

Budget Estimates 2024-25

Questions taken on notice

Portfolio Committee No 3 – Education

Education and Early Learning, Western Sydney (Car)

Hearing: Tuesday 27 August 2024

QUESTION 1 PAGE NO 8

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But thus far, you haven't been advised that there are any?

Ms PRUE CAR: Can I just, for the benefit of the Committee, state once again that the Fort Street upgrade, which was in the media yesterday, that contract would've been awarded when you were Minister, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. But I'm saying to you that you haven't been advised of any since then.

Ms PRUE CAR: So you actually awarded the contract to Synergy through a subcontractor.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you haven't been advised of any since yesterday is what you're saying?

Ms PRUE CAR: No, but I've asked for that advice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will you make that advice public when you receive it?

Ms PRUE CAR: I have asked for that advice. I'll take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has confirmed that School Infrastructure does not have any direct contracts with Synergy Scaffolding and will continue to provide advice to ensure Principal Contractors have adequate safety controls.

Work involving temporary support structures and scaffolding is reviewed regularly as part of the safety assurance program to ensure Principal Contractors have adequate safety controls.

QUESTION 2 PAGE NO 9

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Deputy Premier, can you confirm that, at the start of the year, there was \$394.6 million in the fund 6101 balance?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice, Ms Mitchell.

ANSWER

This year the NSW Labor Government is delivering record education funding, including an increase to school budgets of more than \$700 million compared to the Liberals and Nationals. School budgets are separate to '6101' balances which are also reported at the school-level.

QUESTION 3 PAGE NO 11 & 12

The CHAIR: Can I ask you about the \$1 billion in the budget that was for funding for school maintenance and minor upgrades? How much of that is for disability accessibility upgrades?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take that on notice so you get the right information, but that is really a large injection into maintenance funding. A lot of it will be going to things that have been ignored for years and years that aren't really sexy to talk about—things like toilets.

The CHAIR: Yes, we love talking about toilets. They're vital—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You're doing a whole inquiry into toilets.

The CHAIR: We are doing a whole inquiry.

Ms PRUE CAR: People get a bit funny when I talk about public school toilets so much, but I tell you what—I mean, there are a lot of people around this committee room who have children and know how dangerous it is if a toilet is so bad and hasn't ever been upgraded, so that children literally are holding it in all day, and the health impact of that. The injection will be used to do things like that, but let me take on notice for accessibility upgrades. Of course, when a student comes to a school with a particular need and enrolls in that school, we are obliged to upgrade the school so that child can access education.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is committed to ensuring all students have access to supportive, quality learning environments that allow them to meet their full potential.

\$150 million has been allocated to boost disability access as well as to provide safety upgrades that ensure the department meets its Work Health and Safety obligations. The majority of this funding will be allocated to support the department's Integration Program which provides facilities adjustments that provide a more inclusive educational experience.

QUESTION 4 PAGE NO 15

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, I want to go back to the school funding issue. You said before, in response to Ms Boyd, that you would be really concerned if schools have lost SLSOs. Have you been to Parkes Public School, by any chance?

Ms PRUE CAR: I haven't been to Parkes, no. But, can I just say, with that particular example, if you're talking about something that has happened at Parkes, if we could just get to the crux of that issue of what the allegation may be, we will follow it up; we will take that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am asking you if you have been to Parkes and the answer is no—that's fine. I have had reports from a number of concerned community members that at least a dozen SLSOs have either lost their jobs or lost significant hours because of the budget cuts. Are you aware of that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I am not sure if that is the case. I am going to say to you, Ms Mitchell, that I will ask Ms Summerhayes to take that away and look into that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take that on notice, that would be great, because multiple people in the community have reached out with concerns.

Ms PRUE CAR: That is very concerning and I will follow that up.

ANSWER

This year the NSW Labor Government has delivered a \$700 million increase to public school budgets. The Department of Education is working with all schools to ensure that record funding is prioritising teaching and learning and supporting important programs aligned with schools' Strategic Improvement Plans. The department has advised that this school is being supported to continue employing additional Student Learning Support Officers.

QUESTION 5 PAGE NO 16

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is very concerning. Are you also aware of the very successful agriculture program that runs at Maclean High School?

Ms PRUE CAR: If there is an issue that you're getting to at Maclean High School, we will similarly take that away and come back to you, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But I'm asking if you have been spoken to about that program?

Ms PRUE CAR: Just to save the Committee a bit of time, I know the previous Minister is setting up a range of questions.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm just asking you a question.

Ms PRUE CAR: If you get to the crux of what is happening at Maclean, we can take that away.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You're not aware of the ag program—that's fine; I don't expect you to be. So \$100,000 was allocated to that program. That has now been cut to \$10,000. Parents are now having to sell raffle tickets on the weekend to raise money to run that program for their students. Does that concern you?

Ms PRUE CAR: We will take that away.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has advised that the program referred to is continuing, with additional funding beyond the initial allocation. Additional fundraising was also approved by the principal for a small number of students to attend events.

QUESTION 6 PAGE NO 22

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Absolutely, Chair. How much did the cancellation of the APP contract cost?

Ms PRUE CAR: The APP contract was terminated on commercial grounds.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How much did it cost?

Ms PRUE CAR: I am answering the question. The contract was terminated as per the agreed terms of the contract.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How much did that cost?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. That's all you had to do.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is committed to using Modern Methods of Construction and is expanding the program to accelerate the delivery of new public schools and deliver the best value for taxpayers. It has further advised that the work undertaken to date on relevant projects is owned by the department and will be applied as works proceed through delivery, with associated costs currently commercial in confidence.

QUESTION 7 PAGE NO 22 & 23

The CHAIR: Deputy Premier, I wanted to ask you about the department resource that was sent out called *Supporting the school community during the current conflict in the Middle East*. Are you aware of the discriminatory way that has been put into practice in some schools?

Ms PRUE CAR: I don't know the exact resource to which you are referring, Ms Boyd, to be fair. I am not sure if Mr Dizdar knows or I can take it on notice.

The CHAIR: This is one I asked a question on notice about in July. This is a resource that was put out by the department, *Supporting the school community during the current conflict in the Middle East*. It is instructing principals and schools to be neutral when it comes to the conflict in the Middle East. I have heard from many students who have told me that the result of this have been, for example, that Palestinian students have not been able to wear their keffiyeh at school, they haven't been able to have a Palestinian flag on their bag, and when they have sat up all night watching the conflict and grieving for family and friends, when they go to school they are not allowed to talk about the fact that they are Palestinian. This has all been brought home to this policy that was issued by the department. Are you aware of that? How does this occur?

Ms PRUE CAR: This is obviously very difficult terrain for principals and teachers to manage at this current point. I would say that I know that they are managing this in a context where we have students and staff who are impacted by this conflict in many different ways. They might be—and I loathe to use this word—on different sides of the conflict. Everyone, regardless of whether you are a student or staff member or family member in the public school system, has a right to feel safe and belong in the public school system. I am not aware of the particular issues that have come from that policy, but let me take that away. Our intention to ensure that public schools are neutral and that everyone can belong is one we take very seriously. I take it very seriously personally, as Minister. As public schools, we open our doors to absolutely everyone.

The CHAIR: That's right.

Ms PRUE CAR: That means everyone needs to feel like they can belong. But let me take that on notice personally about that particular policy. But that is the intent of everything we do. That is the intent.

The CHAIR: The conflict in the Middle East is not a football match. It's not about teams and sides.

Ms PRUE CAR: I know and I didn't want to use that word, but I did not know how else to describe it.

The CHAIR: I know that isn't what you were saying. But the idea that all conversation about the nuances and the complexities in region have been silenced has caused a real issue for many, many students and teachers. Do you think in hindsight the reaction from the New South Wales Government and in particular the Department of Education was hasty?

Ms PRUE CAR: Look, I really, really don't want to see a system or situation where any student or staff member feels that way in a public school or in the system. Everything we do is aimed at public schools being a neutral place. For everyone—and I know this will be the case—that you may have spoken to, Ms Boyd, who feels maybe uncomfortable or that it could be done better, I know there are thousands of classrooms where teachers are navigating this very difficult terrain expertly every day. There is nuance in this, as there is nuance in so many other things that kids

come to school with. Kids aren't coming to school in a vacuum; they are coming from home and what they see on the TV, as you said. They are talking to their teacher, who is often the most-trusted adult outside of their parents or even in their life. They are communicating with their teacher, principal or person at school, who have to navigate that terrain.

The CHAIR: That's right.

Ms PRUE CAR: It is being done in schools anyway and, where people are uncomfortable, we'll take that away.

ANSWER

The Department of Education resource 'Supporting the school community during the current conflict in the Middle East' provides suggested approaches for school leaders on how to support students, staff and the community members who may be impacted by the conflict in the Middle East. The resource is not a policy.

The resource contains messages for staff about the importance of being sensitive to the feelings and reactions of all students and in ensuring that no student or staff member suffers from discrimination or harassment.

School principals are best placed to know their school community; they are responsible for making decisions based on student needs and the community context.

QUESTION 8 PAGE NO 24

The CHAIR: Because what teachers are telling me is that ordinarily they are left to their own devices to use their own judgement in terms of having those discussions with their students. But, because of this directive from the department, I've heard of teachers being basically disciplined for talking about these issues in their classes. Are you aware of how many teachers have been disciplined?

Ms PRUE CAR: I have to take that particular concern that you've raised on advisement from the department because that's a particular set of circumstances if teachers are being disciplined. Mr Dizdar would probably have an update on how we're managing that with staff.

MURAT DIZDAR: I think it's a good topic you talk to, Ms Boyd. I do want to thank our school communities who have been working through distressing and difficult times around this, because we're not cut off from global events. But what I can tell you, in a series of communication we did put out—and maybe your line of questioning is a good reminder to us that we should reinforce this with the ongoing nature of the conflict. We did put out material in a November communication around our school leaders, teachers and support staff—how they can best address student wellbeing and address this difficult topic in facilitating communication with families. So you are spot on. We had lots of feedback to say, "Look, I'm a geography teacher. I'm a science teacher. But these are the kids in front of me. I want advice and help about how to help support kids in this situation."

The CHAIR: Advice and help is very different to a directive and to something that then has resulted in principals disciplining teachers for just having a discussion. Do you think, in hindsight—I know that things got politically heated in November. But, now that we are as far down the track as we are and we can see the devastation that's occurring—we've heard from Jewish students, from Palestinian students. They want to have proper discussions about these issues. This directive of having to treat something as being neutral when it is clearly anything but is upsetting for students and teachers. In hindsight, do you think it was a mistake to issue this guideline?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't quite concur around "mistake". In speaking with the range of stakeholders in my role and in speaking with the principals' association and the Teachers Federation and in the vast visits to schools across the State, we've done our best to communicate and support our people. Since 1848 the might of public education has been that we do have to be neutral, that we do have to be thoughtful, that we do have to be balanced.

The CHAIR: Well, we're not neutral on murder. We're not neutral on most crimes. Why would we be neutral on war?

MURAT DIZDAR: These are very difficult global events which have impact on our school communities and we're going to continue to give guidance around that and support around that. I think your line of questioning is fair because it was November advice. It might be timely again—

The CHAIR: It's still having a really severe impact on a lot of students and teachers. Deputy Premier, would you look into—I did ask this on notice and I didn't get an answer—how many people have actually been disciplined and how many children have been suspended or expelled because of a breach of this policy?

Ms PRUE CAR: Let me take that on notice. But I will note the secretary just made some comments about how maybe it's timely to look at this. I just want to make it clear again: Everything comes from the standpoint of ensuring that our public schools are neutral places.

ANSWER

NSW public schools are focussed on supporting students who are impacted by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Appropriate action is taken in relation to any matters of concern that arise in schools around this matter.

There are no specific grounds for suspension or expulsion in the department's suspension and expulsion procedures in relation to this matter.

QUESTION 9 PAGE NO 23 & 24

The CHAIR: Can I ask you something completely different. As you know, private schools have an exemption from the Anti-Discrimination Act. I wrote to you in July about one of the people who contacted me—their negative experience of disability discrimination in a private school, where their child with disability was not provided with adequate support. As I mentioned in my letter, that's just one example of the multiple people I get coming to me with these experiences. I haven't heard back from you in relation to that particular letter. But do you have any intention to stop this discrimination in private schools against children with disability?

Ms PRUE CAR: Let me take that particular issue that you've raised about the correspondence on notice and get back to you about that. I will get back to you about that. That's not good enough. I believe, if I'm wrong—I've only been briefed in a short form, as I said, about the parliamentary inquiry, but this may be part of what the recommendations are. Is that correct—about the anti-discrimination?

ANSWER

The NSW Government is preparing a response to the report on the *Inquiry into children and young people with disability in NSW educational settings*.

Further information has been provided in the response to your correspondence.

QUESTION 10 PAGE NO 25

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Are you prepared to table the Wheeler review to this Committee?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me take that on notice and see what I'm in a position to be able to table. It was an internal review for the purposes of assessing where we're up to.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: But the Tedeschi review was quite public. I'd be interested to see how we actually improved ourselves from the Tedeschi to the Wheeler review, because the reports I'm getting anecdotally from teachers and principals are that we haven't.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me take that on notice and see what I'm able to do.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has initiated contact with the Honourable Mark Banasiak MLC in relation to his queries.

QUESTION 11 PAGE NO 25

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: How many cases has the department lost in the Fair Work Commission over the last five years against teachers and principals?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to take that on notice. I don't have that data in front of me, but I'm happy to come back to you and the Committee.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Sure. When you're coming back to us, can you come back to us on the total cost in terms of settlements in those cases that you've lost in the Fair Work Commission?

MURAT DIZDAR: With what we're able to provide, we'd be able to, Mr Banasiak.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: And if that requires you to go to Treasury to get the answer, I'm happy for you to do that.

MURAT DIZDAR: We're happy to give you what we're able to.

ANSWER

While the Fair Work Commission (FWC) is not the correct jurisdiction for claims made by NSW teachers and principals, 12 cases have been filed in the FWC since 2021. The cases were subsequently dismissed due to the FWC being the incorrect jurisdiction for the claims made.

Of the 12 cases filed in the FWC, one was concluded outside the FWC by way of confidential settlement.

QUESTION 12 PAGE NO 25

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: What is the average time it takes to resolve an investigation by PES, and how does that compare to the EPAC days and the Tedeschi report recommendations around this?

MURAT DIZDAR: That one doesn't have a black and white answer, unfortunately, because—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I'm happy for you to take it on notice. I've just noticed that my—

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't think I have to. I can help you, I think.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I'm just conscious that I'm going to pass to Ms Mihailuk to give her the last three minutes. I'm happy for you to come back and give me more detail—or we can discuss offline.

MURAT DIZDAR: Maybe we will come back, because I think I can answer it here and not take it on notice—

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You can answer it on notice. Is that all right, Madam Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes.

ANSWER

In 2024 (noting it is an incomplete year), 55% of the Professional and Ethical Standards investigations were closed within 12 months, 36% were closed within 24 months and 9% took more than 24 months to complete.

These closure times include matters which may have been on hold for significant amounts of time for issues outside of the department's control such as the involvement of an external investigating body (e.g. the NSW Police Force, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Independent Commission Against Corruption).

The Department of Education has also initiated contact with the Honourable Mark Banasiak MLC in relation to his queries.

QUESTION 13 PAGE NO 26

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: How many lobbyists are on the books with the Department of Education, for example? Mr Dizdar might be able to give me that answer on notice. Do you have a regular pool of—there are 170 lobbying firms, apparently, in New South Wales that are all registered. How many of those does the department—

Ms PRUE CAR: Ms Mihailuk, I tend to get lobbied by students and teachers, not by lobbying firms.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I imagine there might be some lobbying firms interested in some of the land that you have, for example, or be interested in some of the services that the department actually—

Ms PRUE CAR: If we had land, we'd be using it to build schools.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: It's a serious question. You can take it on notice. I'm sure you'll find that out of 170 lobbyists, I'm sure some of them have had something to do in the education space. If you can take that on notice?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm happy to.

ANSWER

The Department of Education observes the Premier's memorandum that NSW Government officials to have 'no contact with unregistered third-party lobbyists' and 'to observe special precautions when meeting with any lobbyist who has been placed on the Lobbyists Watch List.'

The department Executive are regularly reminded of this responsibility and follow all relevant internal procedures to manage any invitation to meet with organisations on the official Lobbyists Register.

QUESTION 14 PAGE NO 26 & 27

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Deputy Premier, I wanted to ask about some of the changes to distance education, particularly in the Northern Rivers. You'd be well aware of some of the community concerns around what's happened at the Southern Cross School of Distance Education?

Ms PRUE CAR: Of course.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you able to provide any information for the community today about why decisions were made to stop those outreach services, which impact and service some of the most vulnerable communities?

Ms PRUE CAR: What has happened, Ms Mitchell, at Southern Cross is a pretty unfortunate set of circumstances because of some serious enrolment irregularities that were found via an audit. That is being investigated by the department at the moment. It's just very unfortunate. The enrolments were inflated and, as a result, we have had to make changes. We cannot have a situation, obviously, where we audit a school and we find that the enrolment figures that are given are different to the actual, because we have to—and I think the people of New South Wales expect us to do this—allocate resources, including teachers, based on the need of that particular school based on their actual enrolments.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. But my question to you, then, is there are obviously real students who have been benefiting from that school?

Ms PRUE CAR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Some of whom are highly disadvantaged, who now don't have access in the same way they used to. What are you going to do for those actual, real students that benefited from that way of learning to ensure continuity for them? That's the concern that's coming through from the local member, Richie Williamson, and others as well.

Ms PRUE CAR: I appreciate that. My answer was about putting it in context of the issue that we are dealing with at Southern Cross.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand that, but what are you doing for those who are there?

Ms PRUE CAR: Let me take that away and take that on notice. But we are dealing with a significant set of irregularities at Southern Cross, which obviously has an impact on what is delivered.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. I'm happy if Mr Dizdar or Ms Summerhayes can answer, but for those students there now who can't access that service anymore, who aren't enrolled and aren't actually getting an education at the moment, what is in place today for those students?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm happy to ask Mr Dizdar to give any information that we might have at hand.

MURAT DIZDAR: Like the Deputy Premier said, an audit of the school has shown what appears to be significant enrolment irregularity.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand that.

MURAT DIZDAR: We've been working with staff at the school. I understand, and I'm being fully briefed, because there's a number of staff who are distressed by the outcome that they're working through. We're making sure we can support them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What about the students, though, Mr Dizdar, with respect?

MURAT DIZDAR: We haven't changed the enrolment provision for any of those students. If there's a particular program or initiative that you're referring to—all the

students who were enrolled in that Southern Cross distance ed are continuing. But if there's a particular program, you might want to just tell us the particular program.
The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might take that offline with you. Sure. Thank you.

ANSWER

Students enrolled in distance education are enrolled as students studying from home with an online or paper-based provision.

Students are being individually supported to engage with face-to-face learning at their base school or work from home completing Distance Education learning. Some students are being supported to engage with post-secondary pathways such as TAFE.

QUESTION 15 PAGE NO 27

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Just back on that lobbying issue, I also remind you that you're Minister for Western Sydney. You have got the airport there. I have no doubt that there will be lobbyists coming to your door as well.

Ms PRUE CAR: I have taken that on notice.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to transcript question 13.

QUESTION 16 PAGE NO 30

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, are you concerned that antisemitism is a systemic issue in our schools?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm concerned about antisemitism, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you think it's a systemic issue in schools?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm concerned about any antisemitism, any racism and any intolerance. We've actually set up the Premier's panel on the prevention of extremism and hate and we are a part of that—a crucial part. The deputy secretary of public schools is working on that. Yes, I'm concerned about antisemitism. I think everyone can put their hand on their heart and say that they are concerned about antisemitism.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have a few examples that have been raised with me by parents. One is a year 7 student at St Ives High School who has experienced ongoing antisemitic comments and cyberbullying and has also had students draw swastikas in a notebook with the intent to intimidate her. This has been raised with the school. What will you do to address an issue like that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I can't begin to imagine how traumatic that would be for a young person in school to have to deal with that. That is extremely concerning. That is why we are engaged constantly with faith leaders. That is why we are looking at religious intolerance. That is why we are setting up a hotline about bullying, particularly when it relates to religious intolerance. I will need to take that away. I'm appalled at that. I don't think anyone can actually say that their response to that would be anything than "That is disgusting."

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You are happy to take that one away and look at what you can do?

Ms PRUE CAR: Of course.

ANSWER

NSW public schools have zero tolerance for religious intolerance and racism.

I am advised that staff from St Ives High School became aware of an incident involving a Year 7 student following comments made outside of the school grounds in a public forum. The school took immediate action to ensure the student's safety and contacted their parents. I understand the actions involved have been dealt with as per the Department of Education's Student Behaviour policy.

QUESTION 17 PAGE NO 30 & 31

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have one other one that I've been asked to raise with you at Lindfield Learning Village. There are allegations that someone also drew a swastika and a sentence saying "Kill the Jews" in the school bathrooms and that students have been told that all Jews deserve to die. Again, that has been reported to the school. Could you take that one on notice as well and report back?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will definitely take that on notice because there is a responsibility that I have personally and that all the people around the table have and that every teacher has and every principal has to make sure that our duty of care means that every student feels like they can belong in our public schools. That is unacceptable. I will take that away.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As we've seen from questions from us and also from the Chair, there are some pretty serious things happening. If you can report back to the Committee on specifically what actions you will take as well—I appreciate you said that you are going to take them away but if on notice you could provide information about what you will do in those particular schools.

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm happy to.

ANSWER

NSW public schools have zero tolerance for religious intolerance and racism.

The Relieving Principal has spoken to students at Lindfield Learning Village about world conflicts and the importance of inclusion, respect, and compassion. It was reinforced that as students enter the school each day they enter as a student of Lindfield Learning Village and are equally valued and respected regardless of their background.

This matter was raised at staff meetings to ensure sensitivity and awareness of student wellbeing in regard to these matters. The issues were also discussed at the school executive meeting to ensure consistency of approach across the school.

The school has an appointed Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO), who is trained with the knowledge to identify and counter racism.

The Department of Education has advised that all staff at Lindfield Learning Village have completed the department's anti-racism policy training. This training increases staff understanding of the nature and impact of racism. The school is also being supported by the department's Multicultural Team.

QUESTION 18 PAGE NO 31 & 32

Ms PRUE CAR: I would like to do the same for numeracy.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But my point is, Minister, we didn't need a Federal funding agreement to implement a statewide phonics check.

Ms PRUE CAR: No, and I've said—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I could just finish my question. I put to you that you don't need a Federal funding agreement to put in place a statewide numeracy check. Why won't you just do it like we did with the phonics check?

Ms PRUE CAR: I've said publicly that if the Commonwealth Government doesn't do it, we will do it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you costed it? Have you done any policy work on it?

Ms PRUE CAR: There is work being done right now.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have an indication as to how much it might cost to roll out?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So just confirming that even if the Federal deal doesn't land, you will look to implement—

Ms PRUE CAR: No, we want to do it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have a time frame of when you would like that to be in place?

Ms PRUE CAR: I can guarantee you this would be something that we will be proud of. This will be something that I will be shouting from the rooftops when we do it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. So this year, next year, this term of government?

Ms PRUE CAR: No, what I'm saying is, Ms Mitchell, this is not going to be a secret. I'm going to be out there saying, "This is the numeracy check. I'm proud to be advocating for this."

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. But you've made public comments about how you think it's a good idea, probably after comments were made in the media by other organisations about it. Have you done any actual policy work to implement it? Have you got a time frame of when you'd like to see it in place? Has any of that happened?

Ms PRUE CAR: Yes, and we are doing policy work on it now, and I hope to say something very shortly.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Had that happened before it was talked about by people like Glenn Fahey?

Ms PRUE CAR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So your work on an independent numeracy check happened prior to Glenn Fahey?

Ms PRUE CAR: We have been looking at this for some time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you provide on notice when that work began, under your Government?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm actually telling you now that we have been looking at it quite—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but "for some time", to be fair, Minister, is not an answer. When did you start working on a policy platform to do a statewide numeracy check?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm not sure why we're arguing about something that we both agree with.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, we agree, but you've said, "We've been thinking about it for a long time." I'm just asking when did you start doing the work? It's not a hard question.

Ms PRUE CAR: I mean, it would have been nice if it happened under the previous 12 years.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We did the phonics, so you can do numeracy. When did you start that policy work?

Ms PRUE CAR: After a significant time. There was no phonics.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When did you start the policy work on the numeracy check?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will take that away.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. Thank you.

Ms PRUE CAR: But we've been looking at it for some time, and I agree with Mr Fahey.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Then I expect that that work would have started months ago then, but I look forward to your answer.

Ms PRUE CAR: It's pretty rich coming from someone who was a Minister in a 12-year-old government.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you've just said that you've been looking at it for some time. You should be able to tell me when you started the work. Was it one of the first things you did?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will take it on notice.

ANSWER

Number sense is a foundational concept supporting students in developing an increasingly sophisticated understanding of mathematical skills and fluency as they understand, interpret and work with numbers.

The Department of Education has begun work to scope an early years number check.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Good morning, Minister. As you know, I have serious concerns about the installation of synthetic turf in schools, particularly with the risk they pose to kids in terms of pollution and burns. The Department of Planning and Environment has now released its draft guidelines entitled *Synthetic Turf in Public Open Space*. I note that they specifically don't consider synthetic turf surfaces in schools, even though in those draft guidelines there are several examples given of schools in joint-venture schemes where synthetic turf gets to be shared between the school and the community. I have a few questions about how the advice of those draft guidelines will impact schools or if it is being taken into account. Firstly, the draft guidelines say: Synthetic turf, especially those consisting of crumb rubber in-fill, should be reconsidered in bushfire prone areas.

There are several schools in the Blue Mountains that have synthetic turf playgrounds. What's being done in response to that recommendation?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm happy to take this on notice because I know it is of particular interest to you and I want to make sure that you get the right information about what we are doing in response to the report. But I believe we are investigating the impact of synthetic turf, including in schools. I believe that's happening. Let me get the latest information to you on notice.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I have a very related follow-up question, but it's not about bushfire-prone areas. The draft guidelines also recommend developing procedures to limit the risks of ingestion, lodgement and inhalation of, or skin contact with, loose infill material. I'm pleased to hear that there might be some work going on in terms of new synthetic turf installations, but for schools that have existing synthetic turf installations, what work is being done to bring the Education Facility Standards and Guidelines to incorporate that recommendation?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will have to take that on notice or pass to Ms Harrington if she knows. But just hearing what you're saying, obviously safety is the number one priority of ours when it comes to the wellbeing of kids in our care. That would be of concern if it is a safety issue, but I'm not sure if Ms Harrington knows anything more.

MURAT DIZDAR: I might kick off and then Ms Harrington can add to it. Our preference, and the advice that our asset management units give—our asset management units are on the ground and support 10 schools each through an office structure, so there is quite a strong army on the ground out there. We always give the preference of natural turf. If the school is working with us and looking to install synthetic material, we will be steering them on to natural turf if they are working with us. At the moment, we only consider it in high-use zones or shared areas, and we limit it to that. We will obviously adhere to any guidelines that impact on us, too. Ms Harrington might want to add more, but my operational experience is that, whenever a school comes to us, we go natural first. We push down that avenue and hear their case or why they may want it. In the vast majority of cases, it ends up with natural turf.

LISA HARRINGTON: I'd just add that, in terms of the draft guidelines, we will be looking at those and we will amend our Education Facility Standards and Guidelines, or EFSG, if we need to. To add to the secretary's point, if any schools are concerned, we have asset management teams that work really closely with the schools. If there needs to be any rectification of synthetic turf within schools, we will take that action at the local level.

Dr AMANDA COHN: And that potential upgrade or update to the facilities standards and guidelines—is there an expected time frame for that one?

LISA HARRINGTON: No. We're having a look at the draft guidelines now, so we'll do that after we've considered the draft guidelines.

MURAT DIZDAR: Can I give you a real practical example. I was at a fantastic school the other day, Mosman High School—great leadership, phenomenal school, wonderful new build, alongside buildings that are 140 years old, which are being refurbished. And, in one section of the school, there was no other viable option, which was made clear to me by AMU, as well as the principal. It's in those scenarios that we only look at the non-natural substance.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm pleased to hear that it's your preference or your recommendation for natural turf, and I look forward to the answers on notice. I'm particularly concerned, given these new draft guidelines that have now come out. There are, obviously, existing synthetic turf installations across the State and, at a minimum, procedures and protocols that need to be updated, but I'd be really interested to hear if there is going to be any work to actually look at removing those and putting natural turf back in.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has confirmed that the use of synthetic turf in schools is limited and careful consideration of site-specific conditions is required when it is used. The use of natural turf is preferred on all school sites, with synthetic material to be considered only in high-use zones, shaded areas or spaces where the growth of natural turf is difficult or not possible.

The department regularly inspects school assets including synthetic turf and works with schools to address concerns should they be raised.

Advice is provided to schools to support decision making for the use of school facilities that is appropriate for the weather and conditions at their location and to ensure the safety of its students.

The department looks forward to the final guidelines being issued and will incorporate these into policies and procedures.

Dr AMANDA COHN: ... I'll move on to a completely different topic if that's all right. This winter there's been an extraordinary rate of infection transmission in schools—particularly influenza, RSV, whooping cough, COVID. I appreciate you're very busy, Minister, and you might not have read it yet, but the National Science and Technology Council published a report earlier this month about the impact of indoor air quality on the transmission of airborne viral diseases, and that report clearly advised governments that, in education settings, proper ventilation and air cleaning strategies enhance safety for students, for staff, reduce absenteeism and improve the learning conditions. What's the progress to date on rolling out permanent improvements to air quality in schools?

Ms PRUE CAR: Obviously, we need to ensure that our schools are as safe as possible; that goes without saying. Diseases definitely take root within school environments. That's for sure. Sometimes it just takes over, when there's an RSV. Almost everyone had RSV this season. But I'm not aware of the publication you speak of, Dr Cohn, but I'll take that away on notice and come back to the Committee.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thank you. I know that, during the height of the pandemic, there was some work done that, I acknowledge, had to be very rushed, where a number of schools were deemed to have adequate ventilation that was natural ventilation. Do you know how many schools in New South Wales still have natural ventilation as their ventilation method?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd just ask Mr Dizdar if he knows the detail on that.

MURAT DIZDAR: I remember the work that you're referring to. It was very timely, particularly at the height of the COVID pandemic. We can get you the exact number, but we've had a strong program of rollout of air cooling and heating in schools as well. We've got some schools that are sealed—for example, under flight paths. So we take a nuanced approach. When you've got a footprint of 9,900 hectares, 2,200 schools, you have got to make sure you can meet that nuance. But I know that that program's been very successful in the rollout of air cooling and heating. But, in terms of how many still rely on natural ventilation, let us go back to that and get you that data. As a former classroom teacher, it's always—teachers do a great job of getting in there before the kids and making sure the room's aired et cetera and then getting them to a comfort point when they arrive, but let's get you the specific number that are just using natural ventilation.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm really interested in that number. And what I'm hearing anecdotally from teachers and from parents is working in classrooms that are naturally ventilated in winter—that, obviously, doesn't happen. Windows are closed, and those rooms are often filled over the recommended capacity. Now that people aren't paying as much attention as they were in the height of the pandemic, it's obviously a huge transmission risk.

MURAT DIZDAR: Every new build and every upgrade also gets the air cooling and heating systems. And, like I said, there is an extensive rollout of air cooling and heating in our schools. But we'll go back for you to how many still rely on natural ventilation.

ANSWER

The Department of Education completed a state-wide review of all windows, fans and ventilation systems, in more than 150,000 spaces across more than 2,200 public

schools, including departmental preschools. NSW is the only state of Australia to have undertaken a review of this scale.

The findings enabled the department to provide individualised, publicly available audit reports for every school, and identified opportunities for improvements to natural ventilation.

Based on these reports, principals and local Asset Services Officers assessed the ventilation requirements of each school setting, and additional rectification works were completed to meet safety and occupancy guidelines. This included adjusting window frames that were painted or screwed shut, and ensuring windows above ground floor level, that were fitted with restrictors, were modified to allow them to open safely.

Within NSW public schools there are more than 43,000 libraries and teaching spaces: of these over 14,000 have had air conditioning and/or mechanical ventilation systems installed, and over 29,000 teaching and learning spaces are using natural ventilation. Since coming to office, this government has installed air conditioning in more than 2,200 classrooms and libraries across NSW public schools.

In addition, all new schools, major upgrades, redevelopments and relocated schools will have air conditioning installed in permanent learning spaces and libraries.

The department provides advice and support to schools with their specific ventilation requirements.

QUESTION 21 PAGE NO 38

The CHAIR: In the New South Wales Government's response to the disability royal commission recommendations, there was reference made to an inclusive education unit, which performs education support functions, including advising educational authorities, educational institutions and principals on inclusive education issues. This was news to a lot of people that I've spoken with. What is this unit? Who manages it right now? Where does it sit?

Ms PRUE CAR: It most definitely sits with Mr Graham, and I'm going to ask him to answer that question.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Certainly. It's a unit that sits within Teaching, Learning and Student Wellbeing and advises schools on inclusive education practices and advises the department on our policies. It oversees advice to the Minister around these policies and around commissions and inquiries such as the royal commission.

The CHAIR: When was it established?

MARTIN GRAHAM: The department has, certainly in my memories, always had something like this. It would've been called different things over different periods of time, but there's always been an area that provided that kind of advice. Certainly to my knowledge, since 2005—Disability Discrimination Act—would've been increased emphasis and focus on that.

The CHAIR: Is it called a unit? Does it have an official name?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes. All kind of areas of the department are often a directorate or a unit.

The CHAIR: How long's it been called a unit?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I'd have to go back and check to see how long it's been called a unit.

The CHAIR: Does it get any specific funding?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Certainly. It's funded. It's not an independent body. It doesn't have an independent board. It's part of the department, so it's funded mainly through its staffing.

The CHAIR: How many people work in it?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I can take that on notice and come back to you with that.

ANSWER

The Inclusive Education unit referenced in the NSW Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission works across a range of policy, program and operational functions. There is also an inclusive education team that provides operational support to schools in the Student Wellbeing Support directorate. Both units were established in 2021. While not always called Inclusive Education, the department has historically included functions specifically related to disability.

QUESTION 22 PAGE NO 39

Ms PRUE CAR: I take it as read that you're reading from the budget papers, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. So you accept that the current rate of inflation is 3.8 per cent, but the increased funding in your department is only 3 per cent?

Ms PRUE CAR: I don't accept the premise of your question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But they're the numbers.

Ms PRUE CAR: I would take that on notice because the lion's share of the funding under—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think Mr Dizdar's got it there.

Ms PRUE CAR: Really, being that nasty doesn't really suit you, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking about your own budget papers. Who turns up without their budget papers?

Ms PRUE CAR: But I will say that the lion's share of the funding that we spend in Education is actually on the wages of teachers that teach in our classroom, and I know for a fact that that has increased, and I will say it has resulted in a 24 per cent decrease in teacher vacancies.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking you, Deputy Premier. You have been given advice that the current rate of inflation is 3.8 per cent. Your only percentage increase in your overall agency expenses is 3 per cent. So do you accept that that is a 0.8 per cent cut in recurrent spending after inflation?

Ms PRUE CAR: No, because I put it on record that I'm advised that the department budget allocation is actually up 6 per cent on recurrent from 2023-24.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But why does it say 3 per cent in the papers, then?

Ms PRUE CAR: And then the Education portfolio allocation is up 7 per cent on recurrent. We can have a debate over this number and that number, but I'm not going to be part of this comparing apples with oranges to suit someone's political purpose.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But your own budget papers say 3 per cent, with respect. I'm literally reading from your own budget papers.

Ms PRUE CAR: With respects, Ms Mitchell, you can cut it whatever way you like.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's the numbers from Treasury.

Ms PRUE CAR: We are spending more on public education than you ever had. We're spending more on public schools than you ever did.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So we can't trust the figures in the budget papers.

ANSWER

The NSW Labor Government is delivering record education funding after 12 years of neglect under the Liberals and Nationals.

In keeping with our election commitment, the government is also increasing NSW's funding of public schools to 75% of the Schooling Resource Standard, and is continuing to negotiate for the Commonwealth Government to increase its share to 25%.

QUESTION 23 PAGE NO 41

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Deputy Premier, I will just take you to the rapid growth in the Southern Highlands as a consequence of housing growth and development, and the increase in student enrolments. Deputy Premier, what plans does the Government have to address the outgrowing capacity of the current school hall at Moss Vale High School?

Ms PRUE CAR: You are right to call out, Ms Merton, the explosion in population in the Southern Highlands. All throughout the area south of Macarthur, through Wollondilly and through to Picton, there has been enormous growth. A lot of the communities have grown without any infrastructure over the past 10 years. I am happy to take on notice what is happening at Moss Vale. I meet with people regularly about school requirements in areas like the Southern Highlands, like Wilton and like Picton, where, can I say, the previous Government built a school where the classrooms had no walls. We are trying to retrofit that right now. We are committed to building schools in growing areas. I don't know how many ways I can say this in different syntax: We will build schools in growing areas.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Deputy Premier, if I could just redirect you, the issue was specific to the school hall at Moss Vale High School.

Ms PRUE CAR: Which I will take on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education continues to work closely with the school to address any maintenance issues raised. Over recent years, the department has invested in significant maintenance and upgrades at the school including roof and flooring replacement works, food technology facilities upgrade and other improvements.

Nominations for school upgrades can be made by principals and are assessed statewide on a needs basis.

QUESTION 24 PAGE NO 42

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you confirm now exactly how much material was removed from the Liverpool West site?

Ms PRUE CAR: Look, I am going to take that on notice or I am going to ask Ms Harrington. I do not want to give the wrong information.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is alright. If Ms Harrington has it, I am happy for her to provide it.

Ms PRUE CAR: Ms Harrington, I am just wondering if you have got that information?

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes, I do. So 2,500 tonnes of mulch were removed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. Do you have the date as to when the final amount of mulch was removed?

LISA HARRINGTON: I can get that for you.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has advised that a Final Clearance Certificate was issued by an independent hygienist on 7 March 2024.

Further works including cleaning were completed before the school resumed normal operations.

QUESTION 25 PAGE NO 47

Dr AMANDA COHN: Okay, thank you. I understand that enrolment application forms for all government schools provide gender options only for male and female. Why does the department not follow the Australian Bureau of Statistics standard classification for gender?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm not across the detail of the enrolment forms, to be honest. I will ask Mr Dizdar to answer that.

MURAT DIZDAR: We've been moving those online. We've got a proud track record of embracing all. I might get Mr Graham to talk to where we're at. It's been representation that's been made to us in the past as well. I'm not sure if he's got any info on that?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I don't have information on that. But, generally, our enrolment forms have to conform to a national statistical standard so all the information in that conforms to the national collection. All the information about parent SES and previous level of education—all that kind of stuff is all in the national standard—

Dr AMANDA COHN: Yes, but if I can redirect you for a second, the Australian Bureau of Statistics standard for gender includes—there are actually five different statistical options there.

MARTIN GRAHAM: It's different to the educational collection, which is the same collection that's used by non-government schools as well. It's a standard that is applied. But we can come back to you with more information about that.

ANSWER

The Department of Education makes every effort to be consistent with Federal guidelines. Any updates would require consideration of the Department of Education's IT system capabilities.

QUESTION 26 PAGE NO 47

The CHAIR: You've got to just jump in! I will ask a real quick one. I understand that the out-of-school-hours care tender process has had a policy change—that parent-managed services are now having to enter a competitive tender process. The feedback I'm getting is it now favours the kind of corporate and the larger players. Do you have concerns about that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I met with the representatives of those out-of-school-hours parent-run services recently and heard their concerns. I'll take that on notice because I did ask the department to come back to me on what could be done in relation to the concerns raised by those parent-run services.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has advised that changes made under the previous government regarding tendering services were made in response to government guidelines relating to direct negotiation.

Under current settings, parent managed OOSH services are able to transition the ownership of their service to the Parent & Citizens Association to be eligible for an automatic licence renewal.

QUESTION 27 PAGE NO 49

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: How many do you have in total in your staff in your office?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take advice on what that number is right now.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: And you don't have them allocated specifically for Western Sydney or Education? You don't know that? Could you take that on notice as well?

Ms PRUE CAR: Advisers advise on particular areas.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: How many advise specifically on Western Sydney, for example, in your office?

Ms PRUE CAR: There's a range of advice that might come from advisers that are in charge of infrastructure or advisers that are in charge of policy. This is a matter that is handled by my chief of staff.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: How many of your staff are specifically focused on policy as opposed to media? Is that divvied up as well?

Ms PRUE CAR: Of course. I think everyone is aware that there are some people with skill sets that are policy advisers and there are some that are media advisers.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You can take that on notice if you don't know that. I'd like to know how many are specifically media advisers and how many are policy. Also, how many do you have seconded from the department?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Members of my staff support me in both of my ministerial roles, as Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney.

QUESTION 28 PAGE NO 50

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, will you rule out turning any part of the former Marsden High School site into a housing development?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'll have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you remain committed to delivering the indoor courts and the 29 outdoor netball courts as part of the West Ryde Multi-Sports Facility?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm not sure whether Ms Harrington has some information on West Ryde that we can give to the Committee.

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes, we are committed to that project. We recently issued the tender in relation to that project.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you, Ms Harrington, have an anticipated project completion date for that at this stage?

LISA HARRINGTON: I'll take that on notice.

ANSWER

The project to deliver a Multi-Sports Facility in West Ryde is underway, with information regarding project timelines made available on the department's website. Further details will be shared as they become available.

QUESTION 29 PAGE NO 50

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. Deputy Premier, I know you're doing consultation at the moment in the northern beaches in terms of co-educational school options. One of the options talks about considering letting in a local stream at the selective high school. Is that something that you'll look to do at other selective schools across the State?

Ms PRUE CAR: What we've committed to doing in single-sex locations is consulting on any changes that may occur in communities to ensure that every single person in New South Wales has access to a co-educational high school. That was the Government's commitment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But one of the options up there is to look at a local stream in the selective school.

Ms PRUE CAR: And that's discrete to that location.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You won't be looking at that anywhere else across the State?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'll take that on notice, but that's part of the consultation about the northern beaches.

ANSWER

This consultation item is specific to the Northern Beaches high schools co-education community consultation.

QUESTION 30 PAGE NO 54

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to ask in relation to that one—and some of this goes to you as well, Secretary. There were a number of documents that were received in the first tranche. I'll note that multiple tranches of documents were provided, but there was a letter that came back to the Cabinet Office, signed by yourself. It indicated that the files were too large, that they couldn't be printed and that you encouraged the member—presumably me—to make a GIPAA request to access that information. Did you receive any advice about asking a member to put in a GIPAA when an SO 52 had already been passed?

MURAT DIZDAR: We take those responsibilities really seriously, Ms Mitchell. Let me apologise for what took place, because I asked to be briefed. That was the material advice I had when I signed, that the files were too large. I was subsequently advised that, inadvertently, human error—I own it as secretary—on our part. Why the file was so large? There were a number of empty columns, and that impacted on this particular attachment and its flow of pages. When I was made aware of that, it was indicated to me that we were in a position to provide that. I repeat, and I apologise, Ms Mitchell, it was a human error on our part that led to that initial advice and signature.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Who gave you the advice to say, "Put in a GIPAA"?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sorry, who gave—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Who gave you the advice to encourage me, the member, to put in a GIPAA request?

MURAT DIZDAR: The briefing document came forward to me to sign off on the letter, and it was in a written form that I took that advice. Subsequently, I asked for a meeting, and in that meeting I was advised that inadvertent human error. I asked how that had occurred. I was briefed, like I indicated to you, that there were a number of rows or columns that were empty, and that led to this file going on for an inordinate length of pages, and that it was in our capacity to be able to cut and remove those empty columns and then provide yourself with the requisite 52 request.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you seek advice from Ms Hargans? Did you discuss the process? It's a little unusual, with respect, for a secretary to ask a member to put in a GIPAA request when a Standing Order 52 call for papers has passed, as you would appreciate, by the entire House. I may have been the member who moved it, but other members were interested in the information as well.

MURAT DIZDAR: That's why I wanted to put on record my apology. I stand by what I signed at the time. It was the advice I was given.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But who gave you that advice? That's what I'm trying to understand.

MURAT DIZDAR: Like I said, it was in a written brief. I would have to go back to the written brief.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you can take that on notice, that would be great.

MURAT DIZDAR: But then Ms Hargans subsequently advised me in a meeting around what I just indicated to you, that there were a number of empty columns that lead to an inordinate length of documentation. We were in a position to be able to remove that and provide you with what you had requested. Again, my apologies for the human error on our part.

ANSWER

The Department of Education followed the same approach that was in place when the Hon. Sarah Mitchell was Minister for Education. This approach has been used over the last three years when documents have not been able to be printed, in consultation with The Cabinet Office and previously with the former Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Where the printed version of a document would be illegible, the department offers that a Member may access the documents informally, using section 8 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act).

Accessing the document under section 8 would allow the Member to view the electronic document at a departmental premise, or where appropriate, to be provided with an electronic version of the document.

With regards to this matter, advice was provided by the Legal Services Directorate to the Secretary's Office.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Hargans, just keeping with you while I have you, in terms of determining a fee, what's the process for that? When do you waive processing fees due to public interest? What's the threshold you put on that?

SARAH HARGANS: I will have to take that on notice. There are some calculations that are taken into account. I wouldn't want to mislead the Committee by taking a guess at that, so I will take that on notice. We do consider waiving or reducing fees on public interest grounds. Again, to the scope around what would be considered to be in the public interest, I would need to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have an example, but I won't go into specifics. A member of the media has asked all State departments for some data, which every other State has provided and waived the processing fees for. In New South Wales it was \$660 and now it has been brought down to \$330. There are some questions about why New South Wales is not also following the public interest process when other States appear to be with this particular information.

SARAH HARGANS: I can't speak for other States and Territories, but the department does work within the guidance from the Information Commissioner, particularly around how we process GIPAA applications and when and how we charge for that. But I can't explain why the other States and Territories decided to waive that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide on notice the threshold—for lack of a better term—that you put around the fees, that would be very useful.

SARAH HARGANS: Yes, we can take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education's practice is the same that existed when the Hon. Sarah Mitchell was Minister for Education. In line with the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* a department can charge a fee for a non-personal GIPA application from the second hour, as the application fee covers the first hour (section 64). The department's practice is that it doesn't start charging until the application exceeds 10 hours.

In the department's advance deposit letters, the two types of discounted processing charges are outlined. One is for hardship and the other is for people in public roles.

Usually, journalists receive the 50% discount under section 66 of the GIPA Act, due to special public benefit. The department's experience is that most journalists request this discount.

There is a 20-hour fee waiver for personal information. This is generally used for cases of hardship.

QUESTION 32 PAGE NO 59

The CHAIR: All of that is great, and I think that building that into the curriculum is great. But this particular question is around what we are doing to upskill teachers, not as teachers but as people who are in direct contact with children who may be experiencing domestic and family violence, to be able to identify and step in to help in those situations, so they know what to do. They see it, and then know what to do. The common risk assessment and management framework is what this question is about.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me see if Mr Graham has any detail around that, in particular. But if we don't we will take it on notice and make sure we come back with it.

MARTIN GRAHAM: I might take some of it on notice. But I will say that our child wellbeing area has exposure to the reports from schools and it is also where we start our professional learning around identification. We have talked about how the mandatory training that takes place each year around child protection has a different focus. Certainly, family and domestic violence has been a focus previously. It is that kind of work. In respectful relationships, we have the work around the syllabus, but we also have a significant investment around additional resources for respectful relationships. We are working closely with the Commonwealth, because all States are doing it. We are also working with the DCJ, Our Watch, Commissioner Hannah Tonkin, and so on. We definitely want to make sure that it is all aligned and that we are supporting our schools strongly with a consistent, single message. Things like the framework can be supported because we are not all talking about different things.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 151.

QUESTION 33 PAGE NO 59

The CHAIR: And the size of the problem. I will ask about something different. How many people are employed under School Infrastructure NSW?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll get Ms Harrington to answer if she has the exact figure. We have been reducing our contractor contingent labour in that area quite significantly. I was going to say close to 1,000 employees make up that area. Ms Harrington might have the exact number.

LISA HARRINGTON: I don't have an exact number. I will come back to you on that.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answers to supplementary questions 102-105.

QUESTION 34 PAGE NO 60

LISA HARRINGTON: For maintenance, we have really improved our response rate for maintenance. We have changed how we respond to schools. Basically we do it through facilities maintenance contractors, rather than through a whole-of-government contract. We are seeing an improved response rate for those call-outs. On average last financial year it was 16 days in terms of those requests, those call-outs, and now we're down to about seven days. In terms of upgrades and additions, there is a long list. A lot of schools throughout the State have requested works be done and that's a matter of sequencing those works according to need. We've done quite a bit with schools in the last few months of really looking at it from an equity point of view—what schools haven't had works done in some time, what's the level of disadvantage in that area.

The CHAIR: Is there a number that you can give me of those that are outstanding?

LISA HARRINGTON: I can take that on notice. But, yes, the upgrades and additions are the requests that schools have and there is quite a long list of those that have developed over many years. We need to keep engaging with schools and to see the need to be able to address the greatest need. Maintenance is very different. Maintenance—the reactive we have to deal with straightaway. The planned maintenance—we have a program that is more directed by the condition of the asset. We have modelling that's done and then it's validated with the schools.

ANSWER

While completion times depend on both contractor and material availability, more than 83% of maintenance callouts are responded to within 24 hours under the new maintenance contract, compared to 60.1% under the old contract.

QUESTION 35 PAGE NO 61

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Hargans, in terms of further information or advice that will come out to schools, is there more to come later this year? I just wanted to clarify that.

SARAH HARGANS: Yes, as I said, the problematic and harmful sexualised behaviour guidelines are being reviewed and the plan at this stage is that they will be released in term 4.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will they be publicly available as well?

SARAH HARGANS: I can't say at this point in time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take that on notice perhaps?

SARAH HARGANS: Yes, we can take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education will be able to provide an update in Term 4.

QUESTION 36 PAGE NO 62

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Dizdar, I'm going to come back to you. I know there have been a few questions about the restructure of the department over the course of the last 18 months. Are you able to provide—and I'm happy if you do it on notice—how many senior executives have either left, their position has been no longer required or their role has been terminated? How many senior exec have left? How many were eligible for a payout under the appropriate section of the GSE Act, and how much has been received in those payouts?

MURAT DIZDAR: Like every agency, I'm bound by the Government's target of a reduction of 15 per cent in PSSE and I'm working to deliver on that. I'm about halfway through delivering that requirement.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But can you provide on notice the specifics that I've asked for? How many senior executives have left, how many were eligible for a payout and how much did they receive?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I'm happy to do that.

ANSWER

From 1 July 2023 to 27 August 2024, 28 Public Service Senior Executives each received compensation payments in line with the provisions of their contract of employment, the Government Sector Employment (GSE) Act, and GSE Regulation 39, totalling \$5.64 million.

QUESTION 37 PAGE NO 64

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: This is probably for you again, Mr Graham. Have you got any data in terms of appeal applications that you have received, say, in the last 12 months? I know that the selective school placement tests are only out recently—some a little earlier than anticipated, but I'm not going to go there. Have you had any data in terms of appeal applications from last year relating to the selective school placement outcomes?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I'll have to come back to you with that data.

ANSWER

A total of 246 appeals were submitted relating to placement outcomes for 2024 entry to selective high schools.

QUESTION 38 PAGE NO 65

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I go to you, Mr Ruming, in relation to some numbers. Obviously, I've seen the Deputy Premier's media release today about teacher vacancies. When was that data captured? I think it's 1,690-something. When is that figure from?

SHAUN RUMING: From 5 August.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There was also a mention today that retirements and resignations are trending downwards. I think we talked last time about what data was available for the previous year, but you indicated that you'd have some more. Do you have any updated figures in terms of the actual numbers?

SHAUN RUMING: We typically measure that and report that annually, but after the last estimates we decided that we should definitely look at that monthly. Although it's an initial trend, when we got to July, the resignation rate was down to 3.21 per cent and the retirement rate was down around 1.6 per cent, down from 2 per cent. We've been looking at it monthly. The challenge with that is some people may retire in term 3 or term 4. We're not doing a victory lap as such, but the indication is that the retirement rate and resignation rates are slowing.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Percentages are great, but last year you gave us actual numbers. You said that retirement was 1,078 and resignation was 2,050. Do you have the raw numbers?

SHAUN RUMING: I'd have to come back to you on notice on raw numbers.

ANSWER

The raw figures quoted were for the 2023 calendar year (1,078 and 2,050).

The corresponding figures for the 2024 calendar year will be available in 2025.

QUESTION 39 PAGE NO 65

The CHAIR: Coming back to the number of not the maintenance requests but the upgrade requests, you said that there was a seven-day average for responding to maintenance requests. What is the average for responding to an upgrade request?

LISA HARRINGTON: It is quite different. When they put the nomination in, there is no set time frame because there is a large demand in terms of schools asking for upgrades and additions. It really does vary depending on the particular upgrade and addition in terms of how quickly those are dealt with. Across all of our 2,200 schools, there are quite a few requests in the system.

The CHAIR: Could you perhaps come back on notice with exactly how many requests there are?

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes, we can.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has advised it is continually reviewing its asset management approaches to improve the educational outcomes of students, maximise the useful life of school buildings, and optimise whole of life asset costs of NSW public schools. All statutory and preventive maintenance is completed as the first priority to ensure our schools are safe and compliant, and maintenance items that poses a safety risk to students or staff as these are addressed immediately. Nominations for upgrades and additions are assessed for funding statewide on a needs-basis.

With record funding for maintenance and local upgrades, the department is working through the multi-year backlog of works previously promised to schools but not delivered under the former NSW Liberal Government.

The CHAIR: One of the frustrations I had with the previous Government was that, as far back as 2019, they still couldn't tell me what was left to be done in terms of knowing what was accessible and what wasn't. Does the Department of Education have an idea as to what is already fully accessible and where that work needs to be done in the future?

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Harrington might want to make comment, but I think we're improving in this area too. Why I know that to be the case is that when Ms Summerhayes and I were principals, we had an asset service officer for 40 schools. We were lucky to see them once a year. Our asset service officers do a huge job, and we've given them a ratio of one to 10 schools. They are in and out of those schools on a regular basis. They're the ones that are keeping us updated on what that school need is, where the facilities lie and what condition they're in. That goes to things like accessibility. Ms Harrington might want to add to that.

The CHAIR: Is there a central repository?

LISA HARRINGTON: We can come back on notice. But I do know that the majority of our buildings were constructed prior to the disability Act, so it is a big task to go and rectify all.

The CHAIR: I do appreciate it's a big task. I just would like to think that we've begun an audit to go, "This is what it would take", rather than just letting things flow until we do get, hopefully, one day, that requirement that everything be made accessible. That's incredibly helpful.

ANSWER

Local School Infrastructure offices work directly with school principals to identify essential access works for students with moderate to high learning and support needs to ensure they can access their local school with ease.

Funding is available for students with special needs under the department's Integration Program which provides facilities adjustments (such as ramps, lifts, and hoists) that aim to provide a more inclusive educational experience. Adjustments ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without a disability. When adjustments are identified to support a student, the department assesses the full school site and works to ensure the student can access education on the same basis as their peers.

The department also provides purpose-built facilities for students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, known as Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs). Students at SSPs are provided with the same syllabus and curriculum content as mainstream students in NSW, however activities are modified to suit individual student needs. Teachers utilise various forms of adaptive technologies in order to achieve the best educational outcomes.

QUESTION 41 PAGE NO 66

The CHAIR: Can we do some basic questions around numbers of children with disability in mainstream schools? Are you able to tell me how many have separate support units or come back with the data on that in terms of how many of our schools have separate support units and how many there are?

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Graham might have the figure about how many support units we've got in the system. One in four of our children in our care in public education have an adjustment or adjustments or require adjustment or adjustments for disability. As to the number of support classes, I'm not sure if Mr Graham has that.

MARTIN GRAHAM: We have just over 4,500 support classes. That includes in our SSPs and in mainstream schools. We can come back to you with how many schools those 4,500 are across.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answers to supplementary questions 24 and 25.

QUESTION 42 PAGE NO 67

The CHAIR: In the last budget estimates we talked about the out-of-pocket expenses, and we were looking at that time at the 2023 interim report. Obviously, we don't have the audited full report at the moment, but the financial year has ended. What is the trend looking like in terms of parents' out-of-pocket costs?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me come back to what figures we do have. I don't have them at my fingertips. Since 2020 we have provided the same consistent advice four years running that voluntary contributions—schools must stress that it's voluntary. We cannot use the words "fees" or "mandated". We've got to respect the capacity of our communities to pay. We've also capped the rates. We haven't allowed for increases because we are being cognisant of the cost of living in New South Wales as well as the pandemic and then unfortunate natural disasters, starting with drought but bushfires and floods. It's a message that we have been reinforcing. Ms Summerhayes has been doing the same since she became deputy secretary. But we have kept those fees at their notional caps and have not allowed for increases.

ANSWER

Parent and carer contributions will be included as components of particular line items in the Department of Education's audited FY2023-24 statutory financial statements. The department's FY2023-24 statutory financial statements are currently being audited and will be published in the department's Annual Report.

QUESTION 43 PAGE NO 68

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to come back to you, if I can, Mr Ruming. In terms of overall teaching numbers—and I'm happy if you need to take this on notice—do you have figures, in terms of within the department, for how many permanent full-time equivalent teachers there are at the moment?

SHAUN RUMING: Yes, just give me a second. Actually, I've got the vacancy numbers in FTE. I'll come back to you on the workforce numbers.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take on notice for me the number of permanent FTEs and the number of temporary FTEs—teachers, for both—and also the number of SLSOs and the number of school admin and support staff.

SHAUN RUMING: Sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The most recent data, if you've got it—from the start of term 3 this year is fine—but whatever you can provide. Could you also provide on notice the same datasets for 12 months ago as well.

SHAUN RUMING: Sure.

ANSWER

Teaching Service FTE	Jun-22	Jun-24
Permanent	44,650.57	51,449.59
Temporary	20,719.62	13,704.31

School learning support officers (SLSO) FTE	Jun-22	Jun-24
Permanent	3,555.57	7,035.02
Temporary	7,785.04	6,050.97

School admin support staff (SASS) FTE	Jun-22	Jun-24
Permanent	9,781.80	14,273.96
Temporary	10,538.33	8,378.58

QUESTION 44 PAGE NO 69

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. Mr Martin, just a quick one for you. In terms of new teachers entering the system, what are the numbers like so far this year in terms of new approvals to teach? I appreciate that's across all school sectors. Do you have any data in relation to that?

PAUL MARTIN: I do. Just give me a second; I'll have a look. I might take that on notice. I'll try to find it and add it into a later answer, if that's okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that's fine, thank you.

ANSWER

As answered during the hearing:

As at June 2024, 4,425 teachers were granted either conditional or provisional accreditation.

QUESTION 45 PAGE NO 69

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that's fine, thank you. I want to ask now about Rankin Springs, a school that I've asked about a couple of times before. I'm happy to direct it to you, Mr Dizdar, but Ms Summerhayes might also want to answer, depending on the nature of the question. I've had some more community concerns about the student enrolments going down. I think they're now down to 19 pupils, whereas about a year ago they were at 32. Is there any feedback in terms of the declining enrolments? Also, could you provide any information in terms of the principal's position and having someone permanently in that role and where that's up to?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure. I'll just see if Ms Summerhayes has got any info on that.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I'd have to take on notice the enrolment numbers precisely, Ms Mitchell. What I can tell you about Rankin Springs is you would be aware that we have been going through a recruitment process for a new principal in a community that has been very active and very involved in this school but also a little bit split in community about how we do that. I know that you're aware of that. We're working very closely. The DEL has a really good relationship with the community. They are speaking with her regularly about how the progress is going on the recruitment for a new principal. I'm happy to come back to you with all the numbers on enrolment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there a financial incentive with that principal position that has been added? I've been told that there is. I just wondered if you—

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes, I believe there is.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy for you to provide on notice how much—

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: What that incentive is? Certainly.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And if you can also—again, on notice is fine. My understanding is that the position has been advertised possibly a number of times, but it still hasn't been filled. If you could—

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Unfortunately, that's not uncommon for many of our country areas, as you would know, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. But if you can provide any further information on notice, that would be great.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Of course.

ANSWER

There has been no change to the enrolment figures the Member has quoted.

The position of Principal at Rankins Springs has been filled through the Department of Education's incentive transfer process. The new Principal is an experienced small school principal and will commence in the role at the beginning of 2025.

QUESTION 46 PAGE NO 72

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Would there be any data available that might show how many schools in New South Wales are actively engaging in teaching civics as part of the curriculum?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Certainly, 100 per cent. Ms Summerhayes might be able to talk to curriculum monitoring because one of the absolute bedrocks for us is that we teach all the syllabus outcomes.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Indeed. Ms Merton, I was just mentioning that it's a bit of a rite of passage that every year 5 or 6 student in a New South Wales school would usually attend the Canberra excursion.

I certainly did when I was in primary school—100 years ago!—and our children across the State continue to do so in most cases. I know that civics is part of the instruction that leads to those extracurricular experiences.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Would any data be available in terms of monitoring the teaching of civics in the curriculum?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: When we do curriculum policy monitoring, our schools run through a rotational monitoring process. We look at what is taught in all of our schools from K-12. Certainly, we are looking at all parts of the syllabus requirements.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Would that data be available?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: We can give you information on curriculum policy monitoring. I would need to take on notice—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Just in terms of results, that's all. Parents are saying, "It's not being taught," or "Why does school A know but school B doesn't?" So just in terms of data and what we might be looking at.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I can certainly take on notice how much specific civics data we have. But, Ms Merton, I would also say to you that when kids talk about what they are learning in a classroom, they may not identify it as civics, but they may have been learning about Parliament, getting ready to go on the Canberra excursion, doing work around the role of the Prime Minister and the history of the Australian Parliament. When kids talk about learning, it's sometimes hard for parents to understand which part of the syllabus is being taught in the classroom.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answers to supplementary questions 193 – 201.

QUESTION 47 PAGE NO 72 & 73

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Ruming, I think this one's also probably for you. Just in terms of department staff, not those who are working in schools but those working in the different corporate offices, both in the Sydney area and across the State, do you have any data on how many full-time staff are working three days a week or more in the office currently?

SHAUN RUMING: We'd have to come back to you on notice with those exact figures, but we do have flexible work options, part-time, job share, flexible start and finish. But, with those exact numbers, we'd have to come back to you on those. We can provide those figures.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. I'm just after full-time staff, how many are working three days a week or more.

SHAUN RUMING: I'll have to come back to you on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you also, if you provide those figures, give me, if possible, what percentage of staff that is?

SHAUN RUMING: Sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm assuming it's not 100 per cent at this point. When would you expect to hit 100 per cent of those staff back full-time, three days a week, as the Premier has outlined is his expectation for the public service?

MURAT DIZDAR: Can I just make comment on this because I've got oversight and responsibility for the entire workforce? We're looking forward to delivering on the Premier's circular, as every agency will need to. I think there is a rebalance to be had here, off the back of the COVID years. Eighty-five per cent of the workforce that I'm responsible for have no option of working from home. They're inside the school gates.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand. That's why I asked specifically about those in corporate offices. When would you expect to hit the 100 per cent of staff back three days a week or more?

MURAT DIZDAR: We're working on our draft policy in line with the Premier's circular, and then we'll need to go out with our draft policy. I intend to consult with Mr Ruming and our workforce, and then we'll make decisions around what that best—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What's the timeline for that consultation, Mr Dizdar?

MURAT DIZDAR: I think we should be able to achieve that work this year. We're in term 3. We're midway through term 3. We should have definite clarity, heading into the new school year, if not earlier, but we look forward to consulting with our workforce and making sure that we can meet the operational needs of schools, because we're the support arm, how we can best deliver and achieve that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand that. I just wanted figures. But, if Mr Ruming can provide some on notice, that would be great.

ANSWER

The Department of Education does not currently collect the data on the number of staff working in the corporate offices each day.

QUESTION 48 PAGE NO 73

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The new high school at Medowie—I've had some community members raise concerns in relation to, I guess, student access once that school opens. Medowie Road is quite a busy road. I'm told that there's not a safe access across that road for students, and a lot of them will be living on the other side of that road, as opposed to the school. Has there been any costings or budgeting for some sort of safe passage for students to cross that quite busy Medowie Road, in that project?

LISA HARRINGTON: I'll have to take the specifics of that on notice. Obviously, we work really closely with stakeholders across council and Transport to make sure that, when we build a school, there's safe access. But I'll have to come back to you on notice on those details.

ANSWER

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring students, teachers and staff can safely access their schools, including the new high school at Medowie. The Minns Government is proud to be delivering this school for the local community in its first term, with the site for the school located in close vicinity to Medowie Public School.

Pedestrian and vehicle access and crossing locations will be informed by a traffic and transport study which is already underway. The study will involve consultation with Transport for NSW and Port Stephens Council.

Once the school's access management plan has been confirmed, it will be shared with the local community and published on the School Infrastructure website at www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/new-schools/new-high-school-for-medowie.html.

QUESTION 49 PAGE NO 75 & 76

Dr AMANDA COHN: There was a project from the Advocate for Children and Young People, *The Voices of LGBTQIA+ Young People in NSW*. It made a recommendation that the department fund inclusion training for teachers and school leaders. Has there been any progress in implementing that recommendation?

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Graham might add to this, but inclusion is a major feature of all our training. You have heard lines of questioning around that. Stakeholders are pushing me to say there is more work that we can do on this front. We did partner with—Mr Graham will get the title right for me—an external authority that has just opened the LGBTQIA+ museum in Sydney. They are not going to forgive me, because I work closely with them. Mr Graham?

Dr AMANDA COHN: You are talking about Qtopia.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Qtopia—it is on the tip of your tongue, Secretary.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, Qtopia. We partnered closely with them. We supported them around curriculum development for excursions for children and our staff. We are working to provide better guidance and more guidance to schools by way of our staff. Mr Graham, did you want to add to that?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We know how important it is for schools to be supported by the department, particularly with these issues. There is work that we are doing. Our work with Qtopia is one of the things we are doing. We are also working to support teachers and schools. We are doing more work around that.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thank you. I am delighted to hear that it is possible to do an excursion to Qtopia. That would have meant the world to me as a high school student. More specifically, I am interested less in the staff who might be interested in this and are promoting inclusion really well—I am coming back to that report from the advocate. There were certainly some pretty distressing anecdotes of a lack of acceptance from some teachers and staff, but also just a lack of awareness and understanding. That recommendation was specifically around training for staff who might have no knowledge or interest in inclusion. Is there any training being rolled out or prepared? What is happening in that space?

MURAT DIZDAR: That is the area that I was referring to that stakeholders are pushing us on, saying, "You can give better support to your workforce. You're certainly doing it through the LGBTQIA+ staff network. But how can you then grow that understanding across the board?" I think we have work to do there. I think it is a fair line of questioning that you indicate to us. Let's come back to you with what we intend to do in that space. We could provide better support for our workforce.

ANSWER

As part of a piece of work supporting staff to promote inclusion, the Department of Education is developing resources which reinforce that public schools are places where every student is a valued member of their school community, regardless of background.

QUESTION 50 PAGE NO 76

DR AMANDA COHN: There was also a recent announcement by the New South Wales Government for 1,300 apprentice and trainee positions in local government, which was a really excellent initiative. Do you know how many of those roles will be allocated to early childhood education and care?

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Read might talk about the apprentices and trainees. We've got a government commitment to deliver for Mr Whan, but this one goes specifically to local government. Ms Read might have details on that.

CHLOE READ: I would have to take that on notice. I am not sure whether they will be allocating specific numbers of places to particular occupations or whether it will be for councils to decide the workforce that they need and can support and using that to access the scheme. I can get more information on notice.

ANSWER

All questions relating to the additional 1,300 apprentices and trainees should be referred to my colleague the Minister for Local Government as the program is the responsibility of the Office of Local Government.

QUESTION 51 PAGE NO 76

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thank you. I would be really interested to understand. I was reading the report that the department did on early childhood services, which was a really informative report—particularly the comments that council-run services were particularly strong in looking after marginalised or vulnerable communities in a way that the private sector hasn't. I am really keen to understand the investment from the Government in council-run early childhood education.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's come back to you with specific info on that.

ANSWER

Council-run early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are eligible for all NSW Government early childhood education grants and funded programs, based on the relevant program guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, Start Strong for Community Preschool, Start Strong funding for Long Day Care, Mobile Preschool Funding, Start Strong Capital Works and the Disability and Inclusion Program.

In 2023-24, the NSW Government provided \$52.9 million to council-run ECEC services.

QUESTION 52 PAGE NO 76

Dr AMANDA COHN: There was also a recent announcement for \$10 million in early childhood education and care as part of the Western NSW Workforce Activation Program. I understand from the announcement that was for establishment, expansion or upgrade of early childhood education and care facilities in local government in Broken Hill and Cobar. Is there any more detail about how that is being allocated?

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Barraket, do you have more detail?

MARK BARRAKET: Yes, I'm happy to take on notice how that's being allocated because, while we have worked with the appropriate government agency on that, we're actually not the lead agency—so happy to take on notice what we're doing to support that.

ANSWER

This program is administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Questions should be referred to the Minister for Regional NSW.

QUESTION 53 PAGE NO 77

Dr AMANDA COHN: It's a fantastic initiative to have a preschool in all of those new schools. Has there been any work to understand the need for long day care as well?

MARK BARRAKET: We are conscious that long day care is something that is one of the types of services that early childhood education and care can provide for communities and there is a lot of interest in that. The Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund, which is a significant investment across 10 years, does look at how we can support children from zero through to five in different types of care models. We are exploring that at the moment.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I appreciate it might need to be taken on notice but I'm particularly interested in that work in the context of the growth areas or the areas that are targeted for housing.

MARK BARRAKET: I can take on notice that detail for you.

ANSWER

Data on growth areas based on Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure information was a specific input into prioritisation of school sites for 100 public preschools when assessing supply and demand.

In addition, further work to address early childhood access and affordability will consider the findings of an Independent Market Monitoring Review, conducted by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. This review specifically investigated areas of early childhood education and care shortages in NSW. This analysis included population growth estimates and housing growth areas.

QUESTION 54 PAGE NO 77

Dr AMANDA COHN: I had a couple of questions which I imagine you're going to take on notice, but I'm happy to put them on record for you. I'm interested to know, for the funding that has been allocated for fee relief for preschool—is that for yourself as well?

MARK BARRAKET: Yes.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Is it possible to understand that funding broken down between department operated, council operated, privately operated et cetera?

MARK BARRAKET: When you're talking about funding, is this the amount of money that we provide for fee relief or is it the amount of money that goes to the service?

Dr AMANDA COHN: The question was about fee relief, but I think both would be helpful.

MARK BARRAKET: There is a range of different types of fee relief that we provide and we've committed over \$430 million in fee relief this financial year. I can provide on notice the breakdown of the amounts that we provide to four-year-olds and three-year-olds through that.

Dr AMANDA COHN: That would be helpful—and by the type of service.

MARK BARRAKET: And by the service type, yes.

ANSWER

In 2024-25 the NSW Government is delivering more than \$430 million in fee-relief for children aged 3 to 5 in preschool. The table below outlines the 2024-25 fee relief funding allocations by service type:

Fee relief by service type	2024-25 Budget
Community preschool fee relief (3 to 5 year-old children)	\$198,394,416
Long day care fee relief (4 and 5 year-old children)	\$202,917,109
Long day care fee relief (3 year-old children)	\$31,700,000
Mobile preschool fee relief (3 to 5 year-old children)	\$3,988,339

Funding allocations by provider type, such as local government and private for-profit organisations, are not yet available for the 2024-25 financial year.

QUESTION 55 PAGE NO 77

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I ask—it might be Ms Summerhayes. I've just had some questions put to me in relation to Rye Park Public School down near Boorowa, which I understand is in recess at the moment. There is some community support there to have it reclassified as operational and to get some students back.

Are you able to provide any information in relation to that particular school?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: No, I'd need to take it on notice, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there anything general you can say in terms of what would be the minimum number required to get it back to an operational status?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Each school community is consulted, as you know, when we put a school into recess or are discussing whether we should close a school or not. It's very much contextualised by the communities that we are serving. So I wouldn't like to give you a number out of a ballpark.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But can you provide on notice some information about that specific one?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes, I'll certainly provide on notice about that specific site.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answers to supplementary questions 140 and 146.

QUESTION 56 PAGE NO 78

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have a few quick infrastructure questions that I might ask. There is Lismore South Public School. Ms Harrington, do you have an update—obviously that's a flood-impacted school, as you would know—in terms of any kind of time frames of construction to begin on that rebuild?

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes, we had an information session with the community earlier this month and some concept designs were shared. In terms of the time frame, I'll have to come back to you on notice. But we're obviously moving forward with being able to share with the community the designs of what the school will look like, but I'll come back to you on notice on the time frame.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is finalising site investigations and technical reports for the rebuild of Lismore South Public School, and is continuing to pursue opportunities to expedite works for flood-impacted communities like Lismore. Updates on the project will continue to be made available on the department's website.

QUESTION 57 PAGE NO 78

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Also, just in relation to Richmond River high school—again, I know that there have been some recent plans made available. Are you able to provide any information or updates in terms of construction time frames up there?

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes, I'll take that on notice. So similar sort of story there—where we've recently met with the community and shared some designs. I can come back to you on notice on the construction time frame.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is finalising site investigations and technical reports for the rebuild of The Rivers Secondary College, Richmond River High Campus, and is continuing to pursue opportunities to expedite works for flood-impacted communities like Lismore.

Updates on the Richmond River High Campus project will continue to be made available on the department's website.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Googong high school, again, was also another commitment—to build a new one there. Are there any updates in relation to that particular project?

LISA HARRINGTON: I can come back to you on notice on—so stage two for Googong?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The high school.

LISA HARRINGTON: We have the site for the high school for Googong, and we're at that design and planning stage. But I can come back to you with more on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And, again, as best you can—time frames for construction and completion.

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate that there is a process that goes with this, so this might cross over into Ms Summerhayes' purview, but the catchment area for that particular school—and I've had some community members raise questions about the impact that there might be then on Karabar High School when Googong does open. How will you manage that with the local community in terms of information around catchment boundaries? And the time frames for that as well—

MURAT DIZDAR: There is an intricate balancing act with the existing schools and what their boundaries look like. We look at demographic projections for the area. We look at as sensible as possible boundary cut-off points because they can be contentious. We've had historical cases where you cut off a street, where one side of the street can go and one side can't, so we look at all of those things. But the key factors are the demographic projections of the entire area, the drawing area, as well as the existing schools. Having visited Karabar High School recently, I understand their concerns. We'd want to balance their viability alongside a new high school there as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of the time frame of that, obviously that is dependent on the actual build and construction of Googong high school. So there is no kind of clarity that we can give to the community about those boundaries at this point?

MURAT DIZDAR: No. Once we know when we're opening—as you will recall, we like to try to recruit the principal a year in advance of opening because there is a lot of work to be done and, through the principal, we like to get other key staff on board, we like to start working with parents. You want at least six months out, if not earlier, to have the drawing area because you want to start taking prospective enrolments. But we've got a long way to go here. We've got to determine when we'll be opening that school, what year groups we'll be opening with. We've had high schools where we open only with year 7 and we've had others where we open with a stage year 7-8. We've had others where we open with years 7 to 11. All of these things come into play, but at least six months out, if not earlier, we want to make sure we bed down the drawing area and start taking enrolments.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With Googong high school, is that being funded through DOE School Infrastructure or is it coming from the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't want to get this wrong. I'm not sure. Ms Harrington?

LISA HARRINGTON: We might take that on notice.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's take it on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is undertaking planning and design for a new high school at Googong, which the Minns Labor Government is proud to be delivering in its first term. Funding arrangements are made public including through the NSW Budget process. Further information is available on the department's website.

QUESTION 59 PAGE NO 79

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. Bungendore High School—I know we asked about this a little earlier, but I just wanted some figures. Again, I'm happy for you to take this on notice if you need to, Ms Harrington. Do you have any figures in terms of the total amount that has been spent so far on the temporary school?

LISA HARRINGTON: We can take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And are you able, if you can, to on notice provide anticipated costs to maintain that temporary site both for this financial year and the next one, if you've got that available?

LISA HARRINGTON: Yes, we can take that on notice.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 127.

QUESTION 60 PAGE NO 79

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I don't expect you to have that at your fingertips in here. That's okay. Willyama High School, out in Broken Hill: Obviously there's issues out there with the mould and there's been the commitment to rebuild. Is there any update on the timeline for that particular project?

LISA HARRINGTON: We are working really closely at the moment on that. Asset management is involved, as well as infrastructure delivery, in terms of the demolition of the existing school and also the plans for the new school. I can come back to you on notice in terms of the time frames, but we are hoping to come out to the community soon on the designs in terms of the new build.

ANSWER

Updates regarding project timelines will continue to be shared with the community as procurement and planning work progresses. Work is currently underway to plan and deliver the new school.

QUESTION 61 PAGE NO 80

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Fantastic, thank you. The social media forum that the Premier has announced recently—I think it's in conjunction with the South Australian Government—is the Department of Education going to be involved in that forum at all?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, we will be.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know which education stakeholders have been invited to take part?

MURAT DIZDAR: No, we're undertaking that work to support the Premier's summit there. If I've got it right, there's a day in New South Wales and there's a day in South Australia. We'll definitely be at the table because we're a key entity here, but there's work underway on that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy if it's on notice, but are you able to provide any further information in terms of education stakeholders, student voice—who might be invited to take part in that forum?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I know that I've already been asked around the student voice, and I know you've got a very strong understanding of the DOVES network out there and how we might capture it. What I do know sitting here is that there's work at play. I'm happy to come back on notice with whatever we've got at that time. I imagine, given the importance, there'll be a whole cross-section of stakeholders here. Definitely, Education will be at the table.

ANSWER

Invitations to the Social Media Summit are being coordinated by the Premier's Department and The Cabinet Office.

QUESTION 62 PAGE NO 82

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I want to go back to some of the recruitment process, so it's probably back to Mr Ruming. Have you got any data on how many teachers have been hired since the last estimates through the Priority Recruitment Support scheme?

SHAUN RUMING: We've expanded that scheme. I think we're at around 110 schools right now, up from 79. That has been a good improvement. I'll have to come back to you on the number of people who have been hired through that program.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you also provide on notice how many of those staff received the full targeted recruitment bonuses that were available?

SHAUN RUMING: Yes, we can do that.

ANSWER

There has been 517 teacher positions filled by the Priority Recruitment Support team since the commencement of the 2024 school year.

QUESTION 63 PAGE NO 82

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: On the Beyond the Line Program, can you tell me when the most recent iteration of that took place and where they went on that trip?

SHAUN RUMING: That was re-established, I think we said at the last estimates, in 2023. We'll be continuing that in 2024—we've got an intake in September—and also in 2025. We do two trips per year. The March 2024 tour had 49 participants. As I said, the next one is due in September.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So I'm a month early asking about those numbers.

SHAUN RUMING: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know roughly how many are slated to go in September?

SHAUN RUMING: I'll have to come back to you on notice. Out of the cohorts that we've done, 19 students are engaged in rural placements or rural scholarships.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you able to tell me where they're going on the September trip?

SHAUN RUMING: I cannot. I think last time at budget estimates I said they were going to Mudgee and then they were going west from there, and we all wanted to join them in Mudgee. I'll come back to you on the locations for the next one.

ANSWER

Beyond the Line is anticipating approximately 50 pre-service teachers will participate in the study tour. The tour will cover 24 schools across the Central West.

QUESTION 64 PAGE NO 82

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: On the Grow Your Own teacher pipeline—and I know that there are a couple of iterations of that—do you have any updated data in terms of the numbers under that program at the moment?

SHAUN RUMING: For 2024 the planned intake was 211 for Grow Your Own. I note that the Chair earlier had an interest in SLSOs, so this program is right up their alley. It's probably our most popular program. We have currently got 382 participants in that program. We're looking to do more in 2025. We're just doing the modelling on that. We ran about 520 scholarships this year across 13 or 14 different scholarship programs. We're looking to do over 600 in 2025. Grow Your Own will be a big part of that, but I can come back to you with exact numbers for the next cohort.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have any data available in terms of how many people applied versus how many positions there were?

SHAUN RUMING: Not in front of me, but I know we're way oversubscribed—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm not surprised.

SHAUN RUMING: —so I'll come back to you on the exact number.

ANSWER

The Grow Your Own Teacher Training Program offered 150 places to commence in 2024. 379 applications were received. As at 5 September 2024, there are 302 teachers in training in the program:

- 2023 intake: 169
- 2024 intake: 133

The Grow Your Own Local Teacher Pipeline offered 75 places in its first cohort in 2024. 96 applications were received. As at 5 September 2024, there are 60 teachers in training in the program.

QUESTION 65 PAGE NO 83

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Grow Your Own - Local Teacher Pipeline, I know that's Western Sydney, Dubbo, Queanbeyan and I think the Murray area as well. Are there any plans to add additional regions or areas to that program?

SHAUN RUMING: That's the modelling that we're doing right now. We think there's an opportunity in rural and remote. Chloe Read and I have been having those ongoing conversations.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you like to say something, Chloe? I know you haven't had a chance today.

CHLOE READ: I've answered one.

SHAUN RUMING: In terms of those regions, we think they'll benefit significantly from Grow Your Own. Those four areas that you talked about were specific to high schools. That was the difference in the first program.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I'm happy for you to take it on notice if you've got a breakdown of the allocation of those positions and how many are going to each of those priority areas as best as you can provide.

SHAUN RUMING: We'll come back to you on those.

ANSWER

As at 5 September 2024, the Grow Your Own Local Teacher Pipeline: participants are working as a supervised Educational Paraprofessional in a NSW secondary school in the following regions:

- Western Sydney: 17
- South Western Sydney: 22
- Queanbeyan and surrounds: 5
- Dubbo and surrounds: 7
- Murray region: 9

QUESTION 66 PAGE NO 83

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: If I could ask a question about the Memorandum of Understanding to Strengthen Accountability for Non-Government Schools and the agreement between the New South Wales Government and Catholic Schools NSW, does the Government have a timeline to revisit the document and renew the memorandum of understanding?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll get Ms Read to see what information she has got. It sits in our Education and Skills Reform area. I'm not sure if she has got it to hand. Or is it Mr Martin?

PAUL MARTIN: Sorry for my ignorance, but I might have to take this on notice. Can you explain the MOU in relation to—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: It's the Memorandum of Understanding to Strengthen Accountability for Non-Government Schools. It's an agreement between the State of New South Wales and Catholic Schools NSW.

PAUL MARTIN: In relation to replacing the diocese and our responsibilities for the Catholic system?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: The question is just in terms of what the status of the agreement is and the time frame for the renewal of that.

PAUL MARTIN: Can I take that on notice?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Yes.

CHLOE READ: I think that might actually be ours to take on notice. I think that was under the current school funding agreement. If that's the case, it would go with that timeline. When we had a new funding agreement, we might refresh that documentation. I'll take extra detail on notice.

PAUL MARTIN: One of us will answer it.

CHLOE READ: One of us will answer.

ANSWER

The NSW Government will revisit the MoUs once the terms of the next national agreement relating to school education reform, and the bilateral agreement concerning its implementation, are known. The NSW Government will identify strengths and areas for improvement in consultation with stakeholders.

QUESTION 67 PAGE NO 83, 84

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Ms Harrington, if I could revisit the issue of school infrastructure—and we spoke about this earlier today—in terms of the new housing zones and precincts and plans and the expected influx of new dwellings and residents and bigger communities. If I could, I go back to the Hills shire and the Castle Hill area. I am aware that Landcom announced in terms of the Castle Hill Showground precinct being one of the housing areas there that School Infrastructure NSW has confirmed a new primary school is required to meet future demand generated with the wider Hills showground areas. Ms Harrington, I'm wondering whether we have a time frame or we know anything further about that.

LISA HARRINGTON: I can come back to you on notice with some more detail there. Obviously, we are working closely with Planning. That area is of interest in terms of the transport oriented developments. Following our enrolment growth audit, it's one of those regions that we are looking at really closely to make sure that we are aware of the housing in that region and we are able to make sure that schools are there for those communities. I can come back to you on notice in relation to that particular project and time frames. But it's an area that we are talking to Planning about a lot at the moment in terms of making sure that we, with the Bella Vista and Kellyville precincts, are able to meet the demands in those regions.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 158.

QUESTION 68 PAGE NO 85

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I wanted to also ask about funding for a teaching position working out of BackTrack in Armidale. That's something that has been available for a period of time. Do you know, Mr Dizdar, whether that will continue to be funded by the department?

MURAT DIZDAR: I am happy to take it on notice and come back to you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Does Ms Summerhayes know or are you going to take it on notice?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: No.

ANSWER

BackTrack is being supported by the Youth Employment Social Impact Program. BackTrack has also been offered the opportunity apply for funding through the Perfect Presence program.

QUESTION 69 PAGE NO 86

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you remind me—if new providers wanted to be considered to be on that online-approved providers list, what's the process for them?

MARTIN GRAHAM: The process is you apply to the department, and there's a panel with a range of expertise that considers those providers, and then you come onto the panel. These schools know what the price is and what kinds of services they offer.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have an individual who I met with recently, who is doing some work in this space, and they're a survivor themselves. They were keen to share some of their resources if it was going to be useful to schools. Are you able to provide—I'm happy if it's on notice—some advice that I could pass onto that individual about the process?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes, we can provide some contact details of people who would be happy to talk to them, whether they wanted to be a provider or whether they're just keen on passing on materials or other people they might like to work with. There are a lot of not-for-profits working in this area that certainly we're aware of as well.

ANSWER

Principals are responsible for reviewing the expertise and approaches of external providers prior to them entering the school. The department assists principals by pre-assessing student wellbeing programs. Quality assuring external wellbeing programs forms part of the department's strategy to drive an improved evidence-based wellbeing service delivery model for all schools.

The Student Wellbeing External Programs catalogue is an online register of externally produced programs, quality assured by the department and available to schools either free of charge or to purchase. The most recent release of programs quality assured by the department were focused on consent and respectful relationships education. Further information can be found at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/student-wellbeing/external-wellbeing-providers/swep-catalogue/Student-Wellbeing-external-programs-catalogue-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf>

Should a member of the community wish to discuss respectful relationships education further, they can contact the department's team via email at CSE.CSL@det.nsw.edu.au.

QUESTION 70 PAGE NO 86

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. Thank you. I want to turn now to the curriculum rollout, so this is probably to Mr Martin. There has been the recent announcements of the remainder, I think, of the K-6 syllabuses. What's next, what's the timeline, and are you on track?

PAUL MARTIN: We are on track.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you on budget? I haven't got to ask you that anymore.

PAUL MARTIN: We're on budget, and we're on track. There were originally 111 syllabuses. As you're aware, there was a four-year time frame which was almost impossible to complete. Even had we been able to, the load on schools would have been significant. The mandatory syllabuses are completed, in terms of primary. The PDHPE has already come out for 7 to 10. History and geography—I think history is coming next and imminently, and then we will be completing and going through senior secondary, which won't be released until 2027. The final date of all of the syllabuses is 2027.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So 2027 is senior secondary being released?

PAUL MARTIN: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When will they begin implementation, and when will they be examinable for HSC and the like?

PAUL MARTIN: Year 11 in 2027, year 12 in 2028. I'll confirm the new timeline with you on notice so that that's all very clear.

ANSWER

The syllabus development, implementation and first year examined in the HSC timeline can be found on the NESA website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/about/strategies-and-reforms/curriculum-reform/timeline>.

QUESTION 71 PAGE NO 86

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. The changes that were made—and I'm just trying to refresh my memory; I think they came in this year—in terms of the ATAR requirements for vocational education and that change to allow more. Ms Read might want to comment on this as well. Have you seen an uptick in the number of students wanting to take vocational courses after that came into place? If it wasn't this year—and I can't remember, so correct me.

PAUL MARTIN: The change to category A and category B—so there were two categories of courses. For ATAR calculation, UAC had determined, historically, that students could only do one of the category B courses if they wished to have an ATAR. After conversation with the NESAB board and Professor Shergold, UAC got rid of the categories, so students can do more than one category B course. They still are required, if they do more than—any category B course, any VET course, still has to have an exam at the end of it for it to be counted for ATAR. There are 12 industry frameworks where that is covered at the moment. The implementation—I think this is the first year of year 11.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that was my understanding.

PAUL MARTIN: So we won't have data until—I mean, we'll have data that's from our HSC returns. I can provide whatever we've got on notice.

ANSWER

There has been an increase in students studying courses that were previously categorised as Category B, including English Studies.

There are 3,271 students in the 2024 Year 11 cohort studying at least one Vocational Education and Training (VET) Framework who will be potentially eligible for an ATAR and would not have been prior to the removal of categorisations. This is compared to 2,596 Year 11 students in 2023 and 2,376 Year 11 students in 2022.

QUESTION 72 PAGE NO 87

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, absolutely. I look forward to seeing that data because I think it's going to, hopefully, be good. We'll see. In *Budget Paper No. 1* in the Measures Statement and some of the new measures, there's a dot point around "Human Capital Management Program—Release 3" but not a lot of detail. Can someone provide me an update as to what that next iteration is and what the budget allocation is, if possible?

MURAT DIZDAR: We've released human capital management, the first section of the rollout. So we're at work for rollouts two and three. We're happy to take the figure on notice so we can give you the accurate figure.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has advised that the Human Capital Management is a long-term program which will support the Plan for NSW Public Education. Release 1 is available to education support staff, with future work to focus on supporting the staffing needs of the department. While the details of negotiations remain commercial in confidence, information will continue to be made available including through the Budget process.

QUESTION 73 PAGE NO 87

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you very much. Vaping in schools obviously is an issue that, again, is not new. Are there any updates in terms of the work with Health around how you're managing this in schools? Again, Ms Summerhayes, you might want to add some context from your position as well. Is there any more updated guidance advice going out to school communities in terms of vaping since we last met?

MURAT DIZDAR: We held a very successful round table with Health earlier this year around vaping, and we had stakeholders, including students and academics, health experts, educators and partners in education at the table. We did capture a series of actions, and we're delivering on those actions. Mr Graham may have what those actions were. If not, we'll come back with what they were and where we're at.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That was earlier this year?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you, on notice, maybe provide the timing of that round table as well? I think there was media interest in it at the time.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, there was media coverage, but there was a series of actions captured. I don't have it in front of me, but we'll give you those on notice and where we're up to with them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. If there's any information, and not just what the actions were but if any have actually been delivered or acted upon, that would also be good to have that information as well.

MURAT DIZDAR: No, we won't just list the actions—what we're doing with them, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great.

ANSWER

NSW held the Roundtable on Vaping in Schools on Thursday 16 November 2023.

Work is underway to develop resources to better support and inform students, teachers, and principals in managing this issue in our schools. This work will complement the ongoing efforts of NSW Health to increase the awareness of the dangers of vaping in the wider community. Further information is published on the department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/pdhpe/drug-education/community-information#Addressing2>.

QUESTION 74 PAGE NO 90

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of the pathways target, can you provide some more information in terms of what schools are collecting?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. I'll get Ms Read to talk to that, and then Ms Summerhayes has got great operational experience on this as well.

CHLOE READ: In terms of the pathways target, we wanted to make sure that we captured a range of different pathways. So, I, from memory—and Ms Summerhayes might help me out. The target can be things like number of school-based apprenticeships, HSC completion and finishing year 12.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes—SBATs et cetera.

CHLOE READ: Yes. And then, at the system level, we'd be tracking the thing we've been tracking for a long time, which is the number of students in further education, training or work in the year post-school.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just one-year post-school?

CHLOE READ: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There was some talk previously about looking at a five-year period, but I don't know whether that's eventuated.

CHLOE READ: I might come back to you on that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine.

ANSWER

At the system level under Our Plan for NSW Public Education, the department will measure success by tracking the proportion of students who take up university, training, or work in the year after school.