

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2020-2021**  
**Questions taken on notice during the hearing**  
**Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education**

<b>EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING</b>
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**QUESTION NO 1**  
**PAGE NO 6**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you have a definition of a "major regional centre"?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I might ask the secretary to respond to that, or Mr Manning looks after before- and after-school care.

**Mr MANNING:** I will have to take that on notice. I do not have that with me.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can you see if you can come back to us during the course of the hearing?

**ANSWER**

The below answer was given during the Budget Estimates hearing by Mr Mark Scott on page 53 of the transcript.

"The Minister was also asked, Chair, about the definition of "major regional centre" by the before- and after-school reform team, as per fulfilling the Government's commitment. It has been identified by finding those locations outside of the Sydney metropolitan area, ranked by the highest population numbers according to the last Commonwealth Census. We have taken the top 20 and these locations are: Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Blue Mountains, Bowral, Mittagong, Cessnock, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Foster, Tuncurry, Goulburn, Griffith, Lismore, Maitland, Nowra, Orange, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Tamworth, Tweed Heads and Wagga Wagga. Thank you, Mr Chair."

**QUESTION NO 2**  
**PAGE NO 6-7**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. When we are calculating places—13,797—we are calling one before-school and one after-school?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take that on notice because, obviously, services run in sessions as well. They do a morning session and an afternoon session, so I will just double-check unless someone can clarify that at the table.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, that is correct, and it is linked to the Commonwealth's definition in terms of the childcare rebate.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, which means that if your child attends before and after, it will actually be counted as two places, not as one. That is correct?

**Mr SCOTT:** It is a standard national way of counting.

**ANSWER**

The Before and After School Care (BASC) program is improving access to care for all NSW public primary school students, including increasing the number of approved places offered by providers. Approved places relates to the capacity of services to offer care, and not enrolments.

Provider capacity is determined in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations, which requires the approved provider of an education and care service to ensure that, for each child being educated and cared for by the service, the education and care service premises has at least 3.25 square metres of unencumbered indoor space and 7 square metres of unencumbered outdoor space. An approved provider may also apply for a service waiver in relation to these space requirements.

As at 10 February 2021, the BASC program resulted in a total net increase of 13,797 approved places since July 2019.

The Department of Education does not maintain information on places filled as part of its function as the NSW Regulatory Authority for early childhood education and care. Providers are responsible for sharing enrolment availability and information.

**QUESTION NO 3**  
**PAGE NO 7**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, how many places are projected to be provided by the end of 2021?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take that on notice. Obviously, we are working to fill that demand where it is needed from parents. I know that when we did some figures in term four last year we had a significant reduction in the wait list, so we are moving through with the election commitment, but in terms of the projected figures of where we think we will need to be, I will take that on notice just to clarify the most up-to-date figures for you and for the Committee.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government has committed \$120 million to make before and after school care available to all parents with children at public primary schools, and the number of places delivered will be targeted to meet unmet demand.

**QUESTION NO 4**  
**PAGE NO 9**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** That evidence is directly contrary to your own policy, which is about the remediation priority. A hygienist has identified this asbestos as being high priority in terms of the need to remediate it. Can you provide on notice, if you can, which of the 347 instances of identified high-priority friable asbestos hygienists have said should be left in situ and not remediated?

**Mr SCOTT:** Sure.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education's Asbestos Management Plan includes comprehensive management options for dealing with 'high priority' asbestos including its removal or encapsulation. The Asbestos Management Plan helps ensure the ongoing safety of students and staff at all NSW public schools across the state.

The Department has a panel of consultants that specialise in asbestos management which includes carrying out necessary investigations, overseeing and reporting on remedial works.

**QUESTION NO 5**  
**PAGE NO 13-14**

**The CHAIR:** Okay, another invisible school: In March 2017 the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and your predecessor, Minister Rob Stokes, announced that by 2019 a new science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] Catholic high school would be constructed at the Celestino Sydney Science Park at Luddenham. The Government were very happy to be part of this announcement. Where is the school?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I might ask the secretary to—obviously, as you said, Mr Chair, it predates my time as Minister.

**Mr SCOTT:** I think it is a question for Catholic Schools NSW.

**The CHAIR:** The Premier and the education Minister were part of it, and part of the announcement was that there would be State Government capital funding to assist the new STEM high school in the Parramatta diocese. Greg Whitby was there as part of the announcement at Luddenham.

**Mr SCOTT:** I believe that if there is a delay that will not be as a result of the support of the Government; that will be to do with the planning and prioritisation by Catholic Schools NSW and Parramatta diocese. We are happy to take the question on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Well, four years later, Mr Scott—and the Minister—and no capital applications were sought for the construction of the school.

**Mr SCOTT:** From Catholic Schools NSW?

**The CHAIR:** No, they are not even off first base; they are not even at the pitching mound.

**Mr SCOTT:** I suppose that answers the question, though, Chair, doesn't it really? I mean, an application would be considered in line with the usual non-government school capital funding protocols.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, but have the Premier and the education Minister carrying on from Rob Stokes done anything about saying, "We went out there four years ago and were part of the announcement—where is the school?"

**Mr SCOTT:** I can take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Where is the school for the people in western Sydney, given that the Premier, in particular, was part of this promise and announcement?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, Chair. We can check whether there has been any correspondence or questions raised by Catholic Schools NSW in the Parramatta diocese. But it is a Catholic school and I believe that the Government will be in a position to provide the support that was committed. But in order for that to happen, the plans—

**The CHAIR:** Okay, if you can check for me if the Premier has followed up asking whether four years later, "Where is the school?" I raise what I think is a very important ethical question on top of that: Is the Government aware that this mob Celestino—I do not think the most ethical land development process I have ever seen in western Sydney at the Sydney Science Park—is still advertising this STEM school to attract investment into their site, families, building it all up, using the publicity delivered to them by the Premier and the then education Minister for a school that just does not exist? Would the Government feel used in this process for land development promotion and advertising around this Sydney Science Park? Minister, will you give an undertaking that you will never be involved in this sort of shonky arrangement in the future where the Government is used to promote land development and a school facility that clearly there is no intention of ever building?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Chair, what I will say is that I do think you raise a very good point in terms of commitments or public commentary by developers when they

are looking at the development of their land. Obviously, as I said earlier, this announcement predates my time as Minister; I am not across the issue.

**The CHAIR:** I know. But what I am saying is that the Government was used and used badly by these people. The community out there that heard the announcement from the Premier—and four years later the school is invisible—would feel very let down that it was all a complete fraud. This Government was party to it and, seemingly, has not done anything to reprimand these developers and give a commitment that this sort of shonky practice would never happen again.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think, as the secretary said, obviously it being a Catholic school build, we will take on notice the details of that particular project.

## **ANSWER**

### ***The Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta has provided the following information regarding the building of a STEM-focused school in the Sydney Science Park.***

Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) is proud to be building a first-of-its-kind school in the Sydney Science Park. This is part of the Department of Education's commitment to provide new schools in the high-growth areas in western and north-western Sydney.

The Sydney Science Park sits with the Northern Gateway Precinct of the Western Sydney Aerotropolis. The planning framework for the Aerotropolis is still being developed with input from the community, landowners, the eight member councils of the Western Sydney Cities Deal, the Western Parkland City Authority, the Western Sydney Parklands Trust and the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), among others. The Draft Aerotropolis Precinct Plan is currently open for public comment as part of this ongoing planning framework development process.

There are currently no planning approvals for the Sydney Science Park precinct. The project planning has undergone a number of revisions.

The decision about when to open the school will depend on a number of factors, the most important being the needs of the local resident population, particularly for the - primary years. The finalisation of the planning framework will provide the certainty required to progress our planning, consider timing in line with likely population growth and commence the process to lodging the necessary development approvals.

**QUESTION NO 6**  
**PAGE NO 16**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** To plan for a new school at Westmead? Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So why has there been no action on that to date?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I do not accept the premise of your question. There has been action on that school to date. We are going through the planning process for that school. It is in the assurance review phase, and we are preparing the business case to go to Treasury for that school.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How much money has actually been spent on the planning stage to date?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I might take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you have a site?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We have got a lot of school commitments and a big infrastructure portfolio rolling out, as you know. It is part of our commitment to 200 new and upgraded schools, with more than \$7 billion being spent. We will take the figure on that specific planning money for that school on notice and provide that to the Committee.

**ANSWER**

The business case is currently being finalised and will be submitted to Government for consideration in due course.

Further updates and information relating to the project will be communicated via the School Infrastructure NSW website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/>.

**QUESTION NO 7**  
**PAGE NO 16-17**

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, I want to ask you about the status of this document. This is the protocols for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provisional models are to be considered. This document is still current, isn't it? This is the policy of the department.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I just want to confer with the secretary on that.

**Mr SCOTT:** I just want to check on that, Mr D'Adam. It is date lined December 2014, so let me just double-check on that. I have a later version of it here.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that a later version? What date is that, Mr Scott?

**Mr SCOTT:** It is hot in my hand, but you can see that there are some differences. I just want to check the differences. Some of the terminology has changed and the department has actually changed. We have new positions like the director of educational leadership and other roles.

**The CHAIR:** This is dated December 2014. What is yours dated?

**Mr SCOTT:** This actually does not have a date on it. It just has the material on it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that why it is not on the department's website?

**Mr SCOTT:** I can take that on notice and find out for you. But my advice is that this is not the latest document.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Perhaps you could tender the document that you are referring to.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, we will take it on notice and come back to the Committee on that.

**ANSWER**

The version of the Department of Education's document "Protocols for schools where recess, closure, merge or other educational provision models are to be considered" currently available on the Department's website was updated in December 2020. The date of December 2020 is indicated at the end of the document on page 8, the final page.

The current document can be readily accessed using the following link:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/media/documents/Protocols-school-closures-recess-amalgamation.pdf>

**QUESTION NO 8**  
**PAGE NO 18-20**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** To assist, I am happy to table a table of the 20 schools that are now up to 18 months late that have been promised.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What I will say more broadly—and I am happy for Mr Manning to provide a comment on the specifics—and as I have said many times, we have got a record infrastructure building program underway in the State; we are delivering more schools than any government before us and I think the community can and does judge us on our track record. We have delivered more than 100 new and upgraded schools since we have been in government. In terms of the timing of particular projects and the numbers that you are referencing, I have not seen this document before. Is this one that you have created?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That is right. We have worked off your list of election commitments.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What I would say—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am just providing you with some information which is on the School Infrastructure website.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If I can just say, this is a document that you have created which has only just been placed in front of me and other members of the Executive here today. What I will say in relation to some of the dates that you have got here—we can happily talk through the specifics—I would refute the premise of some of the schools that you have here in terms of the delays. With all due respect, a document that has been created by the Opposition at budget estimates—I would like to have the time to see whether what you have put in front of me is correct, to be honest.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I am happy for your bureaucrats to go away and look at this and we can talk about it more this afternoon, but I can assure you that it has been created from publicly available information on the School Infrastructure website.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, but I would like to check that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you have an updated version of this list, the projects that are in—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We can take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many schools have been promised that are not on this list, that are not even in the early stages of planning?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** All of the commitments that we made—as I said, we have a lot of election commitments and school building commitments. We have delivered many of our record school builds and, as I said, the lists that are in the budget papers are the schools that we are working on as part of our school building initiative.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** This is your own internal working document, Minister. The south-western Sydney selective school is not even on the list for early planning.

**The CHAIR:** You said it was fair dinkum, Minister.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It is fair dinkum, Mr Chair. That is why I said I just want to check because, as you would be well aware, this is a document that has only just been placed in front of me and I just want to check what is on the site.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No, Minister. It was placed in front of you in August last because it is actually your internal working document.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Point of order: The Minister has outlined that the document has been placed in front of her today in the hearing. She needs to, of course, be able to verify that document and see if there are any other new documents. It is reasonable for her to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** It is the Government's own paper as part of the SO 52 process. The Minister said this school was fair dinkum. It is not on the list. It is a major concern, is it not?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are there any other schools that are not on the list that you have committed to, Minister?

**Mr SCOTT:** We will just check. My understanding of the selective school issue in south-western Sydney—the critical question about that, which is currently just being finalised now by the department, is the appropriate location for that site.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, Mr Scott, I am going to stop you there because I did hear that answer to the Chair's question earlier. I am just wondering if there are any other schools that are not on this list.

**ANSWER**

The Secretary of the Department of Education, Mr Mark Scott, tabled a response in relation to this line of questioning. A copy is below.

**RESPONSE:**

The information provided by Labor includes a number of errors. Firstly, the list of 20 schools includes a double entry so it is in fact a list of 19 schools. (Monaro High School Upgrade)

Of those 19 schools, 14 of them have an approved business case delivery date of January 2022. In addition 6 of the 19 schools have already been handed over either in entirety or stages, 4 of them early.

We make a concerted effort to update the community on the progress of these projects as often as possible. During these updates we provide estimated timelines for each stage of the project.

Breakdown

<b>1</b>	<b>Marsden Park (new primary school)</b>	<b>Early 2020</b>	<b>Mid 2021</b>	<b>18 months</b>
	Clarified: Approved delivery date Jan 2022 Handover operational (Northbourne PS)			
<b>2</b>	<b>Harrington Park Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Mid 2021</b>	<b>Late 2022</b>	<b>18 months</b>
	Clarified: Approved delivery date Jan 2022  SSDA issues			
<b>3</b>	<b>Parramatta West Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Early 2020</b>	<b>Mid 2021</b>	<b>18 months</b>

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

Absorbed into Rydalmere Education Strat

**4 Canterbury South Public School Upgrade Mid 2021 Late 2022 18 months**

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

Council traffic management concerns

**5 Fairvale High School Upgrade Early 2020 Mid 2021 18 months**

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

Unexpected finds

**6 Greystanes Public School Upgrade 2020 Late 2021 12-24 months**

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

Unexpected finds

**7 Denham Court (new primary school) Early 2021 Late 2021 12 months**

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

On track for mid 2021

**8 Kingswood High School Upgrade Early 2020 Late 2020 12 months**

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

**9 Lindfield Learning Village Stage 2 Early 2021 Early 2022 12 months**

Staged Delivery

**10 Dapto Public School Upgrade Early 2021 Late 2021 12 months**

Clarified:  
Approved delivery date Jan 2022

**11 Monaro High School Upgrade Mid 2020 Mid 2021 12 months**

Clarified:

Delivered Dec 2020

<b>12</b>	<b>Willoughby Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Early 2020</b>	<b>November 2020</b>	<b>11 months</b>
	Clarified: Approved delivery date mid 2020 Delivered Nov 2020			
<b>13</b>	<b>Banksia Road Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Early 2020</b>	<b>Late 2020</b>	<b>12 months</b>
	Project was delivered in two stages: Stage 1: 9 June 2020 (6 weeks late), Stage 2: 15 October 2020.			
<b>14</b>	<b>Ashtonfield Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Early 2021</b>	<b>Late 2021</b>	<b>12 months</b>
	Protracted negotiations			
<b>15</b>	<b>Lake Cathie Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Late 2020</b>	<b>Late 2021</b>	<b>12 months</b>
	Delivered early 2021			
<b>16</b>	<b>Samuel Gilbert Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Early 2021</b>	<b>Early 2022</b>	<b>12 months</b>
	Clarified: Approved delivery date Jan 2022			
<b>17</b>	<b>Braidwood Central School Upgrade</b>	<b>Late 2020</b>	<b>Mid 2021</b>	<b>6 months</b>
	Clarified: Approved delivery date Jan 2022			
<b>18</b>	<b>Murrumbidgee Regional High School Upgrade</b>	<b>Late 2020</b>	<b>Mid 2021</b>	<b>6 months</b>
	Clarified: Handover mid 2021			
<b>19</b>	<b>Monaro High School Upgrade</b>	<b>Mid 2020</b>	<b>Early 2021</b>	<b>6 months</b>
	Double up			
<b>20</b>	<b>St Ives North Public School Upgrade</b>	<b>Mid 2020</b>	<b>Term 4 2020</b>	<b>4 months</b>
	Clarified: Completed Oct 2020			

### *Extended explanations*

#### *Banksia Road PS*

Project was delivered in two stages: Stage 1: 9 June 2020 (6 weeks late), Stage 2: 15 October 2020.

Regarding stage 1: an incident at the school created the need for the upgrade. The final funding amount from Treasury was contingent on the school's insurance payout, which delayed delivery of the project by 6 weeks.

Additionally, the Stage 2 works added additional scope to the project not initially captured in the business case.

#### *Willoughby Public School*

The project was delivered in more stages than originally envisaged in order to ensure that impacts on school operations were appropriately mitigated. There were also some unexpected contamination uncovered that required remediation impacting some stages of construction.

**QUESTION NO 9**  
**PAGE NO 20 AND 23**

**Mr SCOTT:** And the commitment to building a new selective high school in south-western Sydney is clear. It is going to be built, Mr Chair.

**The CHAIR:** It is a lack of intent, is it not? It is a lack of commitment—backsliding. There has been some resistance somewhere about the idea of a selective school. That is why it has disappeared.

**Mr SCOTT:** No, it has not disappeared.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, I want to take that on notice and check why it is not on that particular list in that particular document. As I said, the commitment is there for that school.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you. Mr Manning, could I ask that after the lunch break you bring to the meeting your early, planning stage documentation about the new selective high school in south-west Sydney so we can ask some questions about the detail and what you have there in the early so-called planning stages?

**Mr MANNING:** Okay

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government is currently in the early stages of planning for a selective school in South West Sydney. Work has begun to review the needs of the growing local community, including current and projected demographic demands, and how the school could be best established as part of the broader development.

The Department of Education has identified potential land opportunities and is working with other government agencies to ensure that the location of the selective school can service the growing South West Sydney community.

**QUESTION NO 10**  
**PAGE NO 27-28**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When did it move to the advanced stage?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask Mr Manning the comments. The advice I have is that advanced planning—and that the business case has been lodged for the new primary school in Gregory Hills. Mr Manning might want to add more to that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When was that lodged, Mr Manning?

**Mr MANNING:** Let me just refer to my notes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you need a bit more time, Mr Manning?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes. Sorry, I cannot find—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Why don't I come back to the Minister and then you can let us know?

**Mr SCOTT:** We can come back after lunch with that.

**ANSWER**

The business case for the new primary school in Gregory Hills was lodged in mid-2020.

**QUESTION NO 11**  
**PAGE NO 28-29**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, are you aware that year 7 students who commenced at Ryde Secondary College just weeks ago are being let out of class early so they have a chance to use bathrooms?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am not aware of that.

**Mr SCOTT:** We will have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We will take that on notice, yes. It has not been brought to my attention.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** There are children who cannot go to the toilet all day because they do not have access to toilet facilities.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, I want to take that question on notice. It has not been brought to my attention and I do want to check the legitimacy of the claim that you are asking. That is why I want to take that one on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Well, Minister, this is a site that has 11 demountable bathrooms. My office has received correspondence from a concerned parent at that site because their child, who has just started year 7, is being let out of class early. Despite the 11 demountable classrooms—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, 11 demountable bathrooms or classrooms?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Eleven demountable bathrooms. I apologise; there are a number of demountable classrooms as well. They are being let out of school early in order to use them.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Look, as I said, Ms Houssos, I will take that on notice. It is not an issue that has been raised with me. I am happy to look into it and report back to the Committee.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education has advised that no students were leaving school early to go to the toilet. In the first two weeks of 2021, the school allowed Year 7 students out of class two minutes before the rest of the school, at the end of Period 2 and Period 4, as part of their high school introduction to accessing amenities.

There are a total of 42 toilet cubicles and seven toilet blocks, which includes 14 boys' toilets, 28 girls' toilets and three disabled toilets at the school. This is in line with the required entitlement for student amenities.

**QUESTION NO 12**  
**PAGE NO 29-31**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That is correct, is it not? Okay. Minister, when will female students at Yanco Agricultural High School receive their permanent dormitories?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you for the question. We are in the process of planning for the upgrade at Yanco. Can I say in relation to that particular matter: I visited the school with the Hon. Wes Fang, actually, to meet with the students and staff. The local member also came. Mr Dizdar was with me on that visit, and also a former senior executive from School Infrastructure as well. There were clearly concerns from that school community about those female dormitories. I went and had a look myself and I agree that they need to be updated. That is why, as I said to that community, we will look at what we can do in that space. We are in the planning stages for that particular project and that will run its course so that we can get that upgrade for the female students, which is important.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That was promised at your visit in July last year? Is that right?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. The visit in July last year was an opportunity to have a look at the issue firsthand and also to see what we could do in that space. I think I made it quite clear to the school community—and, again, Mr Dizdar was there—that it was not a project that was currently on the agenda in terms of what we were looking at. But I think we could all very much see for ourselves that the need was there. So then, when we were back from that visit, we have had some conversations and started about what we could do to plan. That is why we made the announcement that we were planning for the new dormitories there and that planning is underway.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When was that announcement made for the planning?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will have to take that on notice. You might remember, Wes; you were there. I cannot remember. I will take it on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you give me a rough idea? Perhaps someone can come back to us with that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will have to take it on notice. I do a lot of visits, especially in regional communities.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The female students wrote to you because they have demountable dormitories—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I know. I have been there. I have seen it.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —and the male students have permanent dormitories. Have you responded to their February 2021 letter yet?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will have to check. I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps you can come back later in the day?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes. I mean, it is only early March, so I will have to check in terms of whether that document has made its way to my desk yet. But, as I said, I met with students at Yanco, including female students, when I visited the school. I am very happy to respond to them.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can you outline what are the options that are being considered by the school?

**Mr MANNING:** For that one specifically?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, can you tell us now?

**Mr MANNING:** No, I cannot. We will take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The options that are being considered by the school?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

## **ANSWER**

An announcement was made in July 2020 that planning would commence for an upgrade to the boarding facilities at Yanco Agricultural High School. The project was identified as an Assurance Review project in the 2020-21 Budget and has been funded for planning only at this stage.

The Department of Education is currently undertaking early planning for female boarding upgrades at Yanco Agricultural High School. This includes investigating the feasibility, costs and benefits, spatial requirements of upgrades and how they might fit within the wider Yanco Agricultural High School.

Once the planning process has been completed a business case will be submitted for approval.

Upgrading the boarding facilities means that the Department considers the needs of boarders and ensures facilities are fit for purpose for current and future students.

A Project Reference Group (PRG) is also established for consultation purposes and will help to inform the options under consideration. A PRG typically includes representation from; project subject matter experts, school staff and the school community.

Updates regarding this project will be provided via the School Infrastructure NSW website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/y/yanco-agricultural-high-school-upgrade.html>.

**QUESTION NO 13**  
**PAGE NO 30**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Mr Manning, are you able to provide us on notice with an updated version of which projects are in the early planning stages?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, I think we can do that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, we can do that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education's priority planning projects are publicly available in *Budget Paper No 3 – Infrastructure Statement – 2020-21 Budget*. There are 30 projects in total and they are identified as Advanced Planning and Assurance Review projects.

The progress of individual projects will be communicated to school communities through regular project updates. Further information is available on the School Infrastructure NSW website at [www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au).

**QUESTION NO 14**  
**PAGE NO 34**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** How many of them have worked in consulting firms?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will have to take that on notice. Ms Owen clearly has. Ms Cachia, after her time at the New South Wales bar, spent time in Health and spent a few months in a consultancy firm or a professional services firm. I am not sure of everyone else.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Rather than guess—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We will take it on notice.

**Mr SCOTT:** We will take it on notice—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If you can get that provided later today, that would be useful.

**Mr SCOTT:** —but I believe there are far more educators than there are consultants on that team.

**ANSWER**

Of the 12 members of the Executive, four have had previous employment in varying roles and durations with a consultancy or professional services firm at a point in their careers.

**QUESTION NO 15**  
**PAGE NO 34**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** How much has been spent on international recruitment?

**Mr SCOTT:** On international recruitment? We spent money—I can get the detail on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I will make it easier for you: How much was spent on executive recruitment in the last calendar year for 2020?

**Mr SCOTT:** Ah right, so that is your question. I will take that on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** And how much was spent in the year before, the 2019 calendar year?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education complies with the Talent Acquisition Scheme and the NSW Procurement Policy Framework. Financial Statements, including expenditure on any general costs, are available in an agency's annual report.

Details of awarded contracts, valued at over \$150,000, are published on the NSW eTendering website. Additional context and information on this question can also be obtained from the answer to LCQON 2545.

**QUESTION NO 16**  
**PAGE NO 34**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** How much has the department spent on consultants in the last calendar year?

**Mr SCOTT:** Let me see if I can access that information quickly. If not, I am happy to get that for you on notice as well. I will get the precise detail for you, Mr Shoebridge.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** And last year?

**Mr SCOTT:** I do not have the 2020 figure immediately to hand. That is the last published figure we have.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education's 2020 Annual Report is being collated, and is due to be published in May 2020. The report will include details on consultancy expenditure by the Department in 2020.

**QUESTION NO 17**  
**PAGE NO 35**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So, there were 234 senior executive positions in the middle of 2017. What is the current number?

**Mr SCOTT:** Again, I will check that number and take it on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Scott, my final question before I hand over to Mr Latham is: Between 2017 and the middle of 2020, the number of senior executive positions in the department grew by over 25 per cent. That was roughly four times the rate of the growth in the number of teachers.

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, because we had growth in two key areas. One was a massive expansion—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Senior execs growing at four times the rate—

**The CHAIR:** There was another round, David, you will have to come back to it.

**Mr SCOTT:** I want to check those numbers, Chair,

**ANSWER**

There were 234 senior executives in 2017.

As at 30 June 2020, there were 296 senior executives, representing 0.28 per cent of the Department's total staff in 2020.

**QUESTION NO 18**  
**PAGE NO 36**

**The CHAIR:** Can I come to you then, Secretary, on this question: I saw on the website that the Department of Education has established a panel of external service providers for student engagement and so forth. What is the accreditation process for that?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We can provide the details of that accreditation process on notice.

**ANSWER**

A list of prequalified service providers was established in 2019 to assist schools locate services and agencies that offered programs to improve student attendance and engagement. The Department followed NSW government's procurement processes to create this panel.

The service providers offer a variety of services and may include the delivery of targeted wellbeing programs based on the identified needs of the school community.

The Prequalification Scheme Agreement states that services are to be provided by suitably qualified professionals. This was part of the assessment criteria. The providers' staff were required to hold post school qualifications in a relevant discipline or have appropriate experience. For example, family support services are expected to have staff with social work Certificates, Diplomas or Bachelor Degrees, depending on grade and level of roles. Allied health services are expected to have staff with relevant various health qualifications, such as Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees in Allied Health, or allied health specialties such as speech therapy, occupational health, community health, child and adolescent health etc.

In addition, providers were required to demonstrate that personnel have the knowledge, skills and experience to provide engagement and attendance services to children and young people, including:

- Knowledge of cognitive, emotional and behavioural development of children and young people.
- Supporting children and young people using evidence-based interventions.
- Well-developed interpersonal and communication skills, including report writing.
- Ability to work collaboratively with school executive, teachers, parents/carers and other key stakeholders to deliver evidence-based services for students.

Appropriate cultural knowledge and skills to engage with specific groups of young people in ways that are culturally relevant, safe and appropriate.

**QUESTION NO 19**  
**PAGE NO 37-38**

**The CHAIR:** Can someone tell me about Tomorrow Man? I have looked up the eight or so people involved there and only one of them has any sort of mental health or educational qualifications.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to look into that and provide you details on notice, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Can you also look at Gotcha4Life? Their principal is Gus Worland, who lists his qualifications to go into our schools and talk to our students about mental health as a TV and radio personality, award-winning Toshiba salesman and friend of Hugh Jackman.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We can look into that, too.

**Mr SCOTT:** Chair, we will look into Gotcha4Life. I am sorry for that student if that student felt that it was an unsatisfactory day spent and he did not get benefit out of it. I would not want to speak for all students and I would not like to speak for all who experience that program. You mentioned Gus Worland. I do note that Gus Worland has quite a high profile out there and has spoken extensively about men and suicide, and that he is available as a speaker and has spoken in schools. We have many people with a profile who go into schools and speak about the issues that are of importance. But let us do some work on Gotcha4Life and the work of Mr Worland and come back to you on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Just on the basics of feedback, is there any surveying of students to see what they thought of the session and whether it was beneficial to them or harmful?

**Mr SCOTT:** We can see if that happens. That is not unknown in our schools to get student feedback because we want—

**The CHAIR:** Should it not be standard practice?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, I think it is a fair point, Chair. Let us see what the custom and practice is. We want these programs to be meaningful and effective for students. I think you will find, almost invariably, on any program that is put on offer you might find some students who found it was wonderful and appropriate to their needs and you will find other students who were dismissive of it.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, but should this not be part of rigorous evaluation—to try to find out what they are saying? What evaluation reports have you got about Tomorrow Man and Gotcha4Life?

**Mr SCOTT:** Let me check on that, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Can you take it on notice?

**Mr SCOTT:** I think this is what the School Success Model helps us to do. It helps us to identify what are those interventions that are being made at a school level that are helping us see demonstrable lift in areas like wellbeing, student attendance, student engagement and the like. I think that will help us help schools to be discerning in the selections that they make.

**The CHAIR:** I am not saying do not run these programs, but I am putting to you proper accreditation arrangements, evaluation and the evidence base that we are trying to apply in other parts of the system because this stuff is critical. This stuff is important.

**Mr SCOTT:** I take that on notice, Chair.

## **ANSWER**

Principals have flexibility to engage organisations that provide services and information that meets the schools learning and wellbeing needs in consultation with their school community.

*Tomorrow Man* state that they offer programs in secondary schools, TAFE, universities, workplaces and sporting clubs which offer opportunities to generate conversation and to redefine a healthier version of masculinity.

*Gotcha4Life* state that they are a not-for-profit Foundation that funds educational workshops, training programs and products focusing on mental fitness. *Gotcha4Life* is connected to a range of training workshops. *Gotcha4Life* are associated with *Tomorrow Man*.

*Tomorrow Man* and *Gotcha4Life* are not on the existing prequalified external providers list and the Department of Education does not hold information about the educational or mental health qualifications of this organisation. The Department does not centrally hold evaluation reports on the programs offered by *Tomorrow Man* and *Gotcha4Life*.

Individual schools may choose to undertake student surveys of programs and services provided by organisations such as *Tomorrow Man* and *Gotcha4Life*. This information may assist the school in planning future initiatives.

**QUESTION NO 20**  
**PAGE NO 44**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Not on that day, no. I did tell him that I was going out to Wee Waa. Sam Farroway was with me, but, as I said, I met with the principals of both Wee Waa Public and Wee Waa High. I met with the P&C representatives for both Wee Waa Public and Wee Waa High and a member of the local media was there as well.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And when were you first made aware of issues?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will probably have to take that on notice. It has been for some months. As I said, there has been a lot of work that we have been doing out at that school with cleaning the mould, repairing areas that we thought were the cause of concern. It is not far from where I live, so obviously I am aware through local channels when there are issues at schools within the north-west given that I live in Gunnedah, but I have known about it for some months.

**ANSWER**

A staff member at Wee Waa High School lodged an incident report in response to ill health perceived to be caused by mould exposure. There were further reports in July 2020 and the Department prepared advice for the Minister in late August 2020.

School Infrastructure NSW and the Health and Safety Directorate have worked closely since then on an intensive Incident Action Plan.

**QUESTION NO 21**  
**PAGE NO 44 - 45**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How long are the students learning remotely for?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take that on notice. Obviously last year there was a period of about seven weeks where we had a lot of students across the State learning remotely although schools remained open.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I mean at the end of last year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take that on notice in terms of the specific days, but between when we moved them from that site to the Wee Waa Public School—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you provide us with any information on whether additional digital devices were provided to students—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I can take that on notice, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —and additional internet access?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We will obviously look at what devices might have been lent out from the school as well, but we will take that on notice. I will see what I can get for you. That is fine.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure. What medical assessments have been undertaken of students and staff?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I think I will take that on notice. Obviously we have engaged with Health and relevant work health and safety experts in relation to that particular school. If individual members of staff or students have had their own health concerns or medical treatment, that is a matter for them. But I will see what I can find out in terms of any advice we have in relation to that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you, Mr Scott. I will come back to it with you later this afternoon. Minister, how many students have left the school since the mould was discovered?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I will have to take that on notice. I do not have the figures. I would also probably pre-empt that response by saying that we would need to have a look at whether movements were based on that or what normal school movements would be in terms of enrolments. You would understand that that fluctuates from time to time in communities anyway, but I will take it on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have exit interviews been conducted with those families?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take that on notice. I do not think we have got that information.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is that a policy now—that exit interviews should be taken with families who move from schools?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Leave a school?

**Mr SCOTT:** We have a lot of migration of families from school to school. As a general course, we are not conducting exit interviews as students migrate from school to school across the State.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But this is not a general migration. This is—

**Mr SCOTT:** Well, you are asking if we have a policy—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you are also making an assumption. That is why I said I would like to look at the figures of the numbers of students who have left. You have to be a bit careful to make the assumption that they are leaving for that reason, but we will take the figures on notice and have a look.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That is why I am asking you if you conducted exit interviews.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Whether they are dramatically different—as I said, populations fluctuate. School numbers fluctuate from year to year in terms of enrolment across all of our schools. You just have to be careful there not to conflate two issues, which is why I want to look at the figures and come back to you on those.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have been told that quite a few have left the school as a result of this situation.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, I want to get the facts in relation to that by taking those numbers on notice, because I am not privy to what you have been told.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps you might want to take this on notice as well: What is the net reduction in school funding as a result of the loss of these students?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We will take that on notice as well. It is all related in terms of the funding models and the numbers of students, so I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, of course, and obviously there are flow-on effects if siblings are lost as well. This is a serious concern for the school community. It has been raised with me and that is why I am raising it with you, Minister.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, I will take the numbers on notice and come back to you.

## **ANSWER**

There was no impact on Year 12 students learning remotely, due to the HSC examinations. Year 11 students were learning remotely for three days, while students from Years 7 to 10 were learning remotely for three weeks and three days.

Digital devices were provided to students on request. 30 laptops were issued to Year 11 and 12 students and 100 laptops were provided for students in Years 7 to 10.

Any students who required additional internet access were provided with internet dongles, if requested. Only 10 dongles were needed by students.

Individuals have been treated by their chosen medical practitioner or treated at hospital as needed.

The Department of Education has been in collaboration with Hunter New England Health in planning a health monitoring study.

The student enrolment at the school has remained stable with 142 students in 2020 and 143 students in 2021.

A total of 56 students left Wee Waa High School during 2020, including 19 senior students for local employment. The equivalent number also enrolled at the school over the year. This is not an unusual number for schools in this area.

The Department of Education has no information to indicate that any families have left due to mould being discovered at the school.

No formal exit interviews are conducted but anecdotal evidence on post school destinations indicates employment or attending boarding schools as the main reasons.

There has been no funding loss due to any change in overall student enrolment numbers.

**QUESTION NO 22**  
**PAGE NO 45 - 46**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, why was Berry Patch's service approval not immediately suspended as is permitted under national laws following the death of Arianna Maragol?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I say in relation to Berry Patch, firstly, the deepest sympathies and condolences to the Maragol family. This is an incredibly serious and tragic issue. As the member is well aware, this matter is currently undergoing various legal proceedings. I will ask Ms Owen if she wants to provide any comment, but what I will say before that is clearly there are coronial processes in place. I do not want to have anything said in this Committee hearing prejudiced or have any impact on that, so we may need to take some of these questions on notice and seek some legal advice given the very serious nature of the incident but also the ongoing and complex legal processes that are underway.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, then I will come back to it this afternoon in my policy questions, Ms Owen. Thank you very much. Why did it take the Department of Education two years following Arianna's death to put in place additional conditions on the approval?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said in my earlier response, Ms Houssos, this is a very serious issue and incident. It is one that we take extremely seriously. There are legal proceedings are underway, including coronial inquests. I am not going to put this Committee or the department in a position where commentary is made in a budget estimates hearing about something that is incredibly complex and serious, so I will take that question on notice and get legal advice in terms of how much information I can provide the Committee in line with that due process.

**ANSWER**

As legal proceedings are underway on this specific and highly complex matter, I am unable to comment further.

**QUESTION NO 23**  
**PAGE NO 46**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** What proportion of three- and four-year-olds currently access those services for free preschool?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

In 2020, over 38,500 children aged three years and above enrolled in a community or mobile preschool were able to access free preschool for some or all of the days they were enrolled.

Depending on their circumstances, services may have received financial support through the COVID-19 Free Preschool Funding Program and/or the Australian Government's JobKeeper Payment Scheme (or other income) to support the delivery of free preschool.

In 2021 and as at 11 March 2021, over 90 per cent of eligible community and mobile preschools have opted in to the COVID-19 Free Preschool Funding Program. Further information on preschool fees will be collected as part of the 2021 Annual Preschool Census. This will allow for further analysis of how many children aged three and above accessed free preschool at community and mobile preschools in 2021.

**QUESTION NO 24**  
**PAGE NO 47**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** The community has also been seeking a variety of data—the OCHRE data. I think they have not got the tables 12, 13, 19 and 20 from the OCHRE reports since 2016. Will you assist in providing that data?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Look, I am happy to take that on notice. Obviously as a former Aboriginal affairs Minister, I am well aware—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I understand.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —of what you are referring to. That OCHRE data—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I am okay if you take that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will take it on notice. If there are things that we can do to provide support or information to the community, we are happy to look at that.

**ANSWER**

Aboriginal Affairs NSW has responsibility for reporting against OCHRE. The published OCHRE report which is available at <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/reports/state-and-local-government/ochre-review-report-28-october-2019>, provides data up to 2017 for Tables 12, 13, 19 and 20.

The NSW Ombudsman monitors OCHRE and to date has not requested data for 2018 or 2019.

**QUESTION NO 25**  
**PAGE NO 47 - 48**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** How did Vishva Hindu Parishad, which is a right-wing Hindu organisation that is considered a military extremist religious organisation by the CIA, find themselves in New South Wales public schools?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am not aware of that provider but I am very happy to find that information out for you, see what we have and provide it on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, what response do you have to the fact that this extremist right-wing organisation, listed as such by the CIA in their world handbook, is currently providing SRE courses in Toongabbie Public School and William Dean Public School?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As Ms Harrisson said, we have taken that question on notice in terms of the specifics of that particular service provider. It is not one that I am familiar with either and I would like to check the validity of that and come back to the Committee, if that is okay.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Given the concern about attacks from extremist right-wing elements in the Hindu community on members of the Sikh community and other minorities in western Sydney, will you treat this as a matter of urgency?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Absolutely. We have said we would take that on notice and get advice in relation to it. I am very happy to come back to the Committee in due course and to yourself as soon as I can access that information.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Alright. Is there anybody vetting what SRE providers are actually saying to schoolkids at Toongabbie Public School and William Dean Public School? Is anyone checking whether or not extremist, hate-filled material is part of the course?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think Mr Dizdar might be able to give you some practical examples of how SRE operates in those matters in our schools. Teachers are present in those classes. Murat, would you like to provide some information on how SRE classes operate in our public schools?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** What monitoring is available?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Mr Shoebridge, I think we have taken the specifics on notice and hopefully we can get that detail to you.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Perhaps you can provide on notice whether or not there was any of that oversight of the SRE that was being "taught", if I could put that in inverted commas, by Vishva Hindu Parishad in those two public schools in western Sydney.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Let us definitely take that on notice. I wanted to also add that we have expert personnel support in the State office that principals can also contact for advice around SRE.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Then how on earth is this organisation allowed to teach SRE in public schools? How did that happen?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, Mr Shoebridge, we will take the specifics of that particular provider and those details on notice and come back to you as soon as we can with an update.

## **ANSWER**

Providers of Special Religious Education/Special Education in Ethics are approved by the Minister for Education. On 19 October 1998, Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia was approved to teach Special Religious Education.

Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia are not known as an organisation of concern and are not identified as a terrorist organisation in New South Wales.

Schools retain duty of care, including for student supervision, health, safety and wellbeing, during Special Religious Education.

Parents/carers who would like to discuss the content of lessons, or have any concerns regarding the delivery of Special Religious Education, should contact the approved provider. The school can provide contact details for the local representative.

**QUESTION NO 26**  
**PAGE NO 48**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, how many New South Wales public schools ran tenders to operate out-of-school-hours [OOSH] care?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask Mr Manning but we might have to take that on notice.

**Mr MANNING:** We will definitely need to take on notice the exact number.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We do not have the figure with us but we will get the exact number.

**ANSWER**

From 1 January 2020 to 15 March 2021, the Department of Education prepared 168 tenders for before and after school care services on NSW public school sites, for both new services and for existing services that had reached licence expiry, significantly increasing access to care for parents, carers and their children.

**QUESTION NO 27**  
**PAGE NO 50**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It was really useful. So this is about improving teaching practice and helping our teachers when it comes to the teaching of phonics.

**The CHAIR:** I will come to the question of the opt-in. It is still only an opt-in for non-government schools. Shouldn't we be applying this across all sectors?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Obviously it will be in place in all of our government schools as part of our School Success Model. We did have a number of Catholic schools that wanted to issue the check and assessment as well. My understanding is that we shared that with them. I do not have the exact numbers off the top of my head. Ms Harrisson might know.

**Ms HARRISSON:** We can absolutely provide that further detail on notice.

**ANSWER**

In 2020, the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check was trialled with 568 NSW schools which included 521 NSW public schools and 47 Catholic schools.

In 2021, the Phonics Screening Check will be mandatory for all Year 1 students in NSW government schools.

No formal arrangements have been put in place for the non-government sector for 2021 as yet.

Phonics is mandatory in the new K-2 English curriculum, which must be delivered in every NSW school.

**QUESTION NO 28**  
**PAGE NO 53**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Was that lodged—and I am happy for you to take this on notice—prior to August 2020?

**Mr MANNING:** I would need to come back specifically on that one.

**ANSWER**

Yes.

**QUESTION NO 29**  
**PAGE NO 54**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Are you in a position to quantify how much you think you have saved in senior executive expenses in the last 12 months or in the last budget cycle?

**Mr SCOTT:** I could take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education spent almost \$10.8 billion on employee related expenses in the 2019-20 financial year, and has a budget allocation of more than \$11.4 billion for employee related expenses in 2020-21.

The organisational changes to the Department in 2020 were intended to support improvements to the delivery of education outcomes, including through school improvement and skills reform. As such, the changes were not driven by a savings or efficiency requirement.

**QUESTION NO 30**  
**PAGE NO 56, 58**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Yes, and there is no dispute about a person's entitlement to that. But we have established that there are 17 SES people in the past year who got paid the 38 weeks.

**Mr SCOTT:** I believe that is right. That is my information.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Do you have a total cost as to how much that was for that 38?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will get that information for you.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Could you?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will put that on notice.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** You will take it on notice—great.

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Well, is it band 2 and band 1?

**Mr SCOTT:** It is 17 across bands 1 and 2.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Are you able to break them down by band 2 and band 1?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, I can do that on notice for you.

**ANSWER**

17 existing PSSE employees were terminated as part of the placement process for the Department's 2020 restructure. The 38 week termination payment for these 17 PSSE employees totalled \$3,058,528.

Band	Number	38 week total
Band 1	12	\$1,922,230
Band 2	5	\$1,136,298
TOTAL		\$3,058,528

**QUESTION NO 31**  
**PAGE NO 64**

**The CHAIR:** Well, where are they? Who represents them?

**Mr MANNING:** There is an executive director who runs that unit underneath, in the service planning space. There is a lot of research that goes into the designs that lend themselves to that. But as Mr Scott said, what we are rolling out is flexibility. So we are not providing just large open spaces and forcing teachers to use just large open spaces. They are spaces that can be closed into single classrooms. They are spaces that can lend some flexibility with some activity spaces in addition to the classroom space and allow the teachers to work on the flexibility they need to. So for the right methods of teaching which are in that classroom environment, we can provide directly a classroom environment. For those who need a little bit more space or want to do team teaching or a whole range of other things, the flexibility is there to allow them to do that. So we are not precluding single classrooms and, in fact, all of the models that we are rolling out allow that.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Can you provide to the Committee on notice the research documents that make these points?

**Mr MANNING:** Absolutely.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education aims to provide flexibility in our projects so that all teaching styles can be accommodated.

The see attached documentation at TAB A.

**QUESTION NO 32**  
**PAGE NO 65 - 67**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Secretary, if you have this information, that would be most useful, otherwise perhaps your Chief People Officer might be in a position to help. Do you have any member of the senior executive service who is working for the department retained via a sponsored visa?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will have to take that on notice.

**Ms CACHIA:** Take it on notice. I believe not.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Yes, I place it on the record. It is not to do with him. But let's just establish some facts here. He was engaged last September, is that correct?

**Ms HARRISSON:** No, it was not last September. He joined us I think it would have been in 2018, but I can provide the specific details on notice.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** So he has been retained on a sponsored visa for two years.

**Ms HARRISSON:** He is on a sponsored 457 visa. We can provide the details on notice. I do not know the specific end date of that visa.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** He is on a 457, you said?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I believe so, yes. But I can confirm that on notice.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** To be fair, I think the 457 is that you are meant to do a skills test process separate to the open recruitment.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Not in the recruitment.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Not in the recruitment process. That is pretty clear guidance from the Federal Department of Immigration. Can you explain to us, how did you skills test for the appointment here?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We can provide the details of that recruitment on notice. We followed the advice from HR and worked closely with the Department of Immigration, as you would expect us to do, in ensuring that that was an appropriate visa. The visa was granted by the Department of Immigration and Mr Kidson has been an asset to the department since he arrived.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** So you are not retaining any labour hire arrangement or anything that has acted as the sponsor of Mr Kidson.

**Ms HARRISSON:** No.

**Mr SCOTT:** No.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Are you absolutely sure of that?

**Ms HARRISSON:** That is my understanding, yes. I am happy to check that and come back to you, absolutely.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Could you take it on notice and check as to whether any labour hire arrangement was used in that respect?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, of course.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Is it intended that Mr Kidson will move to a permanent visa or not, or is that a matter for him?

**Mr SCOTT:** I think you will find that is a matter for him, is it not?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** It is just because there are limits on the ability of the public service to engage temporary labour, as I understood it, but I could be wrong.

**Mr SCOTT:** We are happy to take these questions on notice and check them out and come back to you.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** I have asked for you to take them on notice.

**Mr SCOTT:** We will take them on notice.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** That all depends on how long you sponsored him for as to whether this is hypothetical or not because if he has to renew his visa since his engagement in 2018 then you would probably be required to go through another labour market testing process.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to take that on notice. I do not believe he has been required to renew his visa yet. His visa was for a period that extends past today's date.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Mr Scott, prior to Mr Kidson's employment has the department ever previously hired someone under a 457 visa?

**Mr SCOTT:** I cannot recall. The department has been going for the best part of 150 years—I have been here for four. I am not aware of another case, but—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Could you take that one on notice?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, we can take that on notice for sure.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** But was it you who signed the application form?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will have to check on who signed off the paperwork; I am not sure of that.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** But, to the best of my knowledge, Mr Kidson is the only person in the SES—

**Mr SCOTT:** I am not aware of another, but if you have one by all means let me know.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** I might.

**Ms CACHIA:** We will investigate and come back on that.

## ANSWER

Mr Marc Kidson, Director, Systems Reform, PSSE band 1, is a senior executive that is retained via a sponsored visa.

Mr Marc Kidson, an external and international candidate was recommended for the Director, Systems Reform, PSSE band 1 role following a comparative assessment process. There were no recommended candidates for the recruitment pool. This recruitment and visa sponsorship recommendation was approved by the Secretary on 10 May 2018.

Mr Kidson was then nominated by the Department for a four year, Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS – subclass 482) visa under the approved Standard Business Sponsorship with the Department of Home Affairs. Mr Kidson's occupation code and country of origin did not require a skills assessment to apply to the Department of Home Affairs for the Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482).

The Department of Education is the direct employer and visa sponsor of Mr Kidson.

Mr Kidson's four year, Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS – subclass 482) visa was granted on 15 June 2018 by the Department of Home Affairs and was granted until 15 June 2022.

The Department of Education can advise that records, verified by the Department of Home Affairs, indicate between 2014 and 2017 the Department did not have a Standard Business Sponsorship (SBS) approval in place for 457 visa nominations and visa applications.

The Department of Education has not historically retained data on 457 visa sponsorship of employees.

**QUESTION NO 33**  
**PAGE NO 68 - 69**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** I ask because these are not cheap arrangements. What is the cost of this secondment?

**Ms CACHIA:** I will have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** If you can take that on notice and if you are in a position to provide us a common agreement that would be helpful too.

**Ms CACHIA:** I will be.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Is that, to the best of your knowledge, the only secondment that is currently in place from a firm like Deloitte?

**Mr SCOTT:** We will have to take that on notice. We have got to balance all this up because I think, yes, there will be a cost involved in having a staff member but there is a cost involved in not having an Executive Director of People and Culture. We are undergoing a lot of change and significant pressure on the organisation, so we have to balance that up as well. The only thing I would say in commenting on that line of questioning is that, yes, a short-term contract will have its costs involved, but there are times, though, that we have been able to take up people out of consultancy firms and we are not paying them any additional money to what we would normally be paying to fill that position. Sometimes the firms can feel that it is of benefit for that staff member and for us. At times we can be looking to fill a position and we have had access to some outstanding executive talent for periods of time from consultancy firms, paying them no more than we would normally pay for those positions.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** I appreciate that context. On notice, if we are able to get for the last two years the number of secondments akin to that arrangement that the department has engaged in that would be helpful, if that is possible, Mr Secretary.

**Mr SCOTT:** Sure.

**ANSWER**

Under Division 5, Section 27 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* all contracts above \$150,000 (including GST) with the private sector are required to be declared. The declarations are made using [www.tenders.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tenders.nsw.gov.au). This information is publicly accessible.

In relation to engagements with any service provider for work under \$150,000, this information is not held centrally and providing it would require an unreasonable and substantial diversion of resources.

**QUESTION NO 34**  
**PAGE NO 69 - 71**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** And that Associate Director of Media reports to the Executive Director of Reform and External Relations. Is that correct?

**Mr SCOTT:** I will have to check the organisational structure on that.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Can you provide to us on notice a copy of the advertisement, when it was advertised and when the advertisement was removed? Is that possible?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, sure, we can do that.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Okay, Mr Secretary, can you check for me on notice as to whether or not there were any conversations between anyone in your office and anyone from the Minister's office?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, sure. But I should also reflect on the fact that there was strong support from the Minister's office and clear understanding from the Minister's office that we were running a standard open process on this.

Yes.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Did anyone from Mr Lee's office speak to anyone from your office about this?

**Mr SCOTT:** No, not that I am aware of.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Do you mind checking?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, sure.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But there was probably a character or reference check at some point in the recruitment process. I assume that would have happened. I am not criticising that, but—

**Mr SCOTT:** There certainly will have been a reference check, but did Mr Lee or anyone from his office speak to me about it? Certainly not. And anyone in my office—well, I can check that.

**ANSWER**

The Associate Director of Media role was recruited through an open, external and competitive merit selection process. The role was advertised from 10 September to 18 September 2020; a copy of the advertisement is attached. The role reports to the Director of Media. There were no conversations about the recruitment between the Secretary or Secretary's Office and Minister Lee's. External referee checks were conducted and confirmed the candidate's overwhelming experience and capability for the role.

**QUESTION NO 35**  
**PAGE NO 72**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** The concept of Connected Communities, the concept of different departments working together to deal with the complex needs in a community like that, is great. But as we have seen in Brighter Futures and a series of other projects that were meant to bring together multiple agencies, when it comes to changing the resource mix and to genuine inter-agency cooperation, it seems to fall down on the ground. It is not working in Walgett right now. What will change?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Mr Shoebridge, our evaluation of the Connected Communities Strategy shows that in some locations it has worked really strongly and there are lessons to take there. We are in the process of recruiting for an executive principal. It is my intention to visit the school in the near future and meet with the Dharawal Elders as well as introducing our new executive principal to the school community, pending a merit selection process, and then to help the school reference group work with the inter-agency partners in that location. We have a good mapping of who those partners are, so it is important that we bring them together and focus on working together for the benefit of our young people in that town.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Those are all good statements. The problem is there is no mechanism in place for any of Education, Health or DCJ to be the lead agency and to direct the resources where they need to go. Yes, you can bring people around the table and have a chat but this is not working and there is no redirection of resources. If the only answer is recruiting another executive principal—who will join a list of some 20 in the past 20 years—that is hardly a solution for Walgett, is it?

**Mr DIZDAR:** The certainty of the leadership in the high school context is really important. We have been able to do that at the primary school. Our executive principal at the primary school, now in their second year, is getting good traction in that school context. I am not proclaiming that is the only thing that needs to be done to help progress our adolescents in the high school to where they need to be. What I am saying is that it will certainly be important to be able to then work with the school reference group and with the agencies in the town. Our Connected Communities directorate, our executive director and the directors there have mapped that really well. We will come together and we do need to come together to make sure we put our efforts together.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Okay. Given the time, if there is anything that is going to change then could you provide that on notice? That is what I am really asking.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Sure.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government's Connected Communities Strategy positions schools as community hubs. It broadens the influence of the community and school leadership, to play a role in the delivery of key services, supporting children and young people from birth, through school and into further training, study and employment.

The governance structure at a Connected Communities school features a Local School Reference Group (LSRG).

The LSRG is the agreed governance structure in all Connected Communities schools. The LSRG is chaired by the President of the local Aboriginal Education

Consultative Group with other membership positions made up of the President of the Parents and Citizens Association (if one is established); parents; Elders; key community organisation representatives and the Executive Principal. There is a limited number of positions and schools invite members through an EOI process.

The focus of the LSRG is to provide advice to the Executive Principal about initiatives and/or programs that meet the needs of the students and reflect the key deliverables of the Strategy. The Group also works with the Executive Principal to unpack issues so as to gain workable solutions and positive outcomes.

Parents, carers and community members can use that forum, through their respective representatives or through the Chair, to raise any ideas, concerns or community activities.

The responsibilities of a Connected Communities Executive Principal differ from that of other public school principals as the position is not only the highest level of principalship in the organisation, it also features high level collaboration and involvement across government and non-government agencies and the community, particularly with the school's LSRG.

Mechanisms are in place to firm up service agreements across government and non-government agencies that are responsive to student and school needs.

At a systems level, the Executive Director, Connected Communities, chairs a Senior Officers Interagency Working Party. This high-level group meets throughout the year, or out-of-session to ensure each location where the Connected Communities Strategy is being implemented, has agreed and sustainable services and programs in place that represent its needs and expectations.

**QUESTION NO 36**  
**PAGE NO 74**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** They are not real chuffed with the four minutes you have got them so far, are they? The Teachers Federation delivered a report only a few weeks ago detailing the massive amount of overwork that teachers have and your answer is that you have saved them four minutes.

**Mr SCOTT:** I have details here and I am happy to come back on notice on the initiatives that we have in place that have saved hours across the system for principals, for teachers and for admin staff. The further work on reducing the administrative burden, the task force we have had on that and the initiatives we have put in place have been very well received by our staff. I am happy to put those on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department has a program of work to reduce the administrative burden on schools which has delivered a number of improvements for teachers over the last three years.

The program includes embedding a school-centric delivery approach across the Department, ensuring solutions that the Department rolls out to meet school needs, are coordinated across the Department, and avoid unnecessary duplication or effort.

Each small improvement to the business processes, which on its own might seem inconsequential, can add up to significant time savings for staff.

To date, the reducing the administrative burden program has saved an estimated one million hours across the system, i.e., approximately 500 hours for schools broken down to 105 hours for principals, 10 hours for teachers, and 25 hours for administration staff per year.

This year, there will be a strengthened focus on reducing administrative burden for schools as highlighted within the recently announced School Success Model.

Ambitious targets will be in place to reduce the red tape for principals and teachers by 20 per cent. In phase 2 of the model in 2022, administrative burden will be further reduced by simplifying the school budget and improving system wide reporting.

**QUESTION NO 37**  
**PAGE NO 78**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you very much. Following on from that line of questioning, can you provide on notice a breakdown of the tutors? How many are retired teachers? How many are casual teachers? How many are tutors? How many are university graduates? I think that is all of them.

**ANSWER**

The information below is based on payroll data as of 11 March 2021 and may not include all staff employed in the program.

Schools have employed 2,252 qualified teachers; 1,740 are temporary teachers and 512 are casual teachers. This number may include teachers that have previously separated from the Department and have since applied and obtained a new Approval to Teach.

Schools have employed 33 tutors (educator non-teacher) which include:

- three qualified teachers without current NESAs accreditation (includes teachers who may have retired or left the profession);
- one NESAs accredited teacher who is not an existing Department of Education employee and is yet to receive their Department Approval to Teach; and
- 29 are preservice teachers (student currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Teaching or Master of Teaching, Initial Teacher Education or equivalent program).

**QUESTION NO 38**  
**PAGE NO 79**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** On page 19 it refers loan out-of-school-hours care census, Is that correct?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes. I think this is the survey that we were running last year and I think we will be doing further outreach again this year.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Do you have a date for that?

**Mr SCOTT:** I think—in the first term.

**Mr MANNING:** The beginning of term two.

**Mr SCOTT:** The beginning of term two, sorry.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The beginning of term two. Okay Are you able to provide on notice what the questions are that are asked?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, if it has been finalised, but it really is an attempt to identify any unmet demand.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, excellent. And so I do notice that in the inaugural one there were 1,259 of roughly 1,600 services that participated, but that went down to 809. Are you able to provide figures on notice, if needed, of how many participated in term three 2020?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, sure.

**ANSWER**

In consulting with Before and After School Care (BASC) stakeholders, the Department of Education currently undertakes surveys of parents at NSW public schools to ascertain their requirement for BASC services. The Department also conducts an annual census of approved BASC providers in NSW to determine their capability to deliver BASC services to meet parent demand.

The Department's BASC Program Team is currently prioritising the development of a parent survey that is due for release at the beginning of Term 2, 2021. The survey questions are currently under review, and will be made available once the survey goes live.

For the census of BASC providers in NSW held in Term 3, 2020, a total of 953 services responded.

**QUESTION NO 39**  
**PAGE NO 80**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can you tell me the criteria for determining where the hubs are going to be?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, Mr Manning might be able to talk a bit more about the hubs.

**Mr MANNING:** It is where there is perceived to be most demand but where the school does not have an ability to meet that demand within its existing infrastructure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Why is one at Macarthur Girls High School, given that the Minister has previously told us that there is no need for after-school care at a high school?

**Mr MANNING:** I will need to take that specific one on notice, but it may well be that it is serving a whole range of primary schools, and that may be the most appropriate place to put it on the site.

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, it might just be where there was space, I think you will find.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, absolutely.

**ANSWER**

Macarthur Girls High School is one of the 47 schools across NSW that will open an Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) hub by May 2021, as part of the NSW Government's \$120 million investment over four years to expand access to before and after school care for public primary school children.

On occasions, high schools may offer transport-based OSHC services for nearby primary school children, where there is local unmet demand and limited availability of suitable space in nearby primary schools and off-site OSHC services.

**QUESTION NO 40**  
**PAGE NO 80**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Specifically I want to ask you about the Coonabarabran High School toilet upgrades. In fact, I understand there is a series of toilet upgrades. I am informed that they are going to cost \$600,000. How many toilets are we getting at Coonabarabran High School for \$600,000?

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps you could tell us how many are going to be at Gladesville Public School for the same amount?

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, we will take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes. Let me see—I think we might have a few others.

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, and it might well be—I think in our answer on notice we will provide detail about exactly what is being provided. I imagine it is a fairly broad descriptor for the work that is taking place.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps at Padstow North Public School. I might have a few more on notice.

**Mr SCOTT:** Sure.

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education will refurbish:

- four sets of toilets at Coonabarabran High School, including two sets for boys and two sets for girls;
- two sets of toilets at Padstow North Public School, including one set for boys and one set for girls, and
- four sets of toilets at Gladesville Public School, including two sets for boys and two sets for girls.

**QUESTION NO 41**  
**PAGE NO 80 - 81**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I will move on. Mr Manning, are you able to provide us, on notice, a list of the schools that have had business cases prepared and lodged with Treasury?

**Mr MANNING:** I think earlier we undertook to update you in terms of the priority planning list.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, that is right, and so—

**Mr MANNING:** So, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I would, when you take that on notice, refer to some questions that were provided to me, which I just cannot seem to locate right at the moment, but when I did ask for a list of these previously—I think it might have been in July last year—

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you very much to my colleague. I asked how many school infrastructure business cases had been approved by the Premier. I asked a series of questions about business cases, and I was referred back to how individual projects will be communicated to school communities through regular project updates. It talks about looking at the school infrastructure website. We have had a very close look at the school infrastructure website. We cannot find a list on there of schools that have been promised upgrades that have had those lodged with the business case, so I just implore you to please provide that list as a list of schools on notice?

**Mr MANNING:** Sure. I will provide that on notice. I think the advice you originally received was that there were nine business cases that have been completed?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** No, I did not get a number in any of these that I have asked.

**Mr MANNING:** I am happy to provide that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** In fact, they referred back to an earlier non-answer that I got, so if you could provide us with a list of those, that would be very helpful.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

NSW Treasury manages business cases and the NSW Treasurer is the approval authority, not the NSW Premier.

The Department of Education undertakes robust planning to plan carefully for new and upgraded schools. Early planning work for new and upgraded schools includes a range of preparatory work to inform the submission of a Business Case including, but not limited to:

- consideration and studies of demographic trends;
- an assessment of education requirements;
- an assessment of the condition of the existing school buildings or new sites;
- a review of catchment boundaries;
- identification of any heritage or cultural requirements;
- a review of any potential site constraints;

- ensuring appropriate transport links; and
- identifying potential partnership opportunities.

The timeline for preparation of a business can vary based on the factors listed above.

**QUESTION NO 42**  
**PAGE NO 81 - 83**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have not come to the most egregious example, which is Bulli High School—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Saving it for last, weren't we?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —which apparently now has an example of \$6.2 million projected maintenance liability. It is genuinely your testimony to this Committee that none of that—that was at zero at 2019—

**Mr MANNING:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —and then it magically popped over to \$6,248,716?

**Mr MANNING:** Okay, I would need to take that exact one on notice, but if that school was built or the entire school roof was replaced 30 years ago, then that school roof would be due to be replaced now, and that may well be that cost, absolutely.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, I have limited time. Perhaps just to end the debate and the back and forth, can you provide on notice a list of the projects that come under Bulli High School. Actually, I am not going to provide specifics. I will say any school that now has a maintenance liability in 2021 above \$1 million—if you can provide me with a list of those and a breakdown of what those projected liabilities are for?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** In the meantime, perhaps you can provide me with the breakdown for Wollongong Public School, Maroubra Junction Public School, Manly West Public School, Randwick Public School and Bulli High School?

**ANSWER**

The Department has a well-defined maintenance strategy that ensures all statutory and preventive maintenance is completed as a priority to ensure our schools are safe and compliant. At the end of the 2019/20 financial year there was no backlog of maintenance outstanding at any NSW schools.

The Department has a large property portfolio and maintenance work will always be required.

Each financial year the Department undertakes an assessment of the maintenance requirement in all NSW schools based on a predictive model. Schools with a projected maintenance requirement above \$1 million for the 2020/21 financial year include Bulli High School, Wollongong Public School, Randwick Public School and Crestwood High School.

Maroubra Junction Public School and Manly West Public School have a projected maintenance requirement of less than \$1 million for this period.

Maintenance items will vary from school to school and can include work on; walls, painting, roof repairs, ceilings and soffits, floor coverings, windows, doors and shutters, fencing, gates and grilles, retaining walls, external areas and sewerage systems.

**QUESTION NO 43**  
**PAGE NO 84 - 85**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Let me just ask a really quick series of questions before my time expires. Have the terms of reference been set? Will they be publicly available? Are you taking submissions? When will it report? Will it be released publicly?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I think, on indulgence, Chair, the Hon. Courtney Houssos can be given a little bit of extra time to ask these questions so that the witness can actually come forward and hear them.

**Ms CACHIA:** I can answer it in part and then I will take the rest on notice and get back to you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure.

**Ms CACHIA:** We have consulted with the Teachers Federation, the principals association—the secondary principals and primary principals—and so they are aware of the terms of reference. We are talking to all of those parties. The question of whether those terms will be publicly available, I will have to come back to you on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And are you taking submissions?

**Ms CACHIA:** Yes, potentially.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. And when will you report?

**Ms CACHIA:** I do not know that at this stage.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you have a general idea?

**Ms CACHIA:** I will come back to you on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Will the report be released publicly?

**Ms CACHIA:** I will come back to you on notice on that as well.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you tell me what the title of the internal discussion paper was?

**Ms CACHIA:** I will have to come back to you on notice on that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure. Can you provide me with—

**Ms CACHIA:** Sorry, I actually think it is something, a name like its terms of reference or a paper regarding the very name of the exercise, which is rural and remote incentives review.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure. Can you provide me—I assume this will need to be on notice—a breakdown of the total cost of incentives provided to rural teachers under the different categories that is currently available for the past three financial years?

**Ms CACHIA:** Yes, I will have to come back to you on notice on that.

**ANSWER**

The terms of reference for the Rural & Remote Incentives Review have been set and they have been made available to relevant stakeholders.

The Department of Education has sent the Rural and Remote Incentives Review Discussion Paper to key stakeholders and representatives.

Feedback on the Rural and Remote Incentives Review Discussion Paper has been sought from:

- Aboriginal Education Consultative Group;

- Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW;
- Isolated Children's Parents Association;
- NSW Teachers Federation;
- NSW Primary Principals' Association;
- Public Service Association;
- NSW Secondary Principals' Council; and
- Special Education Principals' and Leaders Association of NSW.

Consolidated feedback will contribute to the final report to the Minister later in 2021. The decision to publicly release the final report will be determined later in 2021.

A breakdown of the total cost of incentives provided to rural teachers under the different categories that is currently available for the past three financial years is provided in the table below.

Fiscal Year	Jul16-Jun17	Jul17-Jun18	Jul18-Jun19	Jul19-Jun20	Jul20-Jan21	
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
<b>Incentives</b>						
THA 6&8 Point		\$ 10,263,696	\$ 10,768,751	\$ 11,389,214	\$ 7,687,508	\$ 40,109,168
Teach Rural Scholarships		\$ 992,030	\$ 716,250	\$ 1,486,264	\$ 352,583	\$ 3,547,127
R&R Incentives			\$ 10,561,133	\$ 22,548,004	\$ 10,783,096	\$ 43,892,232
Rural Teach Experience			\$ 3,258,655	\$ 4,119,991	\$ 2,183,784	\$ 9,562,430
R&R Promo & Marketing Strategies		\$ 260,083	\$ 79,584	\$ 6,793	\$ 3,815	\$ 350,275
R&R Success Profiles		\$ 9,091	\$ 36,364	\$ 27,917	\$ 18,273	\$ 91,645
R&R Survey Suite		\$ 121,188				\$ 121,188
GTIL Teach Rural Scholarships	\$ 766,250					\$ 766,250
NERA Rural & Remote / THA 4	\$ 736,827	\$ 5,724,584	\$ 1,230,199	\$ 1,438,507	\$ 521,947	\$ 9,652,065
R&R BluPrt 7.3 Develop skills NERA	\$ 1,039,328	\$ 1,176,511	\$ 637,979	\$ 5,730	\$ 37,535	\$ 2,897,083
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,542,404</b>	<b>\$ 18,547,182</b>	<b>\$ 27,288,915</b>	<b>\$ 41,022,421</b>	<b>\$ 21,588,542</b>	<b>\$ 110,989,465</b>

**QUESTION NO 44**  
**PAGE NO 85**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Just to be clear, this is the internal government discussion paper that was referred to in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 21 February 2021. Are the professional development courses to accompany the phonics rollout mandatory?

**Mr MARTIN:** The hours of professional learning are mandatory but the types and style of professional learning are up to the teacher in consultation with their school or the system or the sector. So, no, at this stage they are not mandatory.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can I just ask if it will cover how to administer the test and how to interpret the results?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, we provided that training for schools that undertook the pilot of the phonics check last year and the training will be available for other schools taking part in the full rollout this year.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, but it is optional?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We would expect schools to participate in that training if it were as part of effectively implementing a phonics check.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That counts for professional development, does it not?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, that is my understanding. But I can clarify that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Department of Education teachers will be provided with the student materials needed to administer the mandatory Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. They will be supported by professional learning and resources to implement the assessment, analyse the results and target their teaching to meet the individual needs of public school students using evidence-based strategies.

The 2.5 hours of Implementing the Phonics Screening Check professional learning can be recorded by teachers as elective professional development against their NESA accreditation.

**QUESTION NO 45**  
**PAGE NO 86**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Could you provide on notice what the actual community consultation was for this?

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Could you also provide on notice what, if any, role the Deputy Premier had in terms of negotiating the deal between the council and the department?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

The Department is listening to community feedback. This has been demonstrated by addressing community concerns and modifying the location of the primary school library, changes to the shared zone and the development of the transport strategy.

There will be a further opportunity for community feedback during the planning approval process. The State Significant Development application is anticipated to be lodged with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in mid-2021.

Information regarding the project will continue to be communicated to school and local communities as it becomes available through regular updates on the project webpage at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/n/new-high-school-in-bungendore.html>.

The Deputy Premier did not play a role in negotiating the deal between council and the Department.

**QUESTION NO 46**  
**PAGE NO 87 - 88**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If there is anything you would like to provide on notice to add to it please do. I am giving you a broad opportunity to add anything on notice. Parents of students with disability have become so disaffected by public schooling and by the absence of support that they are increasingly moving to home schooling. Mr Scott, you would be aware of the fact that the number of parents choosing to home school their kids has risen by 60.5 per cent in the last four years and that a quarter of all of those parents are saying the reason they are doing it is because they need to make adjustments for their child's special learning needs. Is that not an indication of the public school system failing those kids?

**Mr SCOTT:** I must say it is a broad and a complex story. If you look at the home schooling provisions and the homes chooling increase last year, it was very interesting as we monitored attendance numbers through the year. During COVID we were doing daily attendance counts—the Minister and I would receive them by midday each day—which also included students with disability attending SSPs, and what was noteworthy was that throughout the year of COVID-19, attendance rates at SSPs were significantly lower than other schools in the State, indicating, I think, a concern of those parents, particularly given the pandemic and given often the health risks of their own children—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But, Mr Scott, I should have made it clear—and it is my fault—this is NESA data that is from 2015 to the end of 2019, so it does not include—

**Mr SCOTT:** I was giving you the 2020—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It does not include the impact of COVID. COVID does not impact that rise.

**Mr MARTIN:** There are around 7,000 students enrolled for home schooling. That has increased over the last few years. A proportion of those parents indicate to us why they are moving into home schooling and a significant proportion do not indicate any reason, but there is a proportion that say it is because of their desire to look after their students with special needs. In total it is 7,000 students out of the numbers of students enrolled in schools. So while it is an increasing proportion it is still a very tiny percentage of the total. And the numbers who are electing on the basis of special education or special needs is a proportion of that but not the majority.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Would you disagree about a quarter? That is what the data shows.

**Mr MARTIN:** I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

In the past five years, the proportion of parents who identified 'special learning needs of the child' as the reason for applying for home schooling registration, has varied between 20 per cent to 25 per cent. In 2020, it was 20.82 per cent. In 2019, it was 25.37 per cent. The average percentage for the past five years is 22.86 per cent.

**QUESTION NO 47**  
**PAGE NO 89 - 90**

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Overall in this quite influential report the Cabinet adopted 47 of the 66 recommendations but—and this was an important caveat—many were said to be "subject to operational details". Now, we do not want that to backslide into reasons for not doing them. Is it possible to get an audit of the progress that has been made on the 47 supported recommendations, including especially those "subject to operational details", for the benefit of the Committee?

**The CHAIR:** Okay, good. So you will give us the audit then on the 47 recommendations?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government welcomes the opportunity to provide progress on the supported recommendations of the Inquiry into Measurement and outcome-based funding in NSW schools. The Government acknowledges the Inquiry's call for major reforms to lift student performance and supported 46 recommendations and noted 15.

The Department of Education has committed to a strong reform agenda which includes the School Success Model, as announced in late 2020. Of the 46 recommendations that were supported, 15 have been completed and the remainder are on track for delivery by the end of 2023.

**QUESTION NO 48**  
**PAGE NO 90**

**The CHAIR:** No, it is not a riddle. It is a feature in many of our government schools. Does anyone else know what a resilience doughnut is?

**Mr SCOTT:** I am afraid I am going to have to take that on notice, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. It is a program that is run by Lyn Worsley out of Epping. She has described this as a therapeutic model and she is an "Open House human condition guru". It sounds great. I love gurus. She runs these programs at a number of government schools, particularly on the North Shore, called "resilience doughnut workshops". I am just urging we get more information about what these Hare Krishna type people are doing in our schools and get a handle on all this activity and all the money that they earn. A lot of people are getting very rich on this gear. Resilience doughnut—boy oh boy. And, you know, make sure they are properly accredited—obviously it is of concern to me that this stuff is on at least one annual report of a school that I have seen, but no-one here on the department's executive—the best decision-makers we have got—knows what a resilience doughnut is.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I think we covered some of this ground in this morning's session. We are—

**The CHAIR:** I know, but this is a specific mystery, is it not?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We are very happy to take specifics of this case on notice, but we are creating a panel of providers for exactly these types of services into schools which will help our schools make good decisions about the support that is available to them. There is a very crowded marketplace and we want to help our schools make good decisions for the use of their money and that is why we will be creating that panel of providers.

**The CHAIR:** Well, my kids always loved the doughnuts at school but I do not think you can eat this resilience doughnut so it does not sound like it is worth much. Can I get a report on how many schools are using the resilience doughnut from the Open House human condition guru and how much money we are spending on it and what the evidence base is and the evaluations and so forth?

**Mr SCOTT:** We will try and get that information for you, Chair, yes.

**ANSWER**

The Resilience Doughnut is a strengths-based, evidence-informed model that focuses on the interaction of internal and external resources that are needed to develop personal resilience during times of stress.

The model was created in 2006 by Ms Lyn Worsley, a clinical psychologist and registered nurse with a Masters in Clinical Psychology and Bachelor of Arts (honours) in Psychology. She is the Director of The Resilience Centre which provides a range of wellbeing, psychological and educational services and programs.

The model conceptualises resilience to take the form of a doughnut. The inner circle represents the internal characteristics of the individual, while the outer circle represents the external resources to which the individual has access.

Since 1996, there have been peer reviewed papers, international university studies and reports, and book chapters outlining the efficacy of the model in interventions

(Anyan, 2016; Massey, Worsley, Hanstock & Valentine, 2016; Worsley, 2014; Worsley & Hjemdal, 2017; Worsley & Hjemdal, 2020; Worsley, Lee, & Kong, 2018). Research has also been conducted on the train the trainer model (Worsley et al., 2018; Worsley, 2015).

This research is available on the Resilience Doughnut website and indicates statistically significant improved student wellbeing for some students.

In 2019 and 2020, 29 schools made payment to The Resilience Doughnut and Resilience Report, totalling \$88,337.16.

**QUESTION NO 49**  
**PAGE NO 91**

**Mr MANNING:** The original proposal was for us to look at planning for a new primary school.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** In the current iteration of the proposal, is there a new primary school proposed?

**Mr MANNING:** It is one of the options under consideration, but we are working our way through where we think we finally need to land in terms of the timing of when that school might be needed.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Has the proposal gone to the Minister?

**Mr MANNING:** Not that I would be aware of. I need to come back to you on that one. Certainly the business case is in production. We are working our way through the finalisation of the options. We may well have provided a briefing to the Minister in terms of the progress on it. I need to come back in terms of whether we have done so.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So you have not yet provided a briefing to the Minister on this proposal?

**Mr MANNING:** Like I say, I need to be absolutely certain so I will come back to you in terms of that.

**ANSWER**

The business case is currently being finalised and will be submitted for Government consideration in due course.

**QUESTION NO 50**  
**PAGE NO 92**

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Was there a school hall on the site before that project was initiated?

**Mr MANNING:** I could not say off the top of my head, but possibly.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are you able to check? Are you in a position to clarify that now?

**Mr MANNING:** No, I am not in a position to clarify that now.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Right, okay. You can perhaps confirm that on notice. Is it correct that the existing hall on the site complied with the size requirements under the Education Facilities Standards and Guidelines?

**Mr MANNING:** I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it correct, Mr Manning, that you recommended against the inclusion of the hall proposal for Engadine High School under the school halls program?

**Mr MANNING:** I would need to take that on notice in terms of the documentation you have there.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Liberals and Nationals announced a new hall for Engadine High School during the course of the 2019 NSW State Election. The Department of Education builds new school facilities to the Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines.

**QUESTION NO 51**  
**PAGE NO 94**

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So can you provide on notice, if you do not have this information readily available, what the enrolment cap is for Wentworth Point and what the enrolment capacity is for Wentworth Point Public School?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Every eligible student who wishes to attend a NSW public school will be given a place at their local school. Accordingly, the Department of Education does not have fixed enrolment capacities at NSW public schools. Schools have the capacity to adapt to fluctuating enrolments through the use of a combination of temporary and permanent teaching spaces.

**QUESTION NO 52**  
**PAGE NO 94 - 95**

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So is Carr Street in the drawing area for the proposed Sydney Olympic Park high school?

**Mr MANNING:** I do not have that information to hand.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You can take that on notice.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is Lidcombe within the boundaries for the drawing area?

**Mr MANNING:** Again, I do not have the catchment boundary for that school here.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I am asking these questions because these are obviously sites where we are anticipating further development, further population growth and further rise in population density, but you have chosen to site the high school at the point furthest away from where the growth is. I am wondering why you made that decision. Secondly, it is also sited in a place that is actually quite poorly serviced by public transport. If you are expecting children from those locations—and presumably Newington is a suburb that will feed into that high school as well—then for all of those likely sources of enrolments it is quite difficult for them to get to the location that you have chosen for the site. I want to understand why, or perhaps you can explain the rationale that was applied in terms of determining the site?

**Mr MANNING:** I do not have the detailed analysis with me as to the site selection, but certainly—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that documented?

**Mr MANNING:** It will be documented over a period of time because, as you would be aware—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you provide to the Committee the documentation around that decision?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, we can do that. But I think, importantly, the work we do around the catchment areas it serves, how that works and whether there might be other projects in the future in terms of capacities for high schools that are required on the way through—we do not plan schools in isolation; we plan them as part of our school community groups. If we were to place a school in an eccentric spot from a catchment perspective, that would flow through into where other demand may flow too. So that would be part of that consideration.

**ANSWER**

The Department develops an indicative intake area in the early stages of planning but does not finalise an intake area until about 12 months prior to the school opening. This allows the Department to consult with school principals and communities likely to be affected by new intake areas.

**QUESTION NO 53**  
**PAGE NO 96**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** We might start by just getting some understanding of how many of the 2,200 schools have work health and safety committees established and how many of them actually have elected health and safety representatives [HSRs]?

**Mr SCOTT:** We can take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education has in place consultation procedures for health and safety in accordance with its obligation under the *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act*. The procedures allow schools to elect consultation arrangements from the following:

- Election of a health and safety representative(s)
- Establishment of a work health and safety committee
- Election of a health and safety representative and establishment of a work health and safety committee
- Agreed informal procedures.

Schools often have a combination of consultation arrangements in place relevant to their size and needs. Schools are required to advise the Health and Safety Directorate if their consultation process includes the election of a Health and Safety Representative (HSR). All HSRs are recorded in the Department's system along with their training records in accordance with its obligation under the WHS Act. The Health and Safety Directorate notifies SafeWork NSW of all HSRs on behalf of schools.

Currently there are 39 schools which have Health and Safety Representatives in place.

The Department's Health and Safety Directorate has a team of Work Health and Safety Advisors who regularly attend and consult with schools to ensure they have consultative appropriate consultation and other health and safety arrangements in place. Most schools elect to have a Health and Safety Committee rather than a HSR, however some schools have both in place.

**QUESTION NO 54**  
**PAGE NO 97**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** In terms of abuse complaints made by or on behalf of students, do you have any data on how many of those were made in 2020, 2019 and 2018?

**Mr SCOTT:** We will take that on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** In doing that, do you have a database that tracks the number of them, what the relevant details are and what the outcomes are? Do you track that on a database?

**Mr SCOTT:** Let me see what we can draw out for you there, Mr Shoebridge.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Alright. I suppose one of the particular concerns is about children with a disability. That has obviously been a focus of substantial community disquiet. How many abuse complaints were made by children with a disability last year?

**Mr SCOTT:** Okay, I will take that on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Alright. Again, could you provide the details on the outcomes of those complaints?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I understand that. How many complaints of abuse of a student were referred to the police in those last three calendar years? If you could also break that down in relation to children with a disability—

**Mr SCOTT:** We will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Misconduct has a very broad definition under employment legislation and the types of conduct that may constitute misconduct are more clearly defined in the Department of Education's Code of Conduct.

Sustained misconduct means misconduct has been proven to have occurred.

In circumstances where the conduct of an employee may not amount to misconduct but may still demonstrate poor practice, the employment legislation permits remedial action to be taken in order to assist the employee to address the practice that resulted in allegations of misconduct being made. This means remedial action can be used for minor sustained misconduct or for matters that were not sustained to be misconduct but may amount to poor practice.

**Sexual offence:** an offence of a sexual nature under a law of the State, another State, a Territory, or the Commonwealth, committed against, with or in the presence of a child. The alleged offence does not have to be the subject of a criminal investigation or charges.

**Sexual misconduct:** any conduct towards a or in the presence of a child that is sexual nature that includes for example, descriptions of sexual acts, sexual comments or conversations, comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards a child.

**Assault:** physical force without lawful justification or conduct which causes a child to apprehend the immediate and unlawful use of physical force against them.

**Ill-treatment:** unreasonable and seriously inappropriate, improper inhumane or cruel conduct.

**Emotional/psychological harm:** to engage in conduct which is proven to cause psychological or emotional harm

**Neglect:** a significant failure by a person which parental responsibility or authority or an employee if the child is in their care, to provide adequate and proper food, supervision or a failure to fulfil a duty or obligation resulting in actual harm or where the failure is likely to cause harm including failing to protect a child from abuse.

**Crossing the professional boundary:** failure to observe the professional boundary but without the presence of overt sexual misconduct.

The table below details the numbers of investigations opened in the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020 following receipt of allegations of a child protection nature. This includes matters that may still be under investigation.

Investigations opened- conduct towards student	2018	2019	2020
Ill-treatment	47	69	40
Neglect	72	77	64
OCG/Interim barred from children	4	1	3
Physical harm	103	107	64
Psychological harm	12	16	9
Crossing professional boundary (non-sexual)	NA	NA	49*
Sexual misconduct	200	203	82
Sexual offence	NA	NA	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>340</b>

\*data collection commenced in 2020.

The table below details the investigations opened in the period 1 January to 31 December 2020 following receipt of allegations of a child protection nature involving students identified on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability. This includes matters that may still be under investigation.

Investigations opened- conduct towards students counted in NCCD	2020
Ill-treatment	26
Neglect	35
Physical harm	33
Psychological harm	1
Crossing professional boundary (non-sexual)	12*
Sexual misconduct	8
Sexual offence	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>

The table below details those matters of a child protection nature that were referred to NSW Police for the period 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2020.

<b>Matter referred to NSW Police</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>All students</b>	<b>NCCD</b>
<b>2018</b>	124	29
<b>2019</b>	133	36
<b>2020</b>	97	24

**QUESTION NO 55**  
**PAGE NO 98 - 99**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Alright, so is it true you have not come to this March 2020-21 estimates hearing prepared with the number of suspensions from calendar year 2020?

**Ms OWEN:** I do not have that data.

**Mr SCOTT:** We have the latest data on the public record here.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But I am asking you about—

**Mr SCOTT:** Well, if you are asking, we can try to get 2020 figures for you.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** —the suspensions in 2020.

**Mr SCOTT:** The figures will be distorted by a number of factors in 2020.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I accept that.

**Mr SCOTT:** Firstly, students having been away from school for a period of time. I think it is also fair to say our teachers identified a level of disruption that arrived with the return of students to school after the disruption of the year, but we can try to find 2020 figures for you. But we are happy to talk about the trendline of this data.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** And then could we have it broken down into short and long suspensions?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If we could have some actual numbers about students with disability and First Nations students as opposed to the proportional rate.

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes, we are happy to provide that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can I ask for a further breakdown on notice, David? Is that alright?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Yes, go.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can we get it by kindergarten—so early stage 1, stage 1, stage 2, the various different stages?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And if we can get a breakdown of whether those students were suspended for under 50 days, 51 to 100 days and whatever the longest suspension was?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**Mr SCOTT:** You are talking about an aggregate per student. So, if a student was suspended three times on a long suspension, what does that add up to?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If you have that cumulative data.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Cumulative data, yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I think that would be useful.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And can you give us a breakdown—boys and girls please?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** By gender. Do you track how many students with a disability were, first, initially to be enrolled in a mainstream school—a comprehensive school—but then were ultimately enrolled in a SSP? Do you track that kind of data?

**Mr SCOTT:** Let us see what we can find on that, Mr Shoebridge.

## ANSWER

### Number of suspensions by year of schooling (2020)

	2020
Kindergarten	961
Year 1	1209
Year 2	1603
Year 3	2190
Year 4	2631
Year 5	3119
Year 6	4148
Year 7	10743
Year 8	12690
Year 9	11489
Year 10	8774
Year 11	3119
Year 12	928
<b>NSW Public Schools Total</b>	<b>63604</b>

**Source:** Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Department of Education. Extracted from suspensions database in March 2021. Disability data sourced from the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), collected as at the first Friday in August annually. EAL/D data sourced from the EAL/D census, collected in June annually.

#### Note:

This table shows the number of suspensions, not students suspended.

### Number of short/long suspensions and by year of schooling (2020)

	Short	Long	Total
Kindergarten	842	119	961
Year 1	1040	169	1209
Year 2	1319	284	1603
Year 3	1822	368	2190
Year 4	2172	459	2631
Year 5	2550	569	3119
Year 6	3238	910	4148
Year 7	8249	2494	10743
Year 8	9164	3526	12690
Year 9	8106	3383	11489
Year 10	6008	2766	8774
Year 11	2106	1013	3119
Year 12	661	267	928
<b>NSW Government Schools Total</b>	<b>47277</b>	<b>16327</b>	<b>63604</b>

**Source:** Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Department of Education. Extracted from suspensions database in March 2021.

**Notes:**

- This table shows the number of suspensions, not students suspended.
- Short suspensions (Continued Disobedience or Aggressive Behaviour) can range from 1-4 days.
- Long suspensions can range from 1-20 days and are given for the following reasons:
  - Persistent or Serious Misbehaviour
  - Physical Violence
  - Prohibited Weapon, Firearm or Knife
  - Use of Implement as a Weapon
  - Criminal Behaviour Relation to the School
  - Possession or Use of Illegal Substance.

**Number of students suspended for less than 50 days in 2020**

35802

**Number of students suspended for 51-100 days in 2020**

471

**Number of students suspended for more than 100 days in 2020**

&lt;=5

**The longest suspension given to a student in 2020 (cumulative count)**

The highest total days lost to suspensions by a student in 2020 was 120.

**Number of suspensions for 2019-2020 for students with disability (2019-20)**

<b>Suspensions Count by Grade (2019-2020)</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
	<b>Students with disability who receive adjustments to access education (excluding QDTP)</b>	<b>Students with disability who receive adjustments to access education (excluding QDTP)</b>
Kindergarten	769	697
Year 1	1362	930
Year 2	1653	1225
Year 3	2124	1628
Year 4	2336	1933
Year 5	2866	2119
Year 6	3240	2586
Year 7	6170	5297
Year 8	7148	6390
Year 9	5804	5141
Year 10	3918	3359
Year 11	1144	1014
Year 12	307	289
<b>NSW Public Schools Total</b>	<b>38841</b>	<b>32608</b>

**Source:** Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Department of Education. Extracted from suspensions database in March 2021. Disability data sourced from the Nationally Consistent

Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), collected as at the first Friday in August annually. EAL/D data sourced from the EAL/D census, collected in June annually.

**Notes:**

- QDTP is Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice.
- This table shows the number of suspensions, not students suspended.
- Disability data is based on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), which is a count of the number of students with disability receiving adjustments to access education.
- The NCCD draws on teachers’ professional judgement to determine the level of adjustments students with disability receive, in both the classroom and whole school context, as well as the broad category of disability that relates to the adjustments. The model for the NCCD is based on mandatory obligations to students under the national Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and Disability Standards for Education 2005.
- For more information on the NCCD, including level of adjustment descriptors, please refer to the NCCD Portal (<https://www.nccd.edu.au/>)

The Department does not hold centrally data on other exclusions within schools, such as for time-out or other means. This data is held at the school level.

**Number of students with disability, attending mainstream schools, who were suspended in 2020**

32576

Students can be double counted across if they had suspensions in multiple schools, across different enrolment types during 2020.

**Number of students in a specialist support class in a mainstream school who were suspended in 2020**

3268

**Number of students, attending SSPs, suspended for 51-100 days in 2020**

19

**Number of suspensions for Aboriginal students (2019-20)**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Kindergarten	360	272
Year 1	633	401
Year 2	804	586
Year 3	1111	813
Year 4	1184	947
Year 5	1490	1078
Year 6	1875	1630
Year 7	3910	3349
Year 8	4167	3681
Year 9	3269	3021
Year 10	2186	1915

Year 11	633	619
Year 12	154	153
<b>NSW Public Schools Total</b>	<b>21776</b>	<b>18465</b>

**Source:** Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Department of Education. Extracted from suspensions database in March 2021. Disability data sourced from the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), collected as at the first Friday in August annually. EAL/D data sourced from the EAL/D census, collected in June annually.

**Notes:**

- This table shows the number of suspensions, not students suspended.

**Number of suspensions gender and type (2019-2020)**

Gender	Suspension Type	2019	2020
<b>Male</b>	Short	42097	35786
	Long	14780	12083
<b>Male Total</b>		<b>56877</b>	<b>47869</b>
<b>Female</b>	Short	12706	11491
	Long	4875	4244
<b>Female Total</b>		<b>17581</b>	<b>15735</b>
<b>All Students</b>	Short	54803	47277
	Long	19655	16327
<b>All Students Total</b>		<b>74458</b>	<b>63604</b>

**Source:** Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Department of Education. Extracted from suspensions datacube in March 2021.

**Notes:**

- This table shows the number of suspensions, not students suspended.

The Department has access to, and uses, a number of data sets to determine those students who are newly enrolled in a public school and are subsequently enrolled in a support class in a mainstream school or in a school for specific purposes (SSP).

These are:

- the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability – to identify students with disability
- the Enrolment Registration Number (ERN) system – to determine if a student is newly enrolled and if enrolled in a support class
- the Access Request database - to determine which students have requested and been offered a support class since 2018.

It needs to be noted that all children initially enrol in their local mainstream school not into a support class in a mainstream school or SSP. The local school, in consultation with the parents, may then request additional specialist support, e.g. support class placement if the student's support needs are significant or extensive.

Following the 2017 Upper House *Inquiry into the provision of education to students with disability and special needs in government and non-government schools in NSW*, the Department has developed reports which address a number of the recommendations accepted by the Government.

These include reports on:

- students enrolled in support classes in mainstream schools and schools for specific purposes;
- the number of students seeking support class placement;
- outcomes of an Access Request to satisfy a 28-day key performance indicator; and
- information about support class vacancies

**QUESTION NO 56**  
**PAGE NO 100**

**The CHAIR:** We will see what comes back in the audit of those recommendations. So, thank you, David. Mr Martin, how are we going with the reconstruction of the PD courses for the teaching profession?

**Mr MARTIN:** As you are aware, the Minister announced in the middle of last year that we were to look at the process of accrediting PD courses to have fewer accredited of a higher standard. Later in the year—I have not got the exact dates, but I can provide that on notice—we began the process of disaccrediting, I suppose, all of the existing courses, but providing the three sectors with the capacity and the right to accredit for their own workforces. At the moment we have a survey out with providers. That is a very short survey, but we wish to find out views in relation to our processes of accreditation going forward, and we will have the new process up and running not before the end of this term, but before the end of the first half of the year. We have continued to allow previously accredited providers in the priority areas determined to maintain the courses for the first half of this year so that teachers have enough PD to do to maintain their accreditation.

**ANSWER**

On 29 November 2020, the Minister announced the changes to teacher professional development (PD) quality assurance processes.

At that time, NESAs began the process of disaccrediting existing NESAs Registered courses and started work to establish new, more rigorous application requirements and assessment processes. The new processes are under development and are being informed by feedback from providers collected via an online survey conducted in March 2021, as well as consultation with sectors, systems and other key stakeholders. The new processes will be underpinned by evidence-based principles of effective professional learning and rigorous criteria for PD in the identified priority areas.

As of 11 February 2021, 843 courses have been granted NESAs Accredited PD status for an interim period up to 31 July 2021, ensuring that teachers have access to NESAs Accredited PD while the new processes are being finalised. Courses with interim accreditation have been deemed to meet NESAs interim principles of effective professional learning and relate to either the 'Delivery and Assessment of NSW Curriculum or Early Years Learning Framework' priority area or the 'Students with Disability' priority area.

NESAs is working closely with Health and Aboriginal education stakeholders to ensure that professional development for both mental health and to support Aboriginal students aligns with best practice.

All new accreditation requirements and application process will be operational in the second half of 2021.

**QUESTION NO 57**  
**PAGE NO 104 - 105**

**Ms HARRISSON:** The staffing methodology review is an ongoing piece of work to look at how we staff our schools. So it is an ongoing piece of work.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Does it produce reports or is it just like an agenda item that you talk about?

**Ms HARRISSON:** It is a model that allows us to test assumptions about different options for staffing our schools over time as we have a budget available to make decisions around how we might make changes to that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you provide me on notice how that is reported to the Minister?

**Mr SCOTT:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

Staffing Methodology Review (SMR) is designed to provide a revised methodology for testing new, transparent and effective staffing methodologies.

The Minister is provided with progress updates on the ongoing work of SMR through meetings with the Chief People Officer and Executive Directors School Workforce.

**QUESTION NO 58**  
**PAGE NO 105**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can I just quickly ask about L3? How many schools are still using L3?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I can take that on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And if you can tell me how many schools still use L3 after the Government announced that it will no longer support professional development?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, we can come back to you with that information.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And what action you are now taking to ensure that it is no longer taught in New South Wales schools.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to come back to you with that information and some further context around the specifics of what L3 is and how it operates in our school system, or has operated—it does not operate now.

**ANSWER**

The Department has retired support for Language, Literacy, and Learning, as a result of the of the L3 Review which was published on the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) website on Monday 7 September, 2020.

As a result of the Review, communications were also sent to school principals, Executive Directors, Directors, Educational Leadership and L3 Trainers about the retirement of the L3 program.

**QUESTION NO 59**  
**PAGE NO 105 - 106**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many suspensions have been done in the last three calendar years.

**Ms OWEN:** I have the information in front of me here. We had 14 services actually cancelled and one suspended. A suspension can end up in a cancellation.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And how many cancellations?

**Ms OWEN:** Fourteen.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And that is in the last 12 months?

**Ms OWEN:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What about the 12 months prior to that?

**Ms OWEN:** I will have to take that one on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The 12 months prior to that would be helpful as well.

**ANSWER**

Number of service cancellations in 2020 = 14

Number of service cancellations in 2019 = 28

Number of service cancellations in 2018 = 41

Number of service suspensions in 2020 = 1

Number of service suspensions in 2019 = 17

Number of service suspensions in 2018 = 2

**Research informing the work of School Learning Environments and Change (SLEC) and approaches to school design across School Infrastructure NSW**

SLEC’s remit across Educational Planning, Educational Readiness, Professional Learning and Post Occupancy Evaluation in new build and upgrade schools is informed by national and international research and evidence of best practice.

SLEC’s decision making and advice around the development of flexible and innovative learning environments are detailed in the research documents referenced below. Where there is no online link available, a PDF copy of each research document can be provided if required.

**The benefit of building Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) to support improved learning outcomes:**

There is a vast amount of existing and emerging research in this area, reflecting ILEs and improved learning outcomes. A summary of improved learning outcomes is provided below:

<b>Source:</b>	<b>Effect on test scores:</b>
Armbruster et al (2009)	6 percentage point increase in test scores
Imms and Byers (2017)	0.86 SD increase in test scores
Freeman (2014)	0.5 SD increase in test scores
Brooks (2011)	6.5% increase over expected test scores
Cotner et el (2013)	5 percentage point increase in test scores
Walker et al (2011)	5.36 – 14.6 percentage point increase in test scores across several different assessments

Other research supports the following key points around the development of ILEs:

- Physical characteristics of the learning space account for 16% of the variation in learning progress in British primary school students. Based on the University of Salford HEAD study (Barrett et al., 2015 and 2016)
- Open and flexible classroom arrangements, together with an infusion of one-on-one technologies, improved students’ levels of engagement and their perceptions around the quality of teaching. Significant differences were also found in the students’ performance in mathematics, when compared to like peers in more ‘traditional’ classrooms. (Imms & Byers, 2017, and Byers, Imms & Hartnell-Young, 2018).
- A study of nine NSW high schools found that the varied, adaptable nature of flexible learning spaces coupled with the use of student-centred pedagogies, facilitated a higher proportion of class time interacting, collaborating and engaging with the lesson content (Kariippanon et al, 2019).

- A survey of schools across Australia found that schools with a higher prevalence of traditional spaces reported a lower assessment of student deep learning, when compared to those with more ILEs (Imms, Mahat, Byers & Murphy, 2017).
- There exists a statistically significant difference between ILEs and traditional settings, when measured against levels of student deep learning and teacher mind frames. In a sample of secondary schools, ILEs have a higher incidence of both (Murphy, under examination).
- There are strong indicators that while ILEs are correlated to high levels of student deep learning, they also have no impact on surface learning. In other words, ILEs improve deep learning with no adverse effects on surface learning (Murphy, under examination).

### The “Hub” design:

SINSW’s approach to the design of ‘hubs’ supports collaboration across four learning groups as well as individual work, reflecting best practice. This approach reflects typology D from Dovey & Fisher (see Figure 1).

*“Open plan learning environments (Types D and E) are associated with higher means of teacher mind frames and student deep learning” (Imms, Mahat, Byers & Murphy, 2017).*

According to a survey undertaken by The University of Melbourne, it was found that schools with a higher number of type D spaces reported a higher assessment along the teacher mind frame and perceptions of student deep learning continuum (Imms, Mahat, Byers & Murphy, 2017). Mind frames, or ways of thinking about teaching and learning, are based on the principle that teachers are evaluators, change agents, learning experts, and seekers of feedback who are constantly engaged in dialogue and challenge (Hattie & Zierer, 2017).

Type D spaces are described as “open plan with the ability to separate classrooms”; therefore, it is understood to be the most flexible of all the typologies, allowing the greatest degree of modification of space to suit the needs of learners and teachers. A diagram of these typologies is presented below.

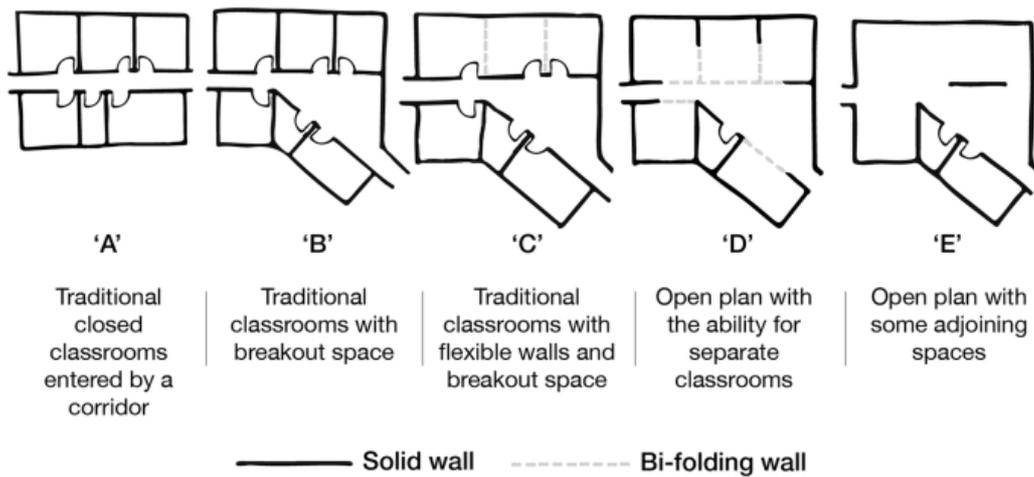


Figure 1 Dovey-Fisher learning space typologies (2014)

**Pedagogy - Collaborative Teaching Practice:**

SLEC provides professional learning to teachers and school leaders and informs the design of learning spaces in NSW public schools to reflect the ability to support collaboration and collaborative teaching practice.

*Increased collaboration in ILEs is a feature of professionalism where teachers “exchange ‘front-of-the-room’, single teacher presentational approaches for collaborative, dispersed and facilitative styles, often in teams, working with multiple students in shared, common learning spaces (Benade, 2019, p. 53)*

Consultation, participation, and ownership are “central elements of sustainable change processes” and support “a reflexive school community, pedagogical shift, professional development, and ongoing support to teachers and students” (Kariippanon et al., 2019, p. 1).

**Pedagogy - Contemporary Learning and Teaching:**

There is evidence supporting the shifting away from a single mode of traditional lecturing:

A meta-analysis of 158 studies of student academic performance in STEM subjects taught via different means found that lecturing increases failure rates by 55% when compared to active learning, which is also particularly beneficial in small classes and at increasing performance on concept inventories (Freeman et al 2014).

*“Fullan identifies three elements of successful school change, which are: being embedded in school structures, having a critical mass of school staff trained and committed, and having a procedure for continued support (Fullan, 2007)”*

## Informing furniture and technology settings based on ‘affordances’:

SINSEW’s approach for informing appropriate furniture and technology settings in flexible learning spaces is based on the learning modes developed by the SLEC unit. Available at:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-learning-environments-and-change/future-focused-learning-and-teaching/learning-modes> The learning modes are informed by research including:

- David Thornburg’s three archetypal learning spaces— the campfire, cave, and watering hole (Thornburg, 2013).
- “Linking pedagogy and space” from Kenn Fisher, available at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/school/principals/infrastructure/pedagogyspace.pdf> amongst others.

This approach is now referenced and used by other researchers: Kariippanon et. al. (2019):

*“These spaces endeavour to offer opportunities for both individual and collaborative work, whilst utilising a range of technologies to facilitate personalized teaching and learning (NSW Government Department of Education 2015). A range of learning modes have been identified as enablers of student-centred, future-focused learning. These include collaboration, discussion, feedback and reflection, guided, explicit, demonstration, experiential and independent learning (NSW Government Department of Education 2016). Each mode requires students and teachers to be interacting differently with the learning space and each other and this has implications.”*

The SLEC unit work with schools to identify and prioritise the relevant modes and affordances.

*Learning environment affordances are qualities of the environment (space, objects and people) which enable perceived teaching and learning activities and behaviours” – Young et al., 2020.*

## Educational Planning and Readiness approach:

*Consultation, participation, and ownership are “central elements of sustainable change processes” and support “a reflexive school community, pedagogical shift, professional development, and ongoing support to teachers and students” (Kariippanon et al., 2019, p. 1).*

SLEC’s approach includes consultation as well as best practice. The consistent pieces reflect best practice, whilst supporting contextualisation for the flexible elements.

SLEC's work covers four phases of support: 1. consult schools, 2. provide professional learning, 3. support schools to transition into their new learning environments and 4. Evaluate and conduct Post Occupancy Evaluations of new build schools. These phases reflect best practice and the recommended approach across:

1. initial planning,
2. getting ready,
3. moving in, and
4. reflecting and adjusting (Duthilleul et al., 2021).

### **Approach to Learning space design, informing the EFSG:**

Benefits of redesigned spaces are thought to be derived from the moveable furniture, open space, and a room space without a "front" (Taylor, 2008).

*"There is strong, consistent evidence for the effect of basic physical variables (air quality, temperature and noise) on learning." (Higgins et al., 2005)*

SINSW's approach to informing learning space design is based on the input from subject matter experts and research reflecting best practice in flexibility (Taylor, 2008; Rands and Gansemer, Topf, 2017; (Imms & Byers, 2017), technology (Imms & Byer, 2017), temperature and environmental quality (Wargocki & Wyon, 2012; Higgins et al, 2005), air quality and ventilation (Wargocki & Wyon, 2012; Higgins et al, 2005), noise and lighting (Higgins et al, 2005).

Barrett et al's 2017 finding confirms Higgins et al.'s (2005) contention that the most successful design elements in classrooms are likely to be elements of flexibility that can adapt to new curriculum demands and new challenges.

There is evidence to suggest that the addition of informal spaces such as breakout spaces supports a wider range of learning and teaching strategies (e.g. Byers et al., 2018). In turn, wider variation in strategies supports greater likelihood that learners' needs will be met (e.g. Nimisha Patel & Kramer, 2013).

Guidelines for the EFSG also include characteristics recognised as best practice:

- **Temperature:** A meta-analysis found that in temperate climates, the performance of psychological tests and school tasks can be expected to increase on average by 20% if classroom temperatures are lowered from 30 °C to 20 °C and that the temperature for optimal performance is lower than 22 °C (Wargocki, Porras-Salazar & Contreras, 2019).
- **Air quality:** A regression analysis of data from published studies suggest that increasing the ventilation rate in classrooms in the range from 2 L/s-person to 10 L/s-person can bring

significant benefits in terms of learning performance and pupil attendance (Wargocki et al., 2020).

- Acoustics: Persistent ambient noise appears to interfere with the encoding stage of memory and this effect was not mediated by distraction or mood... good acoustics are fundamental to good academic performance (Higgins et al., 2005)
- Lighting: In a review of 10 studies, light levels were shown to have a material effect on student behaviour, health and performance (Higgins et al., 2005)

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