the phonics inclusions in K-2; the sequences of writing from years 3 to 6; and then the year 6 continuity into year 7 and the capacity of teachers in high school to be able to identify and improve students' writing and, of course, their reading are part of the new syllabus processes and part of the syllabuses that will emerge later this year.

While those results are shocking—and I agree with you in relation to AERO and the other writing results, the national NAPLAN results—the first step in improvement is making sure that teachers have the tools to work with, and the new syllabuses will do that. If we can arrest the decline in K and 2, there will be less people who are illiterate, and less low SES kids illiterate, in years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Any who slip through that net should be able to be improved as they go through so that by the time we're in year 10 we have very few students who can't write at the national reading level. That's the intention of the new syllabuses.

The CHAIR: Thanks for that answer. It seems to be in touch with the reality of the problem and how you might fix it. You can add to that the year 1 phonics check is a big advance as well. It's a long pipeline, but that would give us some hope for the future. I will pass to the Opposition.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thanks very much, Mr Chair. Mr Martin, just to clarify, the new syllabus will provide supporting catch-up measures for kids who have missed out on phonics?

PAUL MARTIN: The syllabuses are sequential. K-2 has the systematic, synthetic phonics plus the beginnings of writing that require students, at an early age, to begin to identify what a sentence is and how to build sentences into paragraphs et cetera. It is age appropriate. Years 3 to 6 will do the same. For a teacher who has students that haven't met that required level by the year they're in, they'll have the syllabus material that the students should have addressed earlier and be able to intervene. That'll go right through to year 10 so that, if you have year 7 students who are at a year 3 level, those year 7 teachers will know where the students are up to. But the intent is to catch as early as possible so that you have less issues going through. But the syllabuses that will emerge very shortly will have sequenced writing, including sentence, paragraph and text structures, in them for the first time in quite a while.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I know that we're requiring now our teachers to do their professional development in the specific areas. Are there any requirements to do it around writing in particular for those particular years?

PAUL MARTIN: One of the things that NESA and all three sectors will be doing is providing a lot of support to teachers, making sure that they can teach the writing and, in particular, the grammatical structures that haven't been taught really for quite a long time, including in my own life at school, which goes back to the late 1970s. So we're going to have to do a body of work with professional learning for teachers. But we're ready to go. It'll be something that changes the nature of schooling for kids. I think it's groundbreaking. But we've got to bring the profession with us. That will begin from next year.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I could add, Ms Houssos, in terms of writing, Mr Graham can provide some information around the support we are providing to schools and writing. We, as we did with the phonics check, identify the need and make the move. We will see the results from that. We are doing the same with writing. We are working on strategic support for our schools under the School Success model around writing. It is one of the focus areas that we are having that support around to make sure, as Mr Martin has said, that teachers are supported in their work.

MARTIN GRAHAM: New South Wales has a huge amount of strategies around writing—so professional learning, effective writing. We look at the evidence base from K to 6. We look at creating text in years 3 to 8 and strengthening writing from 5 to 8. We also have introduced the check-in assessments. So we now have a writing check-in assessment, which is something we haven't had a lot of before. That was undertaken in late term 3. So we got tens of thousands of kids who've undertaken this check-in assessment in year 6. We'll be providing schools those results shortly.

New South Wales has strong results in writing. You can see we got a strong emphasis through the syllabuses. But we do rank number one in Australia in NAPLAN for years 3 and 5 and two in year 7. Senior

secondary has been more of an issue for us. Best in Class process is really focused on improving writing. We take teachers who have strong writing results in the HSC within their subjects, not just English teachers but art and other subjects as well. We take them 50 per cent of the time and put them into schools that have been struggling with writing. That enables us to actually spread that practice across. It's very practical. It's one of the most popular pieces of professional learning that schools do, because they actually get to see top-quality writing samples, they explicitly learn how to teach kids to get those samples, and they can replicate that through the HSC.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Graham, just one quick question, because we're running out of time. Can you just tell me if those check-in assessments that are being undertaken—my understanding is it's years 3 to 6 at the moment. Are those results available for parents?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We're looking at how we report those results to parents. At the moment, the check-in assessments have been focused on the classroom and the teacher. Obviously, unlike NAPLAN, we don't have a big reporting process around it—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have a straight question for you, Mr Graham: Are they available for parents?

MARTIN GRAHAM: They're not currently available for parents.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Houssos, if I may, they're a tool designed to support teaching and learning in the classroom. They are a tool designed to take a quick snapshot of where a student is so a teacher can adapt their practice. We very much want to maintain them as a low-stakes test that is there to inform the practitioner in the classroom around the best strategies to support them. When teachers receive the results for their students from the check-in assessments, they also receive pointers toward strategies for those students and the identification of their areas of need, moving forward.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But you would be aware, Mr Harrisson, that this Committee visited a number of schools in various different inquiries. A number of schools already do provide those to parents. Why don't you do that as a matter of course across the board?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are working through the issues of how we would do that and how we would do so in a way that didn't impact on the workload of our teachers at a system level.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd like to turn back to Edmondson Park, Mr Manning. We talked about this extensively in our earlier budget estimates hearings. I'd like to ask you about a tender document that's been provided to us under a GIPAA request. You might be familiar with it. I can read it to you:

Request for Tender

Strategic Advisory Panel—Strategic Transactions

Part B—Specifications

Are you familiar with this for Edmondson Park?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes. I'm not familiar with the actual document, but I am familiar with the project.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Great. I can give you a copy of that one because I have a few copies here. We talked about Edmondson Park. I understand that you told us previously that these planning documents were not produced by the department. The document that we talked about in our earlier estimate hearings talked about 9 per cent of the development being retail, but this is a document that is prepared by School Infrastructure NSW. I to take you to page 2, under the background.

The CHAIR: It is the one listed as page 1 of 4?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, that's right. Paragraph 2 states:

SINSW is actively encouraging industry, and its representatives, to identify proposals that recognise the potential value of new schools in precinct developments. By creating a front door for developers ...

Mr Manning, did you draft this document?

ANTHONY MANNING: This was drafted by my organisation, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you think it is appropriate that School Infrastructure NSW is characterising its operations as creating a front door for developers?

ANTHONY MANNING: The purpose of this document, and the purpose of this exercise, is really to recognise that in many cases—and we have talked about them over the years of estimates—that housing

development comes first and the school comes second in terms of the time line for delivery. This is an opportunity for us to look at the feasibility of a model where actually the school comes at the same time as the development for housing comes as well. That is the reference that it means, so it actually is "recognise the potential value of new schools". So rather than waiting four or five years through a VPA process for a school to be delivered, we can actually work in partnership with a developer to ensure that a school can be delivered as early as it possibly can be and recognise that it actually brings some value into the proposition. We think that there some value-for-money opportunities exist as part of that to allow us to accelerate. This is a test of a feasibility of that thinking and this tender document for Edmondson Park is designed to solicit and understand whether we think there really is a value proposition there or not.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The idea would be that the developer would contribute funding for the school. Is that the alternative model?

ANTHONY MANNING: It is not necessarily contribute funding but if—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There are multiple references to alternative procurement developer-led models, feeding into our school design and delivery model. What else is the developer contributing, if not money?

ANTHONY MANNING: It's about value too. If a developer is going to build 20,000 houses, there is a scale of construction activity that is going to occur. It actually means that if the school was included as part of that delivery process, there would be savings available because we would not have a separate prelim set up; we would be buying as part of that process rather than anything else. There is a whole series of value opportunities that present itself with this. The Edmondson Park tender process was designed to really test the market to see whether we thought there was value in that process or not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Just to be clear, you are saying working in partnership with developers does actually include joint retail considerations?

ANTHONY MANNING: Again, this is a document we have put to the market to get their feedback on what they think adds value and what does not add value. There is nothing in this document that suggests whatever deal they offer us we will take or that any deal they offer us we will take. It is an exploration of where we think that feasibility sits, what value it brings to the system. Some of that may be speed of delivery, some may be genuine cost of delivery as part of that process, and other ancillary things that can be delivered alongside a school that happen every day. You go to a lot of high school spaces and you will find commercial developments and things that pop up around the school that actually could be delivered in unison that would add some value to this process. This is us—as I think we said at the last estimates—just testing the feasibility of whether this represented an increased value-for-money proposition.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: This document is dated March 2020. Obviously you have had some time to assess those things, the feasibility. What is your assessment over two years on about whether these alternative developer-led models are feasible?

ANTHONY MANNING: This document was created in order to solicit an actual bid from a developer. The analysis that is done across other sectors, including the university sector, would suggest there is some value in it. What we have not actually done is receive a value-for-money bid that we could commit to. This process was part of that. We have received a bid and we are currently evaluating that bid to see whether we think it actually represents value and is a bid that we would proceed with.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is that the Edmondson Park bid?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes, that's the bid that we talked about before, and you will know from previous questions, we have a site for a high school. We have a standalone build option that we can implement if this doesn't represent value for money to us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The bid is currently being evaluated. When is it due to be determined?

ANTHONY MANNING: I think it would be fair to say we will have it concluded before the end of the calendar year.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You have to excuse my ignorance, obviously I am a ring-in. Mr D'Adam apologises. He has COVID. The bid is a developer has come to you under this framework and said, "We will build the new school if you let us put commercial space on the footprint." That saves the Government money. That is why you are interested in it?

ANTHONY MANNING: No, it is not just about that at all.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But it is partly about that?

ANTHONY MANNING: There are elements of that that could genuinely have value and are worth exploring.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is always going to be in the interests of developers to say, "Yes, we will chuck a school on if you let us have this housing and retail space here as well." Why wouldn't it always be in their interest to do that?

ANTHONY MANNING: We are trying to see not whether it is in their interests, but whether it is in our interests. This tender is about whether it is actually in our interests. For them to deliver a school to our design and our specification at a reduced price—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But that is your job.

ANTHONY MANNING: —to what we would deliver it to. If there are opportunities to identify additional value, then I think we have a responsibility to taxpayers to make sure that we are getting the best bang for what we possibly can.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, just to be clear at the moment, you have a standalone site for the high school?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is adjoining the primary school?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But you are currently evaluating a bid from a developer in response to a tender that has been issued by you that there is a possibility that you would build a nine-storey high school on top of a commercial development. That is correct, isn't it?

ANTHONY MANNING: The tender document seeks to solicit from a developer what they think has value to that process or not. The document you saw, we talked about last time, was effectively a document with the beginning of the statutory planning process that indicated some commercial. We have subsequently received a bid from the developer that we are evaluating, but I can confirm to you that the bid that we have received from the developer does not include commercial.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What does it include?

ANTHONY MANNING: It's a school.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: On the site in the shopping centre?

ANTHONY MANNING: No, there's no shopping centre. There's no commercial; it's a school. They have offered to effectively erect a school for us and they have put a proposal to us that we are currently evaluating to see whether actually that represents better value for money than if we had got on and built a standard school on our own site.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Again, excuse my ignorance, but what's in it for them? They are just not doing that out of the goodness of their heart, Mr Manning. Why have they offered to build this school for the New South Wales Government?

ANTHONY MANNING: As I said before, with a lot of developers there are a couple of layers to this. One of them is the fact that if they are active in a region anyway and have already committed significant construction resources it makes sense. To bring a school on is a marginal cost in the set-up of the site and a whole range of other bits, as opposed to starting again, which is a cost-saving measure. There is also from there an interest in ensuring that the school is there as quickly as it can be. That does—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, we all accept that this makes the development easier for them to sell and we can take that as a given. What explicitly do they get in return in the proposal that we talked about in the last budget estimates? It was 9 per cent retail and 9 per cent community facility. What is it?

ANTHONY MANNING: No, this is not about what they get in return. This is a tender process for them to bid to us, for us to know actually what value they can bring to us to do it. There is no kind of quid pro quo process in this. As I say, we have left it open for them to look at, kind of commercial development as part of a school and how that might integrate. The two things might be—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, can you say that again, Mr Manning? You said that there might be a commercial development as part of it.

ANTHONY MANNING: The way this document works allows for them to consider the value of commercial development alongside the school. That might not be in the same structure as the school; it might have a completely separate front door in a completely separate building to the right or left of the school building. If you are imagining that this is a shopping centre and the entry to the school is up an escalator, that's not how the model works, that's not how the specification works, nor what we have asked to do. You will be familiar with lots of high schools where there are lots of shopping centres adjacent to the high schools, so those things are all available anyway. This is an opportunity for us to test the market to see, when they put their money where their proposal is, whether this represents value and what it is they think brings the value to the table for us to decide whether we want to proceed with it or not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But, Mr Manning, as my colleague has outlined, we don't expect developers to be doing this purely from the goodness of their heart. They are private companies that require a return. What is it that they are getting in return? What is happening to the existing site that is next to the high school?

ANTHONY MANNING: Nothing. We're holding on to the existing site.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So what is it? The tender that is currently underway that you are evaluating is for the private developer to build a high school on the site that is not the one that you own but it's on their site.

ANTHONY MANNING: On their site, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are they considering commercial development adjoining that?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Houssos, if I may, this is a tender process that is live and so there are commercial-in-confidence elements to it. As Mr Manning has clearly articulated, our interest in this as the Department of Education is the value we can get for the New South Wales taxpayer in the delivery of a school. No decision has been made in relation to this proposal. At this stage it is an exploratory process that we are undertaking to test that value that is available to us, and we are absolutely open to saying if it doesn't give value that we wouldn't proceed with it. But I am just conscious that government has also made no decision in relation to that at this stage. So I just want to make sure—in terms of the questioning, Mr Manning may need to take some things on notice given the commercial-in-confidence nature of the tender process we're engaged in.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Harrison, I accept that that's a tender process that's underway but this is a remarkable step by the Department of Education and it was one that Mr Manning and the Minister tried to talk down in previous budget estimates hearings, as though this was a planning document that wasn't theirs, that this wasn't happening and that this wasn't underway. And now we find out that it actually is, that the department has continued to engage with developers in this way and that there has been no communication to the public. This is a fundamentally different way of delivering schools.

ANTHONY MANNING: In terms of the last time we met to talk about this, we confirmed that this was a commercial model that we were testing. The documents that you handed across were actually documents from the developer themselves as part of them testing the framework around the statutory planning process. They weren't documents generated by us. And so I refute the idea that we've been doing this covertly. We haven't been doing this covertly. This has been through eTender. This is a procurement process we've been running, and we've been very open about the fact that we've been running a process to see whether it represents value or not. You have, yourself, articulated the value this brings to the developer, which is in terms of their ability to develop their proposals, particularly around residential development, knowing that a school is going in day one as part of the joint use of that development. That does genuinely have value.

This is an attempt by us to effectively understand whether that represents value back to the State, rather than waiting a period of time for the developer to complete their development and then for us to come in, acquire land and build a school at a later date, when the development phases are out of sync and the costs for development are then different because of the scale of development and because there's no ability then for any of the value capture type concepts that government has been looking at across the portfolio for a long time. Edmondson Park was one that we really wanted to test. We've had good conversations. We've seen other sectors engage in this process. What we've asked for is a tender where we have a firm price that we can properly evaluate to understand whether it represents value or not. And to the secretary's point, I have a site to build a traditional school on, so I know exactly what that will cost me to do. If this doesn't represent value for money then we won't be proceeding with it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you understand, though, Ms Harrison, how it is slightly problematic when we're trying to ask questions about the investment of public money in public education, and school

infrastructure is a critical part of that—a big part of the public money that we spend on public education—and the response that we're getting is, "We can't give you that because it's commercial in confidence"?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think actually the fundamental reason I can't give that to you is because decisions have not yet been made by government. I think it is appropriate that a department is seeking to provide the best value for money for a taxpayer. I think it is appropriate that we consider those factors. And it is appropriate for us to give options to government on that, but ultimately there remains a decision to be made that has not yet been made in this case. As we've indicated quite clearly, we are not interested unless it delivers value for the taxpayer and for public education. That's what we're looking at this for and, if it doesn't stack up, that wouldn't be something we would be recommending the Government proceeded with.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will continue with that, because I find it quite extraordinary and feel that we've had a bit of a run-around on this. Mr Manning, you talk about how the value is derived from there not being a development that's out of sync with the development or building of the school, as though only the private sector could marry those two things up. But a smart government could clearly look at the surrounding neighbourhood and say, "Right, we're going to need a school in there soon". Why can't the Government build schools in places where they're required, on time?

ANTHONY MANNING: We do build schools where they're required, on time. As you're aware, as with any government, there are decisions that are made about priorities for which capital is invested in spaces. It is very difficult for us, particularly around some of the common planning assumptions and the way we've seen some of the developments play out in the last few years. It's all well and good to have a signed-off rezoning plan that has a volume of properties; it's all very well to have a developer that's keen to proceed with them. But as we see in places between the Gregory Hills and Leppington, there can be very different delivery rates across those precincts. It's very difficult to get a sense of which are the ones that are going to run ahead and which are the ones that are going to run behind. It's not possible to proceed with all of them at the same time, and so we have always said, from the beginning of School Infrastructure, we are actively looking at procurement models that can deliver a better value for Government and that can also deliver infrastructure in a more timely way.

In previous times, PPP projects have been used for the same sort of basis to steal a march on those things. This is just another opportunity for us to look at how we engage with the market. But if we did deliver a school at the same time as a development, we would be using separate contractors because we have a separate process. In some places we would be competing for the same resources, and that would actually drive up prices. One of the benefits of this, potentially, assuming that it stacks up—and, as I say, the evaluation is ongoing on this basis—is that we're not competing for the same resources. It's one focus; it's one delivery intent with one set of deadlines and dates. We're not overheating the market by competing for trades and resources, so we actually can deliver what we need to.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Mr Manning, I've heard you and Ms Harrisson say a number of times now that this proposal is about the value proposition for so-called taxpayers, blah, blah, blah. At what point are we looking at the quality of education for our children, when education is being effectively privatised by stealth? Are we not concerned about the commercialisation of our education system? Is that being considered, or only value for money?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, I don't accept the premise of that question.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm sure you don't.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Because we are not looking in any sense at privatising the provision of any public education, and I think it is really important that we are clear that that is not the intent. We are talking about the infrastructure only. As Mr Manning has indicated, that infrastructure and this tender go to the specifications we have for those buildings, to ensure that they meet our standards and provide an appropriate built environment for our teachers to educate our students. I think we've got to be very careful not to confuse those two things.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But you're looking at the idea of doing a deal with the private sector that reduces your up-front infrastructure costs in return for that developer getting a benefit in a commercial way, which can only come from it associating itself with or having buildings very close to the school. That's correct, isn't it?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, I would say that is correct in any method of building that we would do in a development. The provision of a school in a growth area around a development, of course, adds value to the developer. What we are trying to do is see if there's a way we can capture some of that back for the taxpayers of New South Wales, rather than it all going to them. That's what we're considering—whether or not that stacks up—as we've indicated.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Or you could build it independently and not be influenced by the private sector, couldn't you?

ANTHONY MANNING: No. Ms Boyd, I think what the secretary is saying is, wherever we add in a school, we add value. Wherever we put a school in, we add value.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Probably the opposite of that is wherever you don't build a school where it is needed, it's decreasing them.

ANTHONY MANNING: No. We've done the research on it. Wherever we add in a school, we add value to all of the—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can we clarify that, because you've spun that the wrong way.

ANTHONY MANNING: No.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If we work from the assumption that the population should be given a certain number of schools and hospitals and all the rest of it, in places where there isn't that stuff, of course that's going to get a lower value.

The CHAIR: On a point of order, if we can stop interruptions when someone is interrupting someone else and go one at a time, it would be really helpful. Mr Manning, give your explanation.

ANTHONY MANNING: If I could finish the point. What we have found traditionally is that when we add schools into existing developments, we add value to those developments.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Obviously.

ANTHONY MANNING: This is an opportunity for us to understand whether actually getting into the cycle with the developers that are delivering those residences, that may be an opportunity that we can capture some of that value in a reduced cost to the State that allows me to stretch the dollars that I have further and further, as we might need to do. That's the intent of this as a model.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But, again, as with every other bit of privatisation this Government does, it's short-term gain for long-term pain. You are putting yourself in a position where you are then answerable to a developer, or in agreement with the developer, for a longer period of time.

ANTHONY MANNING: Sorry, I don't agree with that as a premise. They are not the terms of the deal that we are offering. We are talking about the delivery of infrastructure in order to enable us to do the things we need to do. Once that infrastructure is delivered, it's delivered and the school is operational. I don't know what lingering things you think we're putting into the deal to make it work, but that's not how it works and it's not what the tender documents ask for. This is purely about the delivery of infrastructure.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: As my colleagues have explained, in order for a private business—we all understand how the business world works—to want to invest, it must be getting something from this too and that must be commercial benefit. Where is that commercial benefit coming from if it's not coming from the surrounding neighbourhood? Why are we not building independent schools? Is it that we've got to the point where our Department of Education is so devoid of independent expertise that it can't organise its own—

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, we have delivered record numbers of new schools. I don't think that is a fair or appropriate question of officials here today. In every single one of our public schools that we own and operate, as Mr Manning has indicated, we are looking to see if there are ways of ensuring that within our budget envelope we can deliver the maximum value and the maximum classrooms across the State. As we've indicated, when you build a school in a growth area, it affects the property prices in that area, and that in itself is a payback. If we can get the school in early and have a look at—all we are talking about here is looking at this at this stage. I want to repeat that we have not made any decisions on this. Government has not yet taken decisions on this. We are simply testing whether or not there are developers building in those growth corridors that might be willing to invest in a school at an earlier point in the development cycle to assist us to get a school operational sooner and to stretch the value of those dollars. We are not talking about handing over ownership. We are not talking about privatisation of the education provision, or of the asset. We are looking at a different delivery model.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Privatisation is broader than that.

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could I clarify before I hand over, because I believe something was misunderstood there. At no point was I criticising the Education officials. I'm talking about government policy when I'm talking about stripping the department of its direction when it comes to its lack of independence.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, I think it would be appropriate at this point that I comment that School Infrastructure was created five years ago. We have grown the capacity in the Department of Education to deliver and maintain infrastructure to record levels. We have delivered a record-breaking program, and I'm really proud of the work that our staff in School Infrastructure have done to achieve that.

The CHAIR: I can understand what Mr Manning is trying to achieve, and I think Mr Manning is a very good official. But it's also true that as soon as you put a school near shops, the shops commercially benefit from the vast number of kids and parents who will use the shopping centre. Instead of this sort of joint venture, or public-private co-location model, would it be more effective, cleaner and less susceptible to these sorts of criticisms, and maybe problems in the future, if the State Government levied a development levy from the commercial interest to say, "This is the amount of money you'll benefit from our guarantee in the master plan of a new Leppington or whatever, there will be a school near the shops and you get the money off the developer to help build the school"?

ANTHONY MANNING: Certainly that would be another way to try and capture the value that the school inherently creates. The problem would be how we legislate to make that happen. But essentially what we are trying to do as an agency is deliver as much as we can, with as little as we can, so we can stretch it as far as possible. If we think we see a way to deliver at a better price point that doesn't compromise any of the infrastructure or any of the delivery of education as part of that process, I think we have an obligation to follow that and see whether it works. Edmondson Park is an opportunity for the developers to actually put a price on the table that is fixed and firm and for us to do an evaluation of whether it is worthwhile pursuing or not, and we are in the process of doing that. If it proves to not be worth doing, we simply won't do it. And at Edmondson Park I have a site and I can build a high school adjacent to the primary school.

The CHAIR: Yes, but don't you think that is a substandard position, then? If you don't do it, the developer still gets the commercial benefit of having a school in that area fully funded by the taxpayer. I mean, development levies are not unusual. We have had them for 40 years at local government level. We have some at State level. Why don't we build in a new school contribution from these developers who hit the jackpot when we build a school next to their shopping centre?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order: While I think it is a very reasonable question, I don't necessarily think it is a reasonable question of these officials, as it is a policy question and should be put to the Government—which I'm sure you will do at one point.

The CHAIR: Yes. Would the officials recommend that to the Government as an alternative to be considered?

ANTHONY MANNING: Happy to raise that with the Department of Planning.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I come to the replacement for Local Schools, Local Decisions, which is being abolished, thankfully. The replacement, notionally, is a set of school targets that have been postponed until next year. Why doesn't the department secretary mandate the five important things we know that work in schools and would make every single school more effective—that is, explicit instruction, teachers teaching; synthetic phonics as the best way to read; a disciplinary model, like Michaela or Marsden Road, that works; Hattie's collective efficacy; and the work health and safety requirements that every school should enforce and were notably absent at the Castle Hill disaster. Why don't we just do the five things that every school should do?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Thank you for the question. I might just give one example before I hand to Ms Walker to give you some further insights. I started this term at Minchinbury Public School, a fantastic school in our system that has seen a significant impact on its reading. I saw there the power of moving from one delivery of instruction around reading to a new one for that cohort. It has had a significant impact.

The CHAIR: What is the new method?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: They have moved to a fully phonics-based method in their school.

The CHAIR: That's good.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: That is certainly at the core of all of the support we provide to the system, and that certainly goes to the professional development for teachers, the line management of principals and the engagement with principals through their Director, Education and Leadership—looking at the evidence-based practices we want to see and focusing the efforts of schools on those practices. And we are certainly starting to see the results. I would indicate, Chair, if we had a system that was smaller and more contained, that might be a more easy opportunity. We have 2,200 schools. We have humans running and leading and practising in those schools, and we need to work with those professionals and provide them with the skills to implement those

strategies that we want to see, and that's the work that we are doing. I will ask Ms Walker to provide some more information on the School Success Model.

SIMONE WALKER: Thanks so much for the question. On the mention of the extension to the targets, just to be clear, we know that the targets are changing around NAPLAN. That was based on some national decisions around NAPLAN. The ones that are being extended into 2023—not a long distance into future—is HSC, attendance and belonging. I think, in the five things that you mentioned, the things that are really interesting in that are the explicit teaching and, as Ms Harrison said, the phonics. That really is the nature of our PL. It is the nature of our Best in Class.

We see it with our HSC Best in Class—it is that absolute firm example. What we know is that we have strategies under the School Success Model where we look at targeted, tiered and focused work, whether it is strategic, guided or universal, that gives a consistent way for us to approach our very large cohort—as we said, 2,200. To move that cohort in the one direction, to get the lift that we are looking for and the lift that we are seeing, we think the School Success Model brings that.

Where we can be more explicit, as you described, we are looking to do that. But we also need to make sure that we ensure that we are respecting and understanding the profession of teaching and the development that teachers and principals need to do so that we are lifting them with the foundational pieces of their workplace. Where we can be more comprehensive and say, "This is the core foundational piece," we have been doing that, as I said, for example, through the strategic, the guided and the universal support. Of the five that you mentioned, would we be in firm agreement that they are the five? I think it's fair to say no. But there are certainly a number in those that you mentioned that we are being much more directive about, "This is the way we do work around here."

The CHAIR: On that, Ms Walker, is it really a contradiction to say, "Teachers are professionals," but there is no central mandate to say to professionals, "You've got to follow the evidence in these key areas: explicit instruction and synthetic phonics. The evidence is absolutely clear. It's not optional. This is what works and you need to do it"? It's the equivalent of lawyers being told they need to follow courtroom rules and doctors being told they need to follow certain procedures that make their patients healthier. Why is teaching saying that teachers are professionals but there is no expectation that they rigidly follow the evidence base—not left or right or some ideological question, but just what works in practice?

SIMONE WALKER: I know a number of my colleagues would have a view on this that they probably want to express. I think what we provide for our teachers is the best evidence and the best research base that we can for them to apply in context. You can't operate in a State like New South Wales without having the context of the teaching experience and the student experience being considered every step of the way. We do provide that research and evidence base. I'm very happy for any of my colleagues to jump in.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: If I may, Chair, I think one of the things is—you draw on the medical example. You use keyhole surgery now and not open-heart surgery, for example. You have to train the professional in those skills. That has been the big investment of the organisation over recent years and it continues to ensure we are offering the professional development for our staff and that that is very much bounded by those evidence-based practices. We do not offer professional development from the Department of Education that is not based in evidence.

As Mr Martin has indicated around the curriculum, we see all of those tools coming together and aligning across the system. We will have the curriculum, the training and development of teachers and then the practice in classrooms. I note that as part of the Commonwealth work at the moment there is work underway around initial teacher education to make sure that at that very entry point we are preparing and engaging the university faculties in that evidence base and making sure that it flows through to our teachers.

Chair, if I may, I just wanted to make sure I was clear on some figures I gave before around the best-in-class and the HSC work because I think I might have had the wrong number in my head. Our best-in-class initiative is very much focused on the evidence and very much focused on what is working in classrooms. Across that, 98 per cent of teachers who have undertaken that professional learning indicate the intent to change their practice as a result. The evaluation of teaching and student work samples following that professional development has shown a significant impact. For example, in writing, an analysis of almost 200 student work samples in 20 schools has shown that the professional learning improves students' ability to write quality text and use grammar effectively.

Our professional development has supported over 4,500 teachers but I note that we have, on any given day, around 90,000 teachers working in and around our schools. Our scale is part of our challenge here, and that we are across 450 schools. For teachers who maintain their engagement with that professional development, we see the impact on their student outcomes. From 2019 to 2021, 184 schools that were highly engaged with the

professional development for the HSC saw a 4 percentage point increase in the proportion of bands 5 and 6 in the HSC. In education terms, in Hattie's effect size of efficacy impact, that is hugely significant. Those that had a medium engagement in the professional learning around their faculties had a 2.7 percentage point increase.

What we are seeing is that high engagement in evidence-based practice and professional development is changing practice in classrooms and is impacting on student outcomes. Certainly, I know in all the conversations I have with high school principals—and I'm sure this goes for my colleagues as well—the appetite for more of that training for their staff is there. The teachers that are engaging in that training are waxing lyrical, quite frankly, at the benefits of it and at the level of stretch for them intellectually that it is providing into their practice. That is what we want to see more of.

The CHAIR: Just coming back to reading, if all these wonderful things are happening, say, with synthetic phonics, how can it be that around 40 per cent of students don't successfully sound out a majority of the year 1 phonics check words? Doesn't that indicate that the teachers aren't teaching? Like, it's a truism that if the students aren't learning, the teachers aren't teaching. If 40 per cent of kids aren't getting through the year 1 phonics check, it's an indicator the school is not actually teaching and practising phonics.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I note that's the figures, I think, from the first year the whole system undertook the phonics.

The CHAIR: No, the first-year result was worse.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: A test.

The CHAIR: It has improved, but 40 per cent is still big.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: So the first year was a sample, and the second year was the whole system. We should shortly have this year's results. We don't quite have them yet, but we will do shortly, Chair. I am confident, in the sense of the work that has gone on this year and through the COVID ILSP and other interventions that we have put in place, that we would expect to see some increase there. We have, in reading, seen sustained growth in performance, and we are seeing growth in student outcomes. Mr Dizdar can give you some further examples of that.

The CHAIR: But do you look at the phonics result of a school that's lousy, the year 1 phonics check, and say to the school leader, "This just indicates you're not teaching phonics, or you're not teaching it very well," and intervene and make them do it? It's a crime against the kids that they can't read.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly, the strategic support we have is targeted at those schools that need it most. The guided support being provided by our directors, educational leadership, is absolutely embedded in that same suite of resources all the way through—this is no "choose your own adventure"—from the universal resources available for a school to access themselves and use, to the materials and support provided by a director, educational leadership, alongside a school team, to the very intensive strategic support where we go in and work alongside a school. The resources are aligned, the resources are evidence-based, and they will back in the new syllabus accordingly. We have gone for that very clear alignment through the whole system to be clear on what we are trying to achieve and make sure that's what's coming through our system.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, I wanted to come back to the tender document. The tender document is actually for a strategic advisory panel.

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many members have been engaged as part of this panel?

ANTHONY MANNING: I will have to take that on notice. As you say, the tender was for some consultants to help us with the evaluation process of this. I'll have to take on notice exactly how many consultants we have taken on board as part of that process, but there is quite a lot of work in the evaluation of this sort of concept to make sure that we thoroughly vet it, thoroughly understand it and understand the implications of it before we would work through what we think the right outcome and decision would be.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me how many have been engaged, what the full-time equivalent is? The document outlines that it could be up to two days per week, but it might be less than that. There are peaks and troughs that it refers to. Can you tell us how many days they have been engaged for and what the total amount is that they have been paid?

ANTHONY MANNING: Today? I will have a look at the information that we've got in that space. I'm not sure we would have a sense of the FTE.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sure.

ANTHONY MANNING: It's about workload, and we are trying to give people a sense of what we think the workload might be rather than how many days they will be in doing what we do. But, yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Total amount and total hours paid for, then.

ANTHONY MANNING: Sure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Great. And how many people have been engaged.

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This is obviously an ongoing role that they are continuing to do for you. Is that correct?

ANTHONY MANNING: This is about evaluating a series of opportunities for us, so, yes. We know we've got Edmondson Park. Depending on where we go beyond that, there may or may not be others that we would do in terms of other shapes. So, yes, we are looking for some consultants that could support us with that without necessarily making a decision about how many projects it might be and where it might go. That's why we've gone to consultants as part of that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: They are currently considering Edmondson Park.

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What other projects are they considering at the moment?

ANTHONY MANNING: As you know, for the delivery strategy document that we produced, we identified a series of projects that we thought there was some merit in. At the moment, Edmondson Park is the only one that we're going through a bid evaluation process for. We're not looking at a bid evaluation process for anything else at the moment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's the only one that you've received a bid from a developer about. Is that correct? The others are open, if others want to make bids, but they haven't actually been considered yet.

ANTHONY MANNING: No. This is the only one we've actually put an RFP out and got a response. The others aren't at that stage yet.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yet? So they're open to be considered?

ANTHONY MANNING: They're open for us to consider what we want to do next and what we think is the right value-for-money step.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What's your priority order? Edmondson Park high school was promised in 2018. The land is sitting there. You could actually just build a high school on the existing site at the moment, but instead you're going through this process where you are engaging with developers and seeing whether maybe you build it on another site.

ANTHONY MANNING: To see whether we could get better value for money, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But the community sees a vacant block of land sitting there. It sees a promise that was made by this Government in 2018 to build a high school. At the moment you're out consulting with developers to see whether they can build it on a different site. If the developers were to build this particular high school, when would construction begin?

ANTHONY MANNING: As soon as we're through the statutory planning process, effectively. That would be the next step for any of the options that we go down for Edmondson Park—the statutory planning approval and then we'd get straight into construction from there. As you know, we're building the primary school at the moment. That was always our priority—deliver the primary school before the high school. The primary school will come onstream day one, term one 2023. Then we will roll straight into the high school. We'll put an EIS together in order to go through an SSDA approval and appoint a contractor to get on and do the work, assuming that we would get on and build it ourselves, rather than this model. We'll have a decision close out on this before the end of the calendar year and we'll be able to proceed with whichever option we think is the right one to go down.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But you have to start the planning process again?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes. As part of every project, we have to start a statutory planning process. That can take six to nine months, depending on the complexity of it.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand there's a tender that's underway and I take that on board. You said that there is no retail component in the bid that's currently—

ANTHONY MANNING: In the bid that's under consideration, yes, there's no retail as part of the offering that's been made to us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But when you say that, there could be retail adjoining it or in the surrounding areas. Is that correct?

ANTHONY MANNING: On land that we don't own, yes, absolutely.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there a community facility that's part of the consideration?

ANTHONY MANNING: I'd have to check that for sure, but we were very keen to encourage community facilities as part of that process. As you know, when we build schools we try to position school halls and things so that actually they can be accessed by communities out of hours as part of the school process. So, again, we would want to make sure that's the process. I'd have to check. I'm not close enough to the bid. The evaluation team are doing that. I'll see that when it's finished.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there going to be a school oval as part of—you said that they would have access to the oval, when we considered the earlier planning documents. As part of this bid, will they have access to a school oval or will they have a school oval?

ANTHONY MANNING: Again, I'm happy to check the exact detail of it. But the reality is we would retain the land that we currently own to provide that function if we needed it.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that you're looking at the department's interests, you're looking at whether it's value for money. Do they explicitly include students' interests, what is the best outcome for a student?

ANTHONY MANNING: In what regard?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When you're evaluating this bid, how do you weight the interests of the student?

ANTHONY MANNING: In the same way that we evaluate the interests of the student with every project that we build. In every project that we build, we look at design process, we look at the location. It's part of our standards and specifications, which are clear about size of classrooms, location of classrooms. We would do extensive consultation with the School Performance executive and teams. This project has been through that as well. From a design perspective, that's how we assure the performance for students. We've been through that process as part of the design process for the offer that we've made on Edmondson Park. To be clear, it's fully compliant with the EFSG guideline that we've developed, which actually supports all our school development.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell us on notice what is the height of the school that's being considered? We talked about nine storeys in the previous document.

ANTHONY MANNING: Do you mean the height of the building or the height of the school?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Height of the school and height of the building.

ANTHONY MANNING: I'll have a look and see whether we've got that detail.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can come back to us today, that would be great. If you have to provide it on notice, that's fine.

ANTHONY MANNING: Let me see.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mr Manning, can you confirm that you approved DGS19/643, which recommended that the Minister approve the purchase of a site at 9 Gregory Hills Drive, Gledswood Hills? This is for the high school.

ANTHONY MANNING: To be honest, I would have to come back on notice in terms of the exact details of the brief.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure. I've got the brief in front of me and it says here, "Approved, Anthony Manning, CEO, Schools Infrastructure NSW". That was back in 2019.

ANTHONY MANNING: That would be me, but I can't say that I remember every brief that comes across my desk that I sign.

The CHAIR: I just interrupt at that point and welcome to our hearing a delegation led by Mr Dae-jung Kim, the Governor of Education in the South Korean province of Jeolla, visiting the New South Wales Parliament today and sitting in on the deliberations of our Education Committee. We welcome you and hope that your visit here today is a great success. Thank you. Mr Buttigieg.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Thanks, Chair. Do you recall that the department had made offers on the land and negotiations had advanced to the point where the vendor had agreed to sell the site to the department for \$21.5 million?

ANTHONY MANNING: I can't say that I do recall, no. I would have to have a look at the brief to refresh my memory.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. It is in the brief I've got here. Is the department still of the view that a high school is needed there?

ANTHONY MANNING: Again, I'd have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: This is not necessarily State secret stuff. This is demand that has been aired in various budget estimates hearings, questions in Parliament. Are you telling me that you are not aware of the demand in that area for a Gledswood high school?

ANTHONY MANNING: I'm telling you that 2019—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: You don't recall the brief at all?

ANTHONY MANNING: I don't recall the brief, no. I'd have to have a look at it to jog my memory. There are a lot of briefs that come across my desk—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure.

ANTHONY MANNING: —and I don't have to hand any formal advice on that. I'd have to take that on notice to understand it.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: If I table the brief for you that you approved, Mr Manning, would that perhaps help if you have a look at it?

ANTHONY MANNING: It may help, yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: You'll see here that the department had actually agreed to purchase the site for \$21.5 million and recommended saying to the Minister. Can I table that, secretariat? Thank you.

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We visited Gledswood Hills primary school. We visited Gregory Hills primary school. You would be aware of that part of Sydney, Mr Manning, and the need for a high school.

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You would agree that—

ANTHONY MANNING: I am aware of that part of Sydney. I am aware of the primary schools that we're putting in place. I can't say off the top of my head I'm across what our high school strategy is at this moment in time.

The CHAIR: Leppington selective, surely.

ANTHONY MANNING: Happy to look at the brief.

The CHAIR: After all these years, surely.

ANTHONY MANNING: Happy to look at the brief and see whether it helps.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: We're talking about almost four years ago now, aren't we, that brief would have been given to the Minister?

The CHAIR: Aren't you building a high school at Edmondson Park?

ANTHONY MANNING: We are building a high school at Edmondson Park.

The CHAIR: Well that is part of your strategy. Do one at Leppington—a selective.

ANTHONY MANNING: We also have Leppington as well, yes.

The CHAIR: I'm here to help.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You would be aware that there is a need—

ANTHONY MANNING: Do you have a copy that has actually got my signature on it?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: No.

ANTHONY MANNING: Okay, so I don't know that this brief went anywhere or even got to me. This is a brief that has my name on it but it doesn't have my signature on it. I don't have memory of a conversation about this piece of land, and that's possibly because the brief never got to me and I never signed it and it never went anywhere else. Do you have a version with my signature on it to help me?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, we've got that document that was produced to us. Is your testimony that you have no recollection of a recommendation being provided about a need to purchase land at Gledswood Hills for a high school?

ANTHONY MANNING: I can honestly say I have no memory. No, that's right. I see a lot of briefs that come across my desk. I have no memory of this brief. That doesn't mean the brief doesn't exist and it doesn't mean that I didn't sign it. I would have to look into TRIM and see whether there is an official signed copy of this brief with my name on it to know whether actually this even got as far as me and I even signed it off.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you take that on notice?

The CHAIR: I think the witness is taking that on notice—

ANTHONY MANNING: Happy to.

The CHAIR: —to check and come back to us later as to the status of the brief.

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, just to be clear though, are you aware of the need for a high school in Gledswood Hills and in that part of Sydney?

ANTHONY MANNING: Again, I would have to take it on notice. I am aware of the number of primary schools we're building. I'm aware of the number of residential properties that are being developed there. I am also aware that we are building high schools and have plans for high schools around the area. So I can't comment at this moment in time on whether we think a high school in or around Gledswood Hills is a great option for that or not. Again, I'd have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mr Manning, I have another document here. It is DOC 19/29046. It's titled "Gledswood Hills Land Acquisition". This one is actually signed by Richard Hayes, director of commercial transactions, and approved by Joe Lantz, executive director of infrastructure planning. It states:

The Executive Director, Strategic Planning as the Minister's Delegate is required to sign a Letter of Offer for the proposed purchase of a new high school site located at 9 Gregory Hills Drive, Gledswood Hills.

It appears as though a formal proposition was put up to purchase the land. As a representative of the department, you have no recollection or knowledge of that?

ANTHONY MANNING: No. It may well be that an offer was made as part of a process of negotiation but at a point in time when we had better developed strategies for the delivery of a high school, and so decided that the land wasn't appropriate to put a high school on. You'll know that we've recently delivered Oran Park High School. That has significant capacity sitting in it. Again, I would have to deal with it as a question on notice so I could understand what was in TRIM, what the conversation with the team was at the time and what the ultimate strategy ended up being.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So you're not aware of whether or not the proposition was formally put to the Minister, notwithstanding the documentation that I've tabled? I'm happy to table this one as well.

ANTHONY MANNING: No, I think the next step in that process would've been me to sign this off. This is me notifying the Minister of our intent to do it. That's the document I need to go and check to see whether that actually progressed or not.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Could you come back to us today on what stage that got up to—whether it was actually presented to the Minister and, if so, what the Minister's response was? It seems somewhat incongruous that we've had four years pass, clear demand for a high school—every man and his dog knows the requirement out there. There are two public primary schools—Gledswood Hills and Gregory Hills—and in excess of 1,000 kids. You're talking about putting demountables on Gregory Hills next year. The idea that four years ago there would have been a brief that went to the Minister about the purchase of land for a high school and we don't know where it's up to now is somewhat strange, I would have thought.

ANTHONY MANNING: For clarification, the demountables are going onto Gregory Hills Primary School so that we can open it as a new school for day one of term 1 in 2023, ahead of the formal construction, which will start in readiness for 2024.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: On that point, when you promised the school, what was the original promised delivery date for Gregory Hills?

ANTHONY MANNING: I don't think there was a promised delivery date.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Are you sure?

ANTHONY MANNING: As we've talked about in previous estimates, the land only came to us, I think, towards the back of 2020. We have been working on it since. There will be a pop-up school. I will check in TRIM as to whether that advice was ever provided up to the Minister. I'm also happy to take it on notice and talk to my team about what the ultimate strategy was. If we didn't acquire the site, I strongly suspect that we had alternative strategies for delivery of a high school for the students around that area. I'm happy to come back on notice in terms of what that strategy was, noting that Oran Park has capacity, we're obviously talking about a high school at Edmondson Park and we made a commitment around a selective high school in Leppington.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: If residents there are on the promise, for example, of a school at Gregory Hills for the first term in 2023, is it reasonable for them to expect a permanent structure be built? Presumably what's going to happen now is you're going to have a whole lot of construction activity around. First, you've got to install the demountables, then you've got to pull them down and then you've got to construct the actual buildings. When the Government goes out and says, "We're going to deliver this school by X date," do you think the residents and families out there expect a permanent structure by that date or demountables on the never-never?

ANTHONY MANNING: The strategy we're got is that we'll put in demountables for our pop-up school for day one of term 1 in 2023. That school will sit there until the new school is finished. There is sufficient size in the site to enable that to work very effectively and very safely.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mr Manning, do we have a—

ANTHONY MANNING: The new school will be delivered as we would do normally. We are proposing to use a modern method of construction so that we can deliver that school as quickly as we're able to once we've been through the statutory planning process.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What's the time line on that?

ANTHONY MANNING: At the moment, the pop-up school will go in for day one of term 1 in 2023. We're working hard to put the SSD application in. That will be the determiner in terms of the date of opening. What we're seeing—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: We could conceivably be having the stopgap measure of demountables for years before the—

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, if I may? I know the Committee visited some of our pop-up schools as part of your inquiry. They are exceptionally high-quality facilities. They are designed in a way to support effective delivery of education. They offer a great solution to a community quickly.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Hear, hear!

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think, as Mr Manning has indicated, we are in the planning process. We are looking to use the modern method of construction, which will enable us to deliver the permanent school on the site as fast as possible.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: No, I understand. The question was not about the quality or efficacy of demountables. The question was this: Do you have a time line for the permanent school to be delivered? If the answer is no, that's fine.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think, as Mr Manning indicated, we are in the planning process. As soon as we have the planning outcome, we will be able to give that time line for the school.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But to be clear, the planning approval is in place for the pop-up school, is that right?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes, it is.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I was listening to some of the answers before about this sequencing or the alignment of delivery with clear demand and growth in these particular areas; Gregory Hills is a classic example. What is the issue here, where we seem to be getting delayed by periods of four, five, six, seven years? You have all these suburbs spring up and massive demand yet government seems to be dragging its heels on the delivery of basic infrastructure like schools. I'm now talking about both primary and high schools now in that particular area.

ANTHONY MANNING: It's not quite how I would characterise it. But if you take Gregory Hills as an example, the site at Gregory Hills was part of a VPA. Within the voluntary planning arrangement that is agreed with DPE, there is often a trigger number of lots that the developer processes before the land becomes available to us. It may well be as part of those ongoing conversations with Planning that we look to bring those triggers far earlier forward so land is available to us earlier than it would be. In some, they have the ability to develop 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 plots before the VPA site comes to us. We also had occasions where actually the work the developer does in terms of progressing the development means that the site that might be allocated to us isn't finished and serviced at the beginning of the development. The roads and infrastructure that go to support that site are not there. We've had a few of those.

We've had some delays in that process whereby they've got to go through a DA to get the site ready for us before we can put the school on, have the roads around it and services infrastructure into it as well. Again, as part of the process of engaging with DPE, we can look at future VPAs and understand whether actually we could bring sites onstream much more quickly, whether we can get the developer to front-end the work so the school site may be one of the first things they build rather than towards the back end of the development, and how that works. They're all conversations we need to have with DPE, which leads the negotiation around those developments and provides us with the details around the VPA—as it would for other agencies as part of that process.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We will now break for morning tea. Tomorrow morning we can all read the infrastructure committee report, which has been tabled.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: We will resume the hearing. We will start with questions from Ms Abigail Boyd.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you, Chair. I am going to start with something completely different. We've been asking for a couple of years about the issue of period poverty in schools. I know that after our questions last year there was a commitment to do a period product trial, which was really great. I understand that that took place in July. In relation to answers to questions I submitted on notice, the department indicated it was still planning on rolling out pads and tampons via dispensers in schools. But I understand that has now been swapped, as of September, to a different scheme which is for period underwear instead. I just wanted to understand how that decision came about, what the results of the trial were and why it was decided to instead go with something that hadn't been trialled.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, I might kick off here. We are delighted we are able to address this issue across our schools. We have not replaced any one item. What we have sought to do here is increase the choice available to support our students to make sure that, within that, we are also looking at more sustainable options available for young people. It's an expansion of breadth rather than a replacement.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay, great. That's really good to hear. As I'm sure you know, a lot of the circumstances that lead children to be unable to access pads and tampons make it next to impossible for them to be washing period underwear and doing things like that in their homes. It's important that they also have that ability to get tampons and pads, although we'd love it if everyone had that sustainable option, obviously. It's just not possible for many children. In terms of the pads and tampons, then, are they being provided by dispensers in schools? Or is the idea for these products that you need to go and ask for them?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'll ask Mr Manning to provide the specifics.

ANTHONY MANNING: We visited over 1,900 schools to assess the need for dispensers. We've been rolling dispensers out since the beginning of term 3. The intention was to have them all rolled out and completed during term 4. I'm happy to take on notice the number that remain to be delivered. But my understanding was the target was to get them all delivered ahead of term 4. That program has rolled out. To the secretary's point, we've launched a procurement process around the period underwear, as part of the feedback we got from students. We'll continue to refine our procurement processes, particularly around the products that feed into the dispensers, so we can make sure we can drive the best value we can through schools. They are being issued to schools already as part of that process. But the plan is through dispensers, and those dispensers have been rolled out and are currently operating.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's really excellent news. Is that in public schools as well as private?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are private schools doing their own?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are responsible, obviously, for the public system in relation to this program. Certainly I know—I'm sure—there will be schools in other sectors who are taking a similar approach. But we don't have information on that. That's not collated by the department.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. Can I ask you about out-of-pocket expenses that are paid by parents for students who are going to public schools? Does the department keep any data on the average out-of-pocket costs?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Boyd, obviously out-of-pocket costs for attending schools can include everything including uniforms and bags. Can I just check the scope of that? Is your intent here to understand the whole cost of sending a child to school in terms of those uniform, bags et cetera, or were there specific areas that you were interested in?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes. I'm looking at, in particular, any sort of imposed term fee, the expectation of voluntary contributions being added onto amounts being sent out to parents as a "You can pay this", which puts people under a lot of pressure, but also subject contributions, unpaid volunteer hours and, of course, excursion fees.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly. I'll ask Mr Dizdar to provide you with the information that we have available on those matters.

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Boyd, we communicate annually right across all our staff and also our principals, reinforcing the message around voluntary contributions. There are no school fees in the public education system. It's a voluntary contribution. That means families may or may not make that contribution. We also stipulate the rate at which they can increase that voluntary contribution. We don't leave it to a school to determine. We give, if required, an annual percentage increase that they can apply to that. That's been frozen for the last three years, respecting and recognising the impact of the COVID operating environment.

In that advice, we also reinforced to our secondaries—because, you'd know, Ms Boyd, when you get to year 9 and 10, you start to select subjects and electives and then into your HSC preliminary studies, so there's subject contribution fees that apply in secondaries. We stipulate the guardrails around that as well, that it must go to things like material composition et cetera, to be able to undertake those subjects. In providing that advice to families, schools are required to communicate how a family can seek student assistance from the school if they're unable to meet those subject requirements. In other words, we protect, Ms Boyd, no students' exclusion from the curriculum on capacity to pay those subject fees.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you for that information. With respect, it wasn't the answer to my question, though, which was, "Do you keep track or any data of what the average out-of-pocket expenses would be?" I understand that there are rules and regulations, and you have oversight over that, but the question I am asking is: Despite all of that, does the department capture data on the average amount people are paying? For example, you can look and say, "Clearly that school is increasing over time" or, "This school pays a lot more than that school, why might that be?" Is that data collected?

MURAT DIZDAR: I am glad I was able to give you the voluntary contributions information, but we do not centrally collect. Ms Owen may want to add stuff. She is saying that through the finance directorate they have got some information so I will let her add stuff.

RUTH OWEN: I think I can answer part of your question, Ms Boyd. We do collect information essentially across the system about voluntary contributions from parents and, as Mr Dizdar was describing, subject matter contributions. I think we do publish this information but I can give you, for example, the 2021 figures across our public school system. In 2021—I will round this figure; I can give you on notice the full figure—\$26 million for general voluntary contributions and \$38 million for subject matter contributions.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am interested in seeing how that varies over time. If you have that data showing over the past five years how that may have increased or decreased that would be very useful.

RUTH OWEN: It has decreased, Ms Boyd. But I think 2021, we all recognise, was a slightly unusual year in the education system. Obviously, there was a term when many students were not school so I would not read anything too much into the trend. We will take on notice providing you with a five-year trend.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Finally, before I hand back to the Chair, a quick question about how much money the New South Wales Government has paid, whether through grants or any other form of payment, towards the infrastructure spend at private schools and independent schools.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Let us take that specific on notice to you, Ms Boyd, and make sure we can give you any breakdowns that you are interested in, in terms of that number as well.

The CHAIR: Secretary, with regard to pedagogy, what is student self-regulation?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I will ask Ms Nixon to provide you with a view of that

LEANNE NIXON: Thank you for the question. Are you talking about self-regulation in terms of behaviour or are you talking about self-regulation in terms of learning?

The CHAIR: Learning.

LEANNE NIXON: In terms of learning I am not familiar with the term in learning.

The CHAIR: What about student direction?

LEANNE NIXON: Student direction, yes, that would be a more familiar term. Student direction would be where the teacher provides a beginning teaching structure—so provide information and then would provide a scaffold around in which a student would be asked to identify what is it that they would take on as the project topic, for example, around a piece of work with some scaffolding around it.

The CHAIR: Right. Why does the department fund this mob at University of Newcastle Quality Teaching Rounds when they push student self-regulation—a concept you are not familiar with—and student direction? It sounds like it is the antithesis of explicit instruction.

LEANNE NIXON: Self-regulation, if we are talking about behaviour and about classroom learning, is often for our high ability students. It is often for students who have that capacity to show their own leadership in their own learning, who may be ahead of the rest of the group that have the capacity to create a framework around what is their next piece of learning. But none of that happens without teacher direction; none of that happens without teacher support. When we talk about learning we talk about—I will take on the information, the teacher provides the structure and then it is about what are the next steps in that learning. As we know, we have students who are able to do that learning and have that self-directed part for themselves.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Right, but why are we paying \$5 million to this mob to do anything other than show teachers how to do explicit instruction? Are they not part of the cancer inside the system where a lot of teachers now see themselves as facilitators? The students are self-starting learners, doing self-regulation and self-direction and the teacher walks around with a cup of coffee dropping in on these little project groups which is normally code for one kid does all the work and gets some junk off the internet.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: That is not my understanding of what the Quality Teaching Rounds program is about. The Quality Teaching Rounds program is led by Professor Gore at the University of Newcastle. It is based on a quality teaching model that has had academics look at it over a period of time and the feedback on that model is that it is rigorous and intellectually sound. The Quality Teaching Rounds model is one of observing practice of teachers and providing feedback to teachers on their practice. A group of teachers form a round and they go and observe each other's practice and provide feedback and they have that kind of explicit feedback around their own practice and move on to the next school. That is the model and it is one of the things we have invested in as we have sought to discover which of those models of observation are the most impactful on improving teacher practice. Because we know that regular feedback and having observations of classroom practice from other professionals that teachers welcome into their classrooms is one of the things that improves teaching practice in our schools.

The CHAIR: The department disapproves of the notion of teachers as facilitators?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: As we have discussed here already today, there is a clear requirement for explicit instruction across the whole curriculum. There is also room, as Ms Nixon has indicated, for there to be areas of student-directed learning within a scaffold, particularly to provide stretch for those students ready to take their learning to the next level. As we seek to build independence in our learners, one of the things we often hear back from universities is that public school students attending university thrive because of that independent learning that they have developed in their public schooling. It is also a skill that our students need throughout the rest of their life, that they can guide their own learning and independently seek to learn and maintain that learning culture.

The CHAIR: If students can be independent learners, why do we need teachers? How can students ever learn unless they are actually looking at the teacher?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, as I said, it is one part. Explicit instruction is absolutely a core part of the delivery of every syllabus, without question and you would see explicit instruction within every classroom across our system. But there is also room within that syllabus to take that explicit instruction, to take that knowledge and information that has been supplied by a teacher and for students to take and explore the concepts of that and to explore that independently and to guide that themselves. There is room for that, but not outside of there being explicit instruction in the classroom.

The CHAIR: I asked the question about this Quality Teaching Rounds on the *Questions and Answers* paper and the answer I got back, having put in my question, CESE says that what works best is obviously explicit instruction. Why don't we just use that instead of this nonsense about student self-regulation and student direction and self-starting learners? And the answer came back, "What works best is a guide, not an exhaustive list of effective practices." What did CESE leave out of what works best that is an effective practice?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: In terms of the Quality Teaching Rounds and the role they play here, Chair, they are observing the practice of a teacher in the classroom. That what works best document provides part of the framework they would use, and I know the University of Newcastle has a quality teaching model that underpins that work and that they are observing the implementation of those practices in a classroom. Those rounds provide feedback to an individual of their practice, so in terms of the way—

The CHAIR: What did CESE leave out? It is not an exhaustive list; what did they leave out?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I will ask Mr Dizdar to comment here. In terms of the exhaustive list—

The CHAIR: Mr Dizdar is not in charge of CESE.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: —it does not set out every single thing that a teacher would do in their day. What it does is point to the absolutely core practices and behaviours you would want to see in every planned lesson that is delivered.

The CHAIR: The Quality Teaching Rounds, in this answer the valuation of it was conducted by the University of Newcastle. They evaluate themselves. Not surprisingly, they say they are wonderful. Classroom observation in itself is not enough, is it, just for the sake of it? You have to be actually directing teachers to the high value-added practices led by direct instruction.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: That is exactly the work I think I articulated to you in the last session, Chair.

The CHAIR: That is not what the answer says about them. If I can come to a specific example with reading—

GEORGINA HARRISSON: In terms of the quality teaching, Chair—if I may—we have worked in partnership with the Paul Ramsay Foundation in engaging with the Quality Teaching Rounds program. The results do show from that program an impact on learning outcomes for students. I think we are interested in knowing more about that because we are interested in seeing those student outcomes improve.

The CHAIR: We all are, but the data doesn't show that. I am always wondering how these wonderful practices are sending the system backwards. If I can ask specifically about Leumeah High School where parents complained in year 7 the students were studying gender stereotypes and gender studies, in English. The answer came back that they are looking at previous media depictions of how women have been portrayed in the past and how that has changed through the decades. Further, when I said you've got a big problem there of kids who can't read and write, the answer is that there are wonderful improvements.

How does the department explain, then, in year 7 reading in the NAPLAN last year, it was substantially below, both students with a similar background and all Australian students, for Leumeah High School? And they've lost 20 points on that measure since 2014. It has been in steady decline. Wouldn't we be a lot better teaching these kids how to read rather than a political topic they can work out as adults—whether they think the depiction of women is fantastic politically or it's undesirable. What have depictions of women got to do with teaching these kids in a disadvantaged community, where 52 per cent of them are in the bottom quartile, to actually read?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I might ask Mr Martin to comment in relation to the requirements under the English syllabus that are being taught.

The CHAIR: Isn't the first requirement to teach kids at Leumeah High School how to read, to make sure every single student in English in year 7 can read, which clearly isn't happening? They're studying depictions of women in the media. Blow me down.

PAUL MARTIN: The syllabuses allow for a range of stimulus and material to allow students to explore and understand a range of texts. For example, if you had a year 7 student and you were reading something that was—

The CHAIR: No, this is not reading; these are pictures of women—pictures.

ANTHONY MANNING: —pre-twentieth century in history or in English or in other subjects, it would be—

The CHAIR: This is politics, isn't it? Identity politics—what has it got to do with reading?

PAUL MARTIN: No, I wouldn't suggest that it would be politics to make sure that students understand that depictions of gender or race have changed over time. That doesn't—

The CHAIR: So what? What has that got to do with English and learning to read?

PAUL MARTIN: I think it's an important part—

The CHAIR: It's a political issue for adults.

PAUL MARTIN: I think it's an important part of understanding how a text works. But it's different from the mechanics of reading. And by year 7, a student should already be able to read because of the work that is done in K-6. But I think it's reasonably usual for a teacher, studying an older text or studying history, to explain how particular depictions were in the past, quite legitimately. I don't see it as diametrically opposed to teaching students to read.

The CHAIR: Who is doing something about the substandard reading NAPLAN results at Leumeah High School instead of pretending and effectively misleading us on the *Questions and Answers* paper to say that strong improvement pathways are evident? It's just not true. People have got to get out of a state of delusion and get real about disadvantaged kids in a struggling neighbourhood, who have got one chance in life—that's the government school up the road. If you don't teach them how to read, you're keeping poor kids poor. I don't know how you sleep at night with this sort of rubbish. I don't.

MURAT DIZDAR: The school is committed to improving reading—

The CHAIR: They're committed, but what are you doing in practice?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order: Let Mr Dizdar answer.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me answer, Chair.

The CHAIR: Someone has got to be angry on behalf of these kids, because no-one helps them.

MURAT DIZDAR: We concur with you that it should be driven around improvement around those key areas of literacy and numeracy. I can tell you that the school has got ambitious targets for reading and has shown improvement in the top two bands for reading on the targets that we set with that school two years ago. On the 2021 NAPLAN results for the top two bands, that school has moved forward from where it was two years ago.

The CHAIR: But they're not the struggling kids who can't read. It's the bottom three bands.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, they are the targets—

The CHAIR: The bottom three bands have dragged the whole school down below the Australian average and the similar student background average.

MURAT DIZDAR: Where I wholeheartedly concur with you, Chair, is we want—

The CHAIR: There's obviously a significant number of kids in year 7 at this school who can't read.

MURAT DIZDAR: We want to move students through all the bands.

The CHAIR: And they are studying media depictions of women.

MURAT DIZDAR: Every student we want to move—

The CHAIR: And the parents are complaining. I don't invent these things. I find out because parents complain to me. Do you know what they say to me? "Why have I got to then spend money on out-of-school tutoring?"

MURAT DIZDAR: I want to reiterate that the school—

The CHAIR: If they had the money, they'd leave this wretched system and go somewhere else which taught their kids how to read. All these passive answers about improvements and support disgust the parents in practice and disgust me.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm just giving you factual coverage for Leumeah. On its target, for the top two bands for reading—that's a target that has been set across the system in every single school—this school has shown improvement from the target that was set. Does the school acknowledge that it has got room—

The CHAIR: How are the bottom three bands going?

MURAT DIZDAR: Does the school acknowledge that—

The CHAIR: The kids who can't read, how are they going?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't have those—

The CHAIR: They still can't read.

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't have those results in front of me.

The CHAIR: Of course, you don't.

MURAT DIZDAR: I've got the target—

The CHAIR: Of course, you don't. It's all set up for nonsense delusional answers instead of the real problem.

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't concur, Chair. These are the targets.

The CHAIR: Of course, you don't. What sort of job are you doing if you don't know how the bottom three bands at a disadvantaged school like Leumeah are going?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm simply giving you the factual coverage on—

The CHAIR: What responsibility do you take if you don't know?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me reiterate. I'm giving you coverage on the targets—

The CHAIR: Do you think you have been in this job too long, like a clerk that recycles these answers instead of going out to the school, putting your foot down and demanding solutions?

MURAT DIZDAR: You're zooming in on Leumeah, and I'm giving you, on the system targets that have been set for that school, the factual coverage on those targets.

The CHAIR: The top two bands, but you say you don't know anything about the bottom three bands, who are the kids in need—the ones who can't read. If our system is not geared up for helping kids who can't read, why do we bother?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, and I said to you, Chair, that we concur that while the target is the top two bands for reading and numeracy that have been set across the system, it's about moving all students from where they are further forward. Yes, we would want to move the students that are in the bottom bands up from those bands as well. But this is a school that has shown improvement in reading in the top two bands, it's a school that's shown improvement in the HSC top two bands and it's a school that needs to focus on stronger numeracy as an area of weakness. We will go back and look at its bottom bands, which you've replayed.

The CHAIR: If you could do that on notice. The Labor Opposition?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: On the voluntary school contributions, Ms Owen, is it possible to provide us with a breakdown by school of how much is received?

RUTH OWEN: We do capture that by school, yes, so we'll take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you provide that on notice for 2021, 2020 and 2019? I appreciate that that's a big ask, but 2020 and 2021 were obviously some pretty unusual years.

RUTH OWEN: I'll take that on notice and see what I can give you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, I want to ask one final question on Edmondson Park. What are the current guidelines around retail being co-located with public schools? Do you have a guideline on that?

ANTHONY MANNING: No, the FSG wouldn't include a guideline for that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I asked some questions on notice about mobile phone usage, and the Chair referenced Labor's very strong policy in his opening statement. Question on notice No. 9517 asked for more details about the Minister's statement that 70 per cent of New South Wales high schools have banned the use of mobile phones in schools. That 70 per cent figure comes from a survey that was conducted in 2019 when the previous policy was introduced. Is that correct?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: That's my understanding. I'll ask Ms Owen to provide you with the specifics on that.

RUTH OWEN: Yes, Ms Houssos, that's my understanding too.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So that's the most up-to-date information that we have about mobile phone policy in high schools?

RUTH OWEN: We haven't done another survey since then, no.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The 70 per cent figure is based on a 2019 voluntary survey. Is that correct?

RUTH OWEN: Correct.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will move on to the pre-kindly announcement, which was a key part of the budget. It talked about trials in the first couple of years. Where will those trials be located, Ms Harrison?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Can I please come back to you on notice on those issues? I'm conscious that in the witness list today those witnesses were not included, in terms of the specialisms and detail of the commitment, but we are at work building the team. We launched the new division for early childhood outcomes in the department just last week, if memory serves.

SIMONE WALKER: Two weeks.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Two weeks ago—they seem quite long weeks at the moment. We are making sure we are setting up for success in the delivery of those budget commitments. I'm very happy to come back to you on notice with where we're up to on those trials.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many people are in the new division?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I can come back to you on notice with the specific position numbers, but this is a significant reform area for us to deliver a significant amount of investment. We are not overdoing it but making sure we have the appropriate resources in place to deliver the outcomes the community wants to see.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In the new division for early childhood outcomes—is that correct? Am I using the right terminology?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: That's correct.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many people will be in there? What are the different levels that they're being paid at?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Yes, certainly happy to provide you with what we have—with an organisational structure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have any information about where the trials will be?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are still working those issues through—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, how they will be determined?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are working those issues through, and I'm very happy to come back to you on notice with the parameters we have on the trials and an update of where we're up to.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In terms of mapping, we've talked about teacher shortages and had an inquiry into it. Are you aware of how many additional teachers will be required?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly one of the key elements of this package is an investment in the early childhood workforce, because to increase the provision in the way that we wish to see the provision increased will require additional capacity in the workforce. I also note we are part of a national program around the early childhood workforce. We have invested funding specifically into the development of the workforce in recognition of that. Again, I'm happy to come back to you on notice with the specifics of the numbers there, unless Ms Walker has any of them with her today.

SIMONE WALKER: No, I think it's better if we come back on notice to the Committee on the specifics.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you also tell us how many teachers will be required and if there's a program to map how many teachers, what that process is?

SIMONE WALKER: Certainly there will be a ramp-up, so wanting to know and understand over a period of time—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Just into the microphone.

SIMONE WALKER: Sorry. As with any very large-scale reform, as this is—and an exciting one at that—there will be a significant scale-up period. So we'll be able to give you an over-time view.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell us when will the first teachers be employed by the department in order to deliver the pre-K?

SIMONE WALKER: Yes. What I will need to give you is would they necessarily be employed by the department, remembering that this sector has not-for-profit, for-profit as well as departmental provisions. So we would need to look across the sector.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand that when you take questions on notice, you often take big chunks and then provide a response. I'm really interested in a specific question. What will be the first year that the Department of Education will employ a new teacher in order to fulfil this announcement?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Houssos, if I can make sure we're really clear on that, because that would be within the government provision. As Ms Walker just indicated, the commitment will undoubtedly involve government provision but also additional teachers into the workforce are needed across the full market in the early childhood area. If it is specific to our plans on the government provisions side or whether you're interested more generally in when do we first expect to see growth in the early childhood workforce to meet these demands—can I check we're clear on that?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm very well aware of the skill shortages. I spoke about them in my second reading speech in the House. I understand and I hear from early childhood providers and their advocates all the time about the skill shortages. I understand that the Government's commitment is for the private sector and also for the public sector. I've asked some questions about where the trials will be conducted. I've asked some questions about how they'll be determined. I'm also specifically interested in when will be the first year that the department is planning on employing an additional teacher in order to fulfil this? If it's not planning on employing them then that's fine and that's the answer, but I'm interested in what the answer is. As part of that mapping process, are you aware of how many additional facilities will be built?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: This is ongoing work by the team as we establish it to look at the mix of facilities and the nature of different provision and location. Again, we are in the first six months of an eight-year commitment, so that work is underway.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can tell us at the moment, where we are at today, how many additional facilities are they expecting to be built and what are the factors that will decide where to put those new public facilities?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly. And I can assure you, Ms Houssos, that the key factor that will determine where those facilities are will be based on the demand within the community for those facilities.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you looking at compensating existing private facilities?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'm not sure. In what form are you indicating for compensation?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you guaranteeing that you will only put public facilities in areas where currently demand outstrips supply?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I am not making any assertions yet, Ms Houssos, about what the provision will look like. That work is underway to map what the need is. We are working in collaboration with both the not-for-profit sector in this area as well as the broader sector to ensure that we are meeting the overall needs of the community.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm interested to know whether you're looking at any compensation packages. What funding will be provided to private facilities?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I would not be in a position to give you a definitive answer on that at this stage in the development of the work, but I'm very happy to come back and provide that to you once a decision on that is made with any certainty.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you take that on notice and see if the people in the department who are charged with this have anything more to provide?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly. Again, I would iterate that we are in about the sixth month of developing an eight-year reform program. I would be very happy to come back to you with what they've got, but I would recognise that we're in the very early stages of that work.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand that it's in the early stages. This is a huge commitment. We're just trying to ascertain and get some more information about where it's at and what is actually going to be delivered.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: What I can say today, Ms Houssos, is under the Start Strong free preschool program, we have extended that to families using any type of preschool program. We have done that because our first focus here is on the needs of those communities and making sure that, no matter what service they attend, we take a very student-centred, young-person-centred approach here. We want to make sure that every early childhood student gets to access that fee-free preschool.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That brings me to my next question. The initial article that announced the program said that at first families will pay, and then it will be free. Have you got a time frame in mind for when that free period will kick in?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: In terms of fees, we are already providing fee-free relief for preschools, in community preschools and government preschools. And now we have a total of \$1.3 billion over four years from 2023 to provide that fee relief for families with children in preschool no matter what service type they attend. We are starting to provide relief to families from next year, no matter their sector. But we are unable to take away all of the fees as yet. So until we have our first trials in place around the pre-kindergarten year—that is when we will be able to address that. I'm happy to come back to you with our current understanding of time lines on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be helpful. And if you could also tell us whether, in the trials, that will be entirely free? I understand the difference between community preschools and preschool programs in long day care centres, and I understand that the Government has finally provided the preschool component for free. Irrespective of where the child attends, I'm interested to know if the trials are actually going to be free in their entirety or whether it's just going to be the preschool program component that is going to be free?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'll need to come back to you on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sure. Can you tell me how many preschools the New South Wales Government has built since 2011?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We have had a consistent number of government preschools throughout that time. I believe the number is 100, from the top of my head. We have not increased the number of preschools, that I'm aware of, in that period.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There is 100 that are currently operating, and there's been no new ones since?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: There are 100 government-operated preschools. There are other preschools operating on some school sites by other providers. Obviously, depending on the needs in the community, there are a variety of preschool provisions in the community beyond the school gate.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Perhaps, on notice, you can tell us on how many school sites do private have new child care?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I would say, at this stage, I would not be aware of a school site, off the top of my head, that has a private provision operating on it, but I'm happy to confirm that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: For private or a not for profit? You just said that there were some school sites.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I do believe we have some school sites where a community provider is operating on the school site. I'm not aware of a site where there is a private operator operating in a public school setting, but I'm happy to come back to you on notice with the breakdown.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. Whether it is community, whether it is not for profit, whether it is parent run, whether it is private—if you can provide that on notice. I mean, it was years ago I visited one. I think it was at Queanbeyan South Public School, and they've got a KU, I think, that is adjoining. How many of those new ones have been opened since 2011?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'm very happy to come back to you with that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be great. I wanted to come to this question. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* a couple of weeks ago talked about 7,000 missing students. That was the breakdown from the national figure about five- to 17-year-olds who were "falling through the cracks"—that is, that they're not attending any formal education. It was off the back of a report that was done by Professor Jim Watterston. Has anyone in the department spoken to Professor Watterston about his report?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'll ask Ms Nixon to provide you with a broad answer. Obviously, this report was not just about whether or not young people are attending school. I would say, to start with, that they are not figures that we recognise. I want to call out, actually, the work the department and our schools have done, particularly post COVID, to ensure that we're getting kids back to school, and that we have seen students and made sure they are safe and well. Certainly we are working across government to understand this report that has come out—understand its implications for us and what we will do about it. But I will ask Ms Nixon to provide some further information.

LEANNE NIXON: Yes, I've spoken to Mr Watterston about the report.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In the article it said that the Government is not collecting data. Have you made any changes as a result of that?

LEANNE NIXON: I spoke to Dr Watterston to understand where he had got that figure from. It was an estimation based on some national data. Currently, the DCJ have taken up the lead on understanding and verifying the data so we could identify in New South Wales what those figures are. We will be working with DCJ around that.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Ms Harrisson, I think you said, "I want to make it clear, we do not recognise those figures", or words to that effect. Is that correct?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Yes. As Ms Nixon has just indicated, that was an estimation based on a national figure. We obviously collect attendance rates and enrolment data and have a view of those students who might not attend one public school and we want to make sure they have attended another. It's one of the reasons New South Wales is very keen to see the Unique Student Identifier work progress at a Commonwealth level, so that we can see where students move. This often happens in regional areas and it often happens between schools and we want to make sure—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Ms Harrisson, can I just interrupt there? Would it be fair to say that the department doesn't have an objective methodology for determining lack of enrolment, based on the evidence that's been tabled here today, yet you are not recognising this alternative study? Is that the position of the department?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I don't believe we said we don't recognise it; I said we don't recognise that specific figure. As Ms Nixon has indicated—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The figure isn't manifested—

GEORGINA HARRISSON: —from her conversation, the professor involved in the work has indicated it is an estimation based on a national figure. It is not a number that is reflected in our data around enrolment and students who may move between schools who we want to check in on. It is just not a number that operationally tallies with what we see. However, Ms Nixon is—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sorry, I'm just trying to reconcile this. You do have an objective methodology for determining lack of enrolment that is superior to this study, is that now your evidence?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think you are misrepresenting what I have said.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I'm a bit confused.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We don't recognise that number. What we do have is an understanding in our system of students who are in a school who then may not be seen in that school for a period of time. We have an active and engaged process to make sure we know where that student has gone and we are following up on every one of those students. In terms of a complete lack of enrolment, if a student does not appear at a school at all, then it's very difficult for us to understand where those students might have moved to or moved interstate or other things. Across the country, we don't have an agreed way for measuring this within school systems.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That's somewhat problematic, isn't it? You don't have an agreed methodology for determining the lack of enrolment and this fellow has come up with a study which suggests it is 7,000 but you are questioning the 7,000 because, for lack of a better alternative, you still have a problem with it.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: What I might do is ask Ms Nixon to explain the data we do have, which is the data we are currently relying on.

The CHAIR: Can we get a guide to how you do it? It's inherently difficult to estimate missing kids by virtue of the fact that they are missing.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Yes.

LEANNE NIXON: It was just a conversation with Dr Watterston to understand how he had come to that figure that was reported in the newspaper. He said he'd had a conversation and he'd looked at data across the nation and this was his estimation. That's the detail of it. He'd looked at ABS data and he'd looked at an OECD report from 2016, I think, and worked on some other data pieces. I don't have the details of that. He said, "You would need to verify that data", and so that is what we will do with DCJ. We will actually do the work to understand what that may look like for New South Wales and get a more accurate number. It may end up being 7,000, but at this point we can't verify that data.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Nixon, I wonder if you could also just provide an outline around the data we do have for students who we want to make sure we have seen and sighted.

LEANNE NIXON: At last estimates I spoke about the 54,000 students who hadn't returned at the end of COVID in 2021 term 4 and how we were able to track down every single one of those to ensure that we were really clear where every one of those had gone to and where they were. We are working on a line-of-sight piece to ensure that every child that leaves our system, we know where they are, we have an exit statement around it, and we are really clear that when they say, "We are going off to that school", that they actually enrol in that school. If that is interstate, then we are tracking that down as well. We are going to ensure that we have the detailed data we are looking for and processes to ensure what we are calling "passing the baton", ensuring we know where every child is.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you think the 7,000 kids are in addition to the 54,000 who didn't come back to school?

LEANNE NIXON: No. Of those 54,000, they have all returned to school or are all in education somewhere. We have tracked them down.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So these 7,000 that Professor Watterston says are out there in New South Wales, you are tracking them in a separate set of work with DCJ?

LEANNE NIXON: No, the initial part will be with DCJ to establish what we believe the number is. Then from there we will do the work around how we are going to ensure where these children are.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When are you expecting to get that number?

LEANNE NIXON: I couldn't make a comment at this point.

SIMONE WALKER: The work has just been initiated by DCJ, so they will be pulling together a whole-of-government committee to have a look at that. If a child hasn't engaged in formal education at all, which is actually what Dr Watterston is discussing in his paper, then that is a child protection issue. That's why it is best placed being led by DCJ.

The CHAIR: Could I ask about Merewether High School, where probably more than any other school I get a steady flow of parental complaints. Naturally, parents do not want a school to tell their boy that he can be a girl and their daughter that they can be a boy, and then potentially the teachers move somewhere else, having caused the carnage. Most recently, parents were concerned that the school flew the LGBTQIAP flag on 16 September. I asked a question about this, and an answer came back, "The flag was flown at the school without permission. The principal knew nothing about it, and then had the flag removed." Who flew the flag and what action was taken against them, given the upset and concern they have caused among several parents? What sort of school just has sort of random people who put the transgender flag up there as some political statement?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: As you have indicated and as, I think, we have said here previously whenever these issues arise that cause concern to Committee members or other members of this House, we are very open to receiving those and taking appropriate action. That is the first I have heard of this specific issue. I will ask my colleagues if they are aware of it. Ms Nixon is aware of it. I will ask her to provide you with some information.

LEANNE NIXON: As you indicated, the flag was flown on 16 September without permission, and the principal became aware halfway through the day and took that flag down.

The CHAIR: Who flew the flag and what happened to them? We are talking about discipline at a school. What happened to this person?

LEANNE NIXON: I would have to take that on notice. I don't have that information with me.

The CHAIR: Further to another set of parental complaints, what was the cost of running the wellbeing festival at Bellingen High School on 21 October, involving hip-hop dancing, ceramics and camp fire cooking? Not learning how to read and write but hip-hop dancing, ceramics and campfire cooking—what was the cost of the school putting this full day of activity on? You can take that on notice as well.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, I'm very happy to take that on notice. For the Committee, one of the things we know from the evidence is that students' wellbeing has a direct impact on their capacity to learn. I would also note that we have had a very disrupted year for young people. We have seen increasing challenges with mental health and other issues, and some of this additional activity around schools is exactly aimed at targeting that. I'm very happy to provide the specifics on notice of the Bellingen day.

The CHAIR: Didn't you commission that literature survey from the Fiona Stanley institute in Perth that showed that there's no clear evidence that teachers or you or anyone else, given none of you have got any medical qualifications, can teach wellbeing? You can teach reading and writing and numbers and the like—geography, science and history—but there is no evidence base that you can teach wellbeing. Isn't it just some sort of soft diversion—and this is part of the problem—in the sliding school results? You go to some of these failing schools, and they will say, "Our job here is to keep the kids happy. Whatever the kids want to do about their wellbeing, that's fine with us. We don't really do any learning here."

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly, Chair, I can. I visited Bellingen High School last term. I can tell you that is not the attitude of the staff at that school. The staff at that school are actively engaged in strategic support to improve their overall outcomes, and I can tell you that in 2021 year 7 and year 9 students achieved above-average growth in both reading and writing at that school.

The CHAIR: But where is the evidence they can teach wellbeing? It's just a myth, isn't it?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'm happy to come back to you on notice on that, Chair. But what I can—

The CHAIR: I read your full thing that you paid for and that Mark Scott commissioned from the Fiona Stanley institute in Perth, and the jury was out. There's no clear evidence.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: The evidence we do have—and we have it from the correlations between the outcomes in the Tell Them From Me survey and it is supported by OECD data—is that—

The CHAIR: But they're happy. Yes, they're happy. Happiness gets you a job when you grow up in Warwick Farm or Leumeah. I don't think so.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, as I was saying, what we do have in the evidence is that in order to be able to learn, students need to have a strong sense of belonging. There is a strong correlation between that sense of belonging and student outcomes. That is why our schools are looking at those issues. But, as I said, I think the academic growth that Bellingen High School is seeing is the area we're most focused on. We have been supporting them with strategic support to help them achieve that growth.

The CHAIR: Secretary, if there's a head teacher in a high school who receives an email from a DEL asking her to furnish evidence of year 12 student improvement and student academic growth and what needs to be done to achieve that, and they prepare a document, supposedly in consultation with the faculty teachers, that says that the answer they're providing is "better breeding", should that teacher be still teaching in the New South Wales education system?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I note that you are returning to an issue that we have discussed here before and that it has been a more confused situation than any one of us would like to see. But I might ask Ms Nixon to provide you with some clarity there.

The CHAIR: If you answer "better breeding"—yes, let's ask Ms Nixon. She signed off here on the approval that this person—this was a disgusting comment from a disgusting person, who was described in the investigation as "lacking credibility". How are they still teaching in the school system with your approval?

LEANNE NIXON: They're not teaching with my approval. I'll ask Mr Currie to comment. A PES investigation has occurred.

The CHAIR: Your approval? Your initials are here on the document: Nixon, Lamb, Currie. You've all approved someone who says that the answer to these results in a working-class community is better breeding. Any

normal, rational person would just march them straight out the door. They were allowed to resign their permanent position and a couple of days later were accepted as a casual. This beggars belief.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, we have a set of processes and guidelines in place. We have legislation that guides the employment of teachers and the way we need to respond and the processes we need to follow. My understanding in this case is we've followed them. I know that you are not satisfied with the outcome of that, but I'm very—

The CHAIR: Who would be? On behalf of the school community, I ask how is this teacher allowed to resign as a permanent and then days later be accepted as a casual weeks before the PES investigation was even concluded?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I will need to ask Mr Currie to provide you with the specifics.

The CHAIR: How is that possible?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Because, Chair, we have a right to a fair process for our staff and for that to be fully investigated and undertaken. Those are the processes that have been in place for an extended period of time.

The CHAIR: You've got no problem with someone saying that the answer is better breeding? You know the other pathetic thing about this? All these documents are covered with respect for Indigenous people. So all the thing about Indigenous—you're accepting the fact someone says, "The Indigenous need better breeding" at this school and that person still teaches there. Seriously?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, I would take this outside of the case itself. I certainly do not support comments of the nature that you have articulated.

The CHAIR: Do Indigenous people need better breeding? You're knowingly allowing a person to work in the school system who said that. They were allowed to resign as a permanent and two days later they were accepted as a casual weeks before the PES inquiry was even completed.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: As I was saying, Chair, certainly, as we have said at these—

The CHAIR: Everyone in this room, if they said that about Indigenous people, would lose their job within a nanosecond. How has this person been allowed to stay?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: As I think we have covered before in these hearings, there is no-one at this table who would support the commentary that has been made here in relation to any part of our community that we are here to serve. We do have staff who, from time to time, make mistakes of judgement. I don't think it is fair to judge a person's whole career on one statement. I do think it is reasonable for us to look and investigate and give them access to fair and due process. That's what our procedures and the guidelines we operate in seek to do: to ensure that we have a fair and due process. But I'm very happy to take the specifics you've raised today in relation to the casual teaching component on notice and come back to you with any further information we have.

The CHAIR: You say, "Don't judge them on one mistake." But wasn't this a deliberative process where the DEL asked the head teachers at this school in the Lithgow region for their outline of what they can do to improve the year 12 results? She says she workshopped this with the other teachers in the faculty and put down "better breeding" in the document. The only lame excuse she's got is that it was the COVID period and there were bushfires. Isn't the basic problem you've got that the PES runs a protection unit for teachers and it's almost impossible to get the sack under the PES unless you're unvaccinated and they don't like you politically or you do a Chris Dawson or you're selling drugs? If you don't sack people for doing this, you basically don't sack anyone. Why isn't the PES staffed by independent reviewers instead of people who have been principals and DELs themselves and are part of the club?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly you will be aware, and I'm sure the Committee will recall, that we undertook a review of the functions of the Performance and Ethical Standards directorate a few years ago. That review was led by Mr Tedeschi. We had a series of recommendations from that review for how we could strengthen the processes within PES to ensure that we did have some of that independence. That includes now a panel-based decision process in relation to these issues, so it's never down to just one individual. I think it's also important in that area of the organisation that we do have experience of the school context, taking into account not all of the staff do but some do and that means that we have a good understanding of the environment our staff are operating in.

We do have a set of legislative and policy parameters we have to operate within. Those do rely very heavily on the need for fair and due process for our staff. There are at times certainly cases that I would want to see that we could act more swiftly, but it is necessary we go through the process and come out with an action. Often when

we go through those investigations, as I understand was the case in this instance, Chair, we find that we hadn't quite understood it as it had occurred at the first opportunity and that actually the chance to gather that evidence and really ensure our staff have access to a fair process internally—

The CHAIR: It's even worse than we thought, surely, because there's a deliberative process where she is asked by the DEL to provide some information, workshops in the faculty and comes up with "better breeding". It wasn't sort of like, "I just thought of that and five seconds later I put it down." It's a deliberative slur against the entire school community, including the Indigenous that you people bend over backwards saying you respect.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think, as I have indicated, the PES process was undertaken. It has finalised. It has come out with an outcome for the relevant staff, and we are required and we do undertake, and we take seriously our obligations to undertake, a process that delivers a fair and due process for our staff throughout.

The CHAIR: A fair and due process. Mr Currie, how is this teacher allowed to resign as a permanent seeing the writing on the wall, and be approved as a casual days later, weeks before your PES inquiry was even concluded? How is that possible?

DARYL CURRIE: I'd like to address some of the factual information with regard to this case. As you'd be aware, that teacher was not the subject of the investigation to begin with. Their resignation was taken retirement taken during that investigation. They've had an appropriate remedial intervention—

The CHAIR: No, she didn't retire. Two days later she is back as a casual.

DARYL CURRIE: They've had an appropriate remedial action, and I think one of the things that's important, I note that they haven't worked in a school since their retirement but also I think one of the things that has to be taken into account is that response, firstly, the words were never said, they were never meant to be handed up, they were on a sheet from a brainstorming session within a faculty—

The CHAIR: That's even worse.

DARYL CURRIE: —and there is an indication in the person subject of allegations response that it was never intended in the way that it's being read. I think what is quite important is that often the intent of something lies with the person that has said it and not the people reading it, and I think that is incredibly important in this case. In terms of your assertion that PES is run by teachers for teachers, and I note that you have a question on notice on this that is coming up soon, only about 32 per cent of people in PES are teachers. The vast majority of those work in the EPMI section, which are actually people that sit side by side helping managers with teaching improvement programs.

They are people with school experience that are helping principals manage those improvement programs. In terms of the investigators that you're alluding to, very few of them have any teaching experience and the vast majority that do have teaching experience may have done a year or two in teaching before heading off to policing, social work, child protection, industrial relations, policy, project management, and in the case of the one that you've referred to there, it was overseen by somebody with DPP experience. Lawyers are a premium within PES as well. There are very few people in the investigation area that have teaching, but when they do, it is usually in coordination with policing and child protection backgrounds.

The CHAIR: When did you last work for someone other than the education department?

DARYL CURRIE: I've been in the education department for 30 years this year, and proudly so. I've got a very wide experience of a whole range of school experiences—low socioeconomic, selective, boys' schools, girls' schools, and also as a DEL at a lot of primary schools and worked closely with them. When it comes to decision-making, I can apply that lens of understanding to the department with very clear detail and understanding of what is appropriate.

The CHAIR: You mentioned earlier on that you think the term "better breeding" might have been misunderstood. That was ultimately rejected in the investigation. It was poppycock, wasn't it? It was a fabricated excuse that it was a reference to the better breeding of mathematical learning. You must think people are idiots.

DARYL CURRIE: Once again, somebody's intent lies with them, not necessarily the people who are hearing it.

The CHAIR: They didn't write "better breeding of mathematical learning"; they just wrote "better breeding".

DARYL CURRIE: Are you saying that shouldn't be accepted when somebody says that my intent is not necessarily what has been heard?

The CHAIR: No. What I'm saying is that you will accept any excuse from anyone to run a protection racket for people who should've been marched out the door within five minutes instead of being approved to come back as a casual. That's what I'm saying.

DARYL CURRIE: That is incorrect. I completely reject that.

The CHAIR: You are testing our intelligence to say that—

DARYL CURRIE: I completely reject that.

The CHAIR: —this was a reference to the better breeding of mathematical learning. Seriously?

DARYL CURRIE: Once again, as I said, the intent—

The CHAIR: It's comical.

DARYL CURRIE: I was not the decision-maker in this case. The decision-maker took the decision that remedial action was required. I still note that person has not taught in a school since they're retirement.

The CHAIR: Who approved them to be a casual?

DARYL CURRIE: Once again, that's part of the resignation process. It will be ticked whether somebody is approved for casual. It depends then whether we—

The CHAIR: Who did that?

DARYL CURRIE: I'd have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Can I find out who did that? We can take it on notice.

DARYL CURRIE: I do note that it would have been done—

The CHAIR: Who approved this person?

DARYL CURRIE: —before the PES action was finalised. This person's name, as you know, was not in the frame until the investigation uncovered who had written it down—not said it, but who had written it down. Before then, as you would be aware—because you were one of the people who brought it up in the first place—erroneously, there was a relieving principal who we were looking at and a principal. This person's name came up after they had resigned. The decision is not for us who ticked it off and whether it remains in place. It was decided that remedial action was appropriate.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Secretary, you mentioned earlier on that students should have a sense of belonging. Should they feel, in our education system, that they belong to Australian society?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We have a strong sense of identity through our public education system, as you're aware. We serve all Australian communities. Certainly, I think that is a strong value that you would see represented in our classrooms.

The CHAIR: Should they feel like they are part of the Australian nation?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: As you're aware, there are a number of things that our schools do that reinforce that connection to Australia as a nation, including flags at every school and the singing of the national anthem in assemblies.

The CHAIR: Should they be proud of Australian history?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly, I think they should be—Australian history, as you're obviously aware, and I am sure are—

The CHAIR: Overall, it's a pretty good nation. A lot of people want to move here.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are a good nation. I note that I've just finished reading with my daughter *The First Scientists* by one of our Aboriginal former students. There is an awful lot to be proud of in Australian society and history in its full history. I note that, and I think it's a really important thing that we celebrate throughout.

The CHAIR: Do you think Australia, in its history, has been a genocidal nation and that should be projected into our schools?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I think there are parts of Australian history that have involved bloodshed, and I think it is appropriate that students are aware and are taught around those issues. But I think it's also vitally important that they understand all sides of those issues in their classrooms.

The CHAIR: Should they be taught that we have been a genocidal nation?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I would note that they should be taught the curriculum and that the curriculum is set by NESA. That is what our students should be taught.

The CHAIR: Mr Martin, is there any evidence in Australian history that there has been an official policy of genocide?

PAUL MARTIN: This is a reasonably abstract question about Australian history.

The CHAIR: It's not abstract for the parents complaining about it.

PAUL MARTIN: Certainly, in terms of in Tasmania, the deliberate policy of the government was to remove and eradicate Aboriginal people from Tasmania. Ultimately, they were placed, I think, on Kangaroo Island. But those sorts of contested questions need to be explored by students in history. If you are talking overall about 250 years of white settlement, you would probably not say genocidal. But there are aspects of Australian history, including one I just mentioned in relation to Aboriginal people, that they may well see and perceive as genocidal in parts or as having been deliberate government policy to remove them.

The CHAIR: How is NAIDOC allowed to distribute that poster to kids as young as six saying, "No pride in genocide", which I have received multiple complaints about? Genocide wouldn't be understood by kids who can't read. It seems to be a stretch, doesn't it, to be distributing that material? Why doesn't the department have tighter control over accurate material about Australian history and a sense of belonging to Australia instead of any old random thing being allowed to distribute to kindergarten and year 1 children?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I might ask Ms Walker to provide some further information in relation to the specific poster you raise for NAIDOC Week. I would note that this is a national celebration. The poster is chosen nationally to support those celebrations. It is chosen by the Aboriginal community. We do celebrate NAIDOC in our schools as a great chance to bring together our whole communities in our schools. But I'll ask Ms Walker to provide some specifics on the poster, if I may?

SIMONE WALKER: Thank you. I do understand that the poster was distributed for year 1 students to use as a colouring-in exercise at one of our primary schools.

The CHAIR: More than one.

SIMONE WALKER: More than one. I think, as the secretary has described, the NAIDOC poster and the decision about the themes for NAIDOC don't sit with the Department of Education, but we do strongly support our students participating and our schools participating in NAIDOC. Whether that poster is appropriate for the colouring-in exercise for children of that age, I think there is a slight difference between the questions that you are asking Mr Martin and the secretary about the application of Australian history in the curriculum and the participation of students in a national day of celebration through NAIDOC.

The CHAIR: I will pass to the Opposition. We will split this time at 12½ minutes each.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thanks very much, Mr Chair. I just wanted to come back to the question about childcare providers who are on school sites. Are you aware that some have been offered only a two-year extension on their leases?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I would need to come back to you on notice on that issue. Certainly, depending on the nature of procurement that needs to be undertaken, we might extend an existing lease while that is undertaken. But I'm very happy to come back to you on notice to make sure, if that is the case, the reasons as to why are very clear.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And if you can tell us how many have been offered a two-year extension and how many have been offered a longer extension?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Yes, very happy to do that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And if you can tell us how many of those have been told that their rents would be increased as part of that extension?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly very happy to come back to you with further details.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Great, thanks. I wanted to move onto parent-run OOSH services. I know this is something that we've asked questions about before and something that we've talked about. I have asked some questions on notice about it as well. What is the rationale for requiring parent-run services to now have to compete with for-profit OOSH services?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'll ask Mr Manning to provide you with details on the parent-run OOSH services.

ANTHONY MANNING: This was a piece of work that was done, from memory, probably a year or so ago. We did an audit. We looked at the delineation between the not-for-profit, P&C-run and private for-profit services within the procurement rules that we have around the procurement Act. What we identified was that P&C-run services were able to be offered without a tender process because effectively they fall under the Education Act, but parent-run services, which aren't within the P&C, are not under the Education Act and therefore would need to go through a tender process. We weren't simply going to offer them. That was the review that was done. I think from memory there were—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Who initiated that review?

ANTHONY MANNING: I think this was a conversation that had started originally through one of the parent-run groups—what is the word I'm looking for—one of the key bodies around the groups.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Advocacy groups?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes. It was trying to understand where they should fit into the process. We took legal advice when we went through the procurement process. The advice that came out was exactly that: that P&C-run, because they effectively operate under the Education Act and under the Minister, were able to be offered services without a procurement process, but anybody else that wasn't would have to go through a tender process.

From memory, I think there were something like 40 services that were essentially impacted by this decision. We have been working with those providers to give them an opportunity to become P&C-run services in time for when their leases expire and we'd need to go through another procurement process. For some of them, it's many years to come. We tried to give them a deadline of around two years to move to that position. We've been working with those providers to be clear about how they would fit under the P&C so they could continue to run their service as part of the P&C structure, and therefore fall within the Education Act and not need to go to a tender process.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I asked a question on notice. I was told there was 35 parent-run—

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes, 38 is the number that sticks in my head.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you provide us with the list of those parent-run services on notice?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes. To reiterate, we're working with those and offering them an ability to become incorporated into the P&C so that they can continue to operate. Again, we're doing it in line with when their leases would expire and we'd need to retender those. Some of those are four or five years away.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you very much, Mr Manning. I should declare I think my kids might attend one of those. I'm not quite sure. Can I move on then to Cooler Classrooms, just to get an update on that one?

ANTHONY MANNING: Cooler Classrooms is running. It's a five-year program. It concludes at the end of this financial year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Let me just cut to the chase. Has everyone been told? Has all the money been spent?

ANTHONY MANNING: No. We're still working through. There still may well be contingency that becomes available. As we have done, we've increased the number of schools as the contingency becomes available for us to put into.

The CHAIR: But will the weather ever get warmer?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think that's a question outside Mr Manning's responsibilities.

The CHAIR: There's no sign of it, is there. These summers and springs now are very moderate.

ANTHONY MANNING: Less wet would be nice, that's for sure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Manning, will they have an answer by the end of the year? What's the deadline for the answer?

ANTHONY MANNING: Again, it runs to the end of the financial year. We'll continue to roll through the process to get to that point.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As at today, how many schools in round two have been told?

ANTHONY MANNING: I have to take that on notice. The only communication we've had with schools for round two are the ones that have been successful in being included within the round one process. I don't think we've issued any notices to anybody saying they haven't been successful. I can come back to you on notice with that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me how many are successful in round two as at today?

ANTHONY MANNING: I can't tell you off the top of my head, but I can take it on notice. I think it's in the order of 60 or 70 schools have been able to be added.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Excellent. If you can provide us with the number and the names of those schools, that would be great.

ANTHONY MANNING: So 92 schools have been approved for delivery.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So 90 schools under round two?

ANTHONY MANNING: Ninety-two.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Under round two?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes. I'm happy to give you the list of the names of all those schools.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: On notice?

ANTHONY MANNING: On notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to ask some questions about the new selective schools. There's obviously some changes that have been announced—the equity placement model. What consultation was done by the department, with parents, in relation to the changes?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'll ask Mr Graham to step in.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Since the release of the report into selective schools, we've consulted with the P&C, Ethnic Communities' Council, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and students themselves, as well as current parents of selective school students.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Excellent. I might come back to that in a moment. Ms Harrison, on 16 September you conducted a planning day for the department. Is that right?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: On 16 September—I think that's the right date—we, yes, had our leadership group together.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many people attended that planning day?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I will need to come back to you with a specific number on notice, but it was all of our PSSE1 and above.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Where was it held?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: It was held at Sydney Olympic Park.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What was the cost of the day, including catering?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Very happy to provide the details of that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you provide us with a breakdown of the costs. Who was the speaker?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We had a number of speakers. We had Dylan Alcott as a speaker. He had to join us by a video link due to attending the Queen's funeral. We had a number of speakers. I'm happy to provide you the breakdown and details of costs.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you got a draft copy of the strategic plan?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Our strategic plan is public. We are currently working on refreshing our strategic plan. The first strategic plan ran to the end of 2023. We have started the process to develop the new strategic plan. We are doing that with our leaders. We will be doing that with our staff during the first half of next year with the aim of having a strategic plan in place from mid-2023 for the next period.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When do you anticipate you will circulate the first draft?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We are currently working on—I will need to come back to you on the specifics of the timing.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can tell us when you are anticipating it will be first circulated.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly. As I said, we want to build this in consultation with our staff across the education system. We want to make sure that we are capturing obviously the full reach of our responsibilities, particularly given the shift in focus in early childhood, as well as our responsibilities in the skills area for life-long learning. So that is the focus of our work at the moment. But I am very happy to come back to you. I think it is more likely we would be saying we are going out with principals and questions for discussion with our staff in the early half of the year, but happy to come back with the specifics on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My time is going to expire. Will you provide a copy on notice of the day's agenda?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly. What I would like to say is, obviously following COVID and the spread of leaders and staff across the system, I certainly made a decision. I thought it was very important for our leadership group to come together and to make sure that when we are developing our strategic plan, the leaders of the organisation are absolutely at the heart of the development of that plan. I would also note the need as an executive team sat here for us to build a strong and collaborative culture. I am very conscious, as I am sure you would have seen in other parts of the sector, for people who join an organisation during that period of working from home it has been really important to make sure we are connecting people with their colleagues and building that connection. Some of the day was on the strategic plan, and some of it was very much on building those connections and shared agenda and collaboration and culture that we want to see through the department.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand. Why wasn't it done at a government school site?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: It was not done at a government school site because our government schools were in operation at the time.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Graham, can you provide me on notice a breakdown of percentage of disadvantaged kids in year 7 next year for each selective high school?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We won't have that data until after the final offers have been accepted, which will be around March next year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you got it for this year?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We can give it to you for this year. We can locate that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can give us a breakdown. I understand it will change next year with the new weightings, but if you can tell us what it is for this current year.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Ms Houssos, just before your time expires, I know Mr Dizdar took it upon himself to try to get some information back to you during the hearing. I wanted to make sure we didn't miss that opportunity.

MURAT DIZDAR: I am keen to get a question off notice and give you this document I promised. This is the Camden Valley Way Growth Corridor Enrolment Panel. I want to clarify for the Committee the word "board" was used. "Board" stipulates all sorts of different legal obligations. It is a panel. This is the communication that I promised that went to all three schools and their school communities. There is a link in there that is really important that takes them to further information. I would like to table that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Secretary, how is the consultant certification system going?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Just to clarify, I assume you mean the work we have underway across our system to ensure that the providers our schools might seek to use in their programs has been assessed and cleared? I will ask Ms Owen to provide an initial answer around that because we are working on our IT marketplace to support the provision of that and in her previous role was leading the panel work around wellbeing.

RUTH OWEN: I am not sure what I can add to what the secretary has said. Across curriculum, across our wellbeing capabilities we have produced panels, evidence for our schools on providers and the evidence base of the quality of those so that schools can select the right providers based on the evidence that we have quality assured for them. Is this the information you are looking for?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Yes.

RUTH OWEN: Yes. I believe two rounds of that have already been completed in terms of the quality for information for schools. The additional panel that the secretary was referring to is within our technology unit. We are also doing the same thing again for the kinds of administrative and teaching software and support for schools. We save schools time by needing to shop around for what kinds of software they need in their school. That has been completed. We are now providing a panel, which again has been quality assured and short-listed by our IT department for schools, and that is in consultation with schools and will be rolled out next year.

The CHAIR: That short list has been determined, has it?

RUTH OWEN: We have worked through that short list. We have been—

The CHAIR: Have Paul Sibson and a mob called Hero—sounds good, doesn't it—been certified in IT? They are trying to enter the system from New Zealand—no evidence base that they achieve anything—pushing whole child wellbeing, student-centric stuff and student directed—again, the antithesis of explicit instruction. They are using Denham Court Public School in that growth corridor next Wednesday at 3.45 p.m. Isn't the basic problem that these shysters come along promising big things, calling themselves heroes, and you find schools that are disadvantaged, the results are not very good, they are looking for the miracle solution, so they grab the next huckster consultant and all their promises and pay for it? Isn't that the thing we need to stop and drive these schools back to using the evidence base that does work?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, I think that is exactly the work we have indicated we are undertaking. We have done so on wellbeing. We are undertaking currently a process around curriculum resources. We are looking at the next panel in terms of behaviour support, and we are also looking at this to ensure that our schools get best value for money and best quality administration systems. We continue to build that out.

The CHAIR: On notice, can you give me an assessment of Paul Sibson and the Kiwi "heroes", and why he is allowed to use Denham Court Public School next Wednesday to sell his wares—

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I am very happy to come back to you on that.

The CHAIR: —and make good coin, with no evidence that he is ever going to achieve anything? Back to the Quality Teaching Rounds and the assessment of Jenny Gore, last year she handed this to us in the teacher shortage inquiry. She wrote up an academic paper saying, "Australia has facilitated neoliberal encroachment into the education landscape by positioning schools and particularly teachers and teaching as in need of fixing." Secretary, do you agree with this analysis of neoliberal encroachment? I have to say, as a neoliberal, I don't find any evidence of it whatsoever.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I don't think it would be appropriate for me to comment in those terms. What I would say is I think the issue that Professor Gore appears to me, and hearing that from you today, is the one that we are hearing from our teachers, that the debate around education, the discussion of education is being carried out in a way that our teachers are struggling to adjust to. They are feeling challenged. They are not feeling supported in their communities and they are not finding that debate is supporting them in their efforts in classrooms. They don't feel valued as a profession. That is the evidence we are seeing back at us. And I think one of the things that we need to collectively shift—I certainly don't recognise the description Professor Gore has used there, but I think we do see a need to think carefully about the way we talk about teaching and teachers in the context of motivating those that we need in our classrooms every day to support our students and to make sure that they do feel they have the support and tools available to them that I think we have discussed at length to enable them to do their job well.

The CHAIR: Just on that—and this was something that came up in the other inquiry about some Monash study that teachers feel picked on in the media—isn't the main media coverage these alarming results: 19,000 kids coming into year 7 semi-illiterate; the ARROW results, the stuff that your own official produced; what Masters said about the declining results, the PISA results and the like? Isn't the concern that the system is going backwards? And who is responsible for that? Obviously, government policy plays a role and Local Schools, Local Decisions was a complete disaster. Ultimately, if the students aren't learning, the teachers aren't teaching. It is not unreasonable for parents, loving their kids more than anyone can, to think the teachers have got to do better and your system has got to improve to turn these results around? That is not an unreasonable public or, on my part, political reaction, I would have thought.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I am not quite sure of the question there, Chair.

The CHAIR: I am asking—you are saying teachers feel picked upon, but don't the declining results and the media coverage about these studies indicate that there is a problem in the system and we should have high expectations about fixing those problems? You have Jenny Gore here, paying her \$5 million a year, and she says none of it needs fixing. What planet do these people live on?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, I don't think it is for me to comment on Professor Gore, but what I think you have heard—

The CHAIR: Yes, it is. You are funding her \$5 million for sending teachers backwards with rubbish pedagogy, and she is saying we are a neoliberal system and if you take the neoliberals out, none of it needs fixing.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: What we fund is the University of Newcastle to support the development of an evidence base around the effective use of teacher observations. We continue to do that. What you've heard from myself and my colleagues today is our commitment to see that lift in student outcomes. We want to do so in a way that supports our teachers. We continue to deliver high-quality resources developed by teachers for use by teachers in our system that are focused on evidence, and we can see the signs of those improvements. I absolutely accept the impatience to see those results. I share that, Chair; of course I do. I want to see those results yesterday; we all do. But where we are applying the interventions, we are seeing the lift in performance. So we need to make sure that we maintain that focus so we can continue to see that more broadly across the system.

The CHAIR: A few years ago the Minister announced that the Government was putting its foot down, saying to the university education faculties, "Unless you teach to the evidence base determined by CESE and others, we won't take your graduates from you to teach in our schools." What has been the follow-through on that?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly this is an issue we continue to work on. We have put in place a success profile for teachers that starts to look at those issues. I would note that the national workforce action plan has highlighted this issue. The Commonwealth Government have released their terms of evidence in relation to work the University of Sydney will lead. Mark Scott will lead in relation to initial teacher education. That is very clear. The feedback from teachers in the room was very clear: They want to leave university better prepared for the classroom. We want to see more teachers in classrooms earlier in their degree. We want to see the opportunity for teachers to get hands-on experience sooner as part of their qualifications, and we certainly want to see the evidence base put through all of the teacher education programs on offer in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: So what's the follow-through? Nothing?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: We continue to work both with the Commonwealth who hold the majority of the higher education leavers—

The CHAIR: Do you say to any university, "You're teaching these kids rubbish and we're not going to take them as graduates because they'll bring that rubbish into our schools"?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: What we say is we will have a high bar for entry to public teaching in a public school. We have that through the work we have been doing over a period of time. Then we make sure the professional development we offer our staff as they enter the public education system and continue their career with us is absolutely based in the evidence. It's also professional development that is embedded in practice and in seeing that practice shift over time.

The CHAIR: A CIS audit of the initial education training programs found that of 31 universities, at least 27 clearly emphasised practices that are not evidence based and did not provide trainee teachers with sufficient exposure to explicit teaching practices. On top of that—because they must be dreadful places to attend, run by Jenny Gore and other radicals—50 per cent of the start-up students drop out. The attrition rate is 50 per cent. Don't we need to look to alternative systems of training teachers who've got the evidence base and have come through a system that actually has a decent retention rate where they have obviously been happy and satisfied to go on into this professional career?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly we are looking at different ways of bringing teachers in. You would be aware of the FASTstream program we have underway. You would be aware of the career change program. The thing that's different about that program, Chair, is we are commissioning—

The CHAIR: What about alternative teacher education?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: With that program, we're commissioning the training from a university for that mid-career program.

The CHAIR: Which university?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I'll need to ask Mr Lamb for the details on that. I may need to come back to you on notice.

The CHAIR: Take that on notice. But why don't you support Alphacrucis that have got a 95 per cent retention rate? They use the apprenticeship model, an integration of theory and practice. In the classrooms I've visited, it's truly inspirational. Don't we need to foster those alternative teacher training bodies?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: I do believe we are involved with that institution, and we are supporting some of that work with an expansion of that model into public schools.

The CHAIR: The Anglicans are starting something up themselves. They are very dissatisfied with these clunky university education faculties. If the Anglicans start up an alternative training system, would we support that and draw better teachers from this than we've had in the past?

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Chair, we are actively involved in the conversations around the national workforce action plan around the provision of internship models and the move into an internship model for teaching. We are actively looking at what those models could be and how they could work in New South Wales. We are also looking at how we need to use our funding with the universities to ensure we're getting the outcomes that we want to see.

The CHAIR: Is there any survey of principals and of what they find with the university graduates coming into their schools? Graduates predominantly go into disadvantaged schools in western Sydney and other places. Do you survey the principals to say, "How do you find these graduates and their level of capacity?"

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Mr Dizdar may want to make comment here. But certainly, by and large, what I see in a number of those schools is—because of the enthusiasm, the attitude and the willingness to learn that those graduates are arriving in our schools with—our principals are seeing great opportunity there for them to engage in professional learning with the department and other things and to make quick progress.

The CHAIR: Yes, but the principals say to me, "The less they learn at university, the better, because the university stuff is junk. If they're an empty vessel, I can pour my school way and my model into them." It is very distressing to hear that, isn't it? It's dreadful.

GEORGINA HARRISSON: Certainly I think our principals would support—I shouldn't speak for them, but I think they would support the opportunity to have undergraduate teachers in their classrooms sooner. We have seen through COVID where we have, through the COVID ILSP program, brought more third-year and final-year undergrads into schools to provide that opportunity both that they have thrived in that environment and that they have had the opportunity to see and learn from the school environment far more directly. That's been a really positive experience for everyone, and so we do want to see how we build more of that into the teacher training model. I think it's an issue we need to continue to work on, Chair.

The CHAIR: We'll have to take Mr Dizdar on notice because unfortunately, tragically, we're out of time.

MURAT DIZDAR: I would have loved to have elaborated, Chair, but I'll hold it.

The CHAIR: No, have a crack for 90 seconds.

MURAT DIZDAR: The only thing I was going to add to that is the practicum hubs. We've been investing in certain geography to have, rather than one or two prac students, 20 or 30 prac students go into a geographical area and undertake that model that you were espousing of being embedded in the school context. Universities have been piloting that with us, and some of their lecturers and tutors are delivering their material inside those school gates. The feedback we get on those practicum hubs is very positive because, one, principals and mentors are eyeballing those teachers; two, those teachers are developing in situ much more than practicum; and, three, the tutors' and the academics' connection to schools becomes a lot stronger. Many of those people are gaining employment prior to fully completing their studies as teaching assistants in our schools, as SLSOs, and then on graduation are gaining employment as well.

The CHAIR: How many of those practicum hubs do you run?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll take it on notice, because I definitely know that we've been expanding them. I was going to say about 20 of them, but let's take it on notice. They're in geography with a group of schools, and I think they are doing wonderful things.

The CHAIR: Very good—a positive note on which to end. Thanks for everyone's time. You can see we're all very worked up to get better results because they matter so much. They are tremendously important for the State's future, particularly kids who have no other pathway. Thanks for your time, and we always find the information useful. We'll see you again in the next parliamentary term, I'd say. You'll miss us; we'll miss you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.