

Budget Estimates 2024-25 Supplementary Hearing**Questions taken on notice****Portfolio Committee No 3 – Education****Education and Early Learning, Western Sydney****Hearing: 2 December 2024**

QUESTION 1 PAGE NO 3

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In your division—and I appreciate what Mr Dizdar said about this being a Government commitment. But, prior to this restructure—I'll use that terminology—how many positions were there within your specific division and how many are there now?

MARTIN GRAHAM: There were 2,464 positions in the division and in the parts of the division that moved elsewhere but are still the staff—2,209. So that's the reduction of 218 non-school based teaching service staff and 37 GSE staff.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Of those 218—I'll start with the non-school based. Have they all gone back to substantive roles in schools?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Some of those positions were vacant, so it's not exact match, like for like, but there were a number of people who decided, "Actually, I'm not going to seek a new position in the structure. I like teaching. I'm going to go back to my school." And then there were some people who were unsuccessful in a role. All of those people have now been informed. We've completed that process, so they're in the process of either going back to their substantive role or being matched with a school-based position.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is anyone leaving altogether? Have you had any people take up a redundancy package?

MARTIN GRAHAM: There are no redundancy packages because they are temporary roles, mostly—the non-school based teaching service roles. I think there are a small number of people, I understand, who are saying, "Look, I was close to retirement anyway. I'm going to take this as an opportunity to retire."

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy for you to take it on notice if there's a breakdown of those positions—how many will be still within the department or intending, and how many are actually leaving the employment. Again, I'm happy for you to take it on notice. I don't expect you to have that.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes.

ANSWER

Final figures will be available in 2025 once the school year has commenced and all placements have occurred.

QUESTION 2 PAGE NO 4

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of some of the other areas for restructure, I think I asked you last time about any reductions of positions within PES and where that was up to. Are you able to provide any updates in relation to those staffing numbers?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I can. Sorry, just bear with me. Mr Ruming would have had it at his fingertips, but I'm just finding it for you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's all right.

MURAT DIZDAR: We're increasing the number of positions in PES overall. We are appointing more investigators and embedding the final recommendations of the Tedeschi review, and that was to bring the average number of cases per investigator down. We're actually putting in more investigators. That investigator number is going from 19 to 24. We're taking out two director roles in that structure. Overall, PES is going up in workforce.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When you say you're going up in workforce, what was it previously and how many will it be after that?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get you the exact number.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: On notice?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. But, overall, we're going up in number, with more investigators.

ANSWER

As at December 2024 there are 54 permanent active investigators in the Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES). The final structure, due to be implemented in 2025, will include 66 investigator positions.

QUESTION 3 PAGE NO 4

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just lastly, the same questions for the School Infrastructure division. Is there any sort of consolidation and changes to roles there too, please?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get you the exact number on notice for that one, if that's okay?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great.

MURAT DIZDAR: Because that's got some movement of roles from infrastructure into people group, into the operations group and into comms and engagement. That was an area of the organisation that was operating in parallel and had duplicative functions, which I've been taking back in, for example, in comms and engagement, consolidating those roles; in health and safety, consolidating those roles. So I want to get the accurate number for you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great, if you could give that to us on notice.

ANSWER

There has been a reduction of 12 Public Service Senior Executive (PSSE) roles and 14 filled non-PSSE full time equivalent (FTE) roles within the School Infrastructure (SI) division. A further 214.6 FTE roles from SI are integrating to other directorates within the Department of Education.

QUESTION 4 PAGE NO 5

MURAT DIZDAR: The award agreement indicates that we need to consult with the union.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But not have agreement, just consult?

MURAT DIZDAR: We've been working very productively with all the stakeholders. If we were to contemplate a change, we'd look at working productively with them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But I want to know specifically the wording. It's only "consult", not full agreement. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't have the exact wording in front of me.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take that on notice and supply it to the Committee? It's actually important in terms of the detail.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to.

ANSWER

Clause 7.1 of the recently made Crown Employees (Teachers in Schools and Related Employees) Salaries and Conditions Award 2024 states as follows:

"The Performance and Development Framework for principals, executives and teachers, jointly developed by the parties, applies to employees covered by this award". This will mean that any changes to the Performance and Development Framework in the future will be collaboratively worked upon with the NSW Teachers Federation.

QUESTION 5 PAGE NO 6

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: To pick up on that point, that data was first supplied to the Committee back in 2023. When Mr Ruming was here last time, he indicated that that data came to the Committee in 2022, so there hasn't actually been any new data. I know he's not here, but Mr Ruming said that there would be more data due to be looked at in March of 2024. But you're still giving me the data that the Committee first got back in 2022. Why isn't there any updated data?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll have to go back and ask, Ms Mitchell. That's the data I've got in front of me.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'll come back to this, but there was an article in the Herald last week that gave new figures saying that there were 2,604 resignations and retirements in 2024 compared to 2,860 in 2023. None of those figures match up. I am really keen to know what the latest retirement and resignation data are, because what you are giving us is now almost a year and a half old.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go and check that. That's the data I've got front of me—that I read out to you. Let me go and double-check and make sure we get you the picture perfect data of it.

ANSWER

The 2,604 figure is correct as at the end of October 2024.

QUESTION 6 PAGE NO 8&9

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Schools had to make plans on the Wednesday. At that time it was pretty clear from media reports that the action would continue on Friday, and they had to notify parents on that day. I think that by the time this was resolved very late on the Thursday, at about 5.00 p.m., it was too late for some of those principals of the high schools that were impacted to then contact parents. I understand remote learning did continue for some schools on the Friday.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to check.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Will you take that on notice for me? I don't need to know the names of the schools. I'd like to know the number of schools that did have to make provisions, such as remote learning on the Friday. I'd also like to know, Mr Dizdar, how many sporting and other events had to be cancelled. I understand exams as well were cancelled or postponed by schools on the Wednesday for that Friday. I'd like to know the full impact on schools—in Sydney, in particular—in New South Wales.

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Mihailuk, my understanding at the time was that there was no material impact on our schools. I'll check if any were non-operational.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I think you should check, Mr Dizdar. Obviously, I am cognisant of some impact myself. I know from talking to other parents that sporting activities were postponed. Once they thought it was industrial action on the Wednesday, sporting activities were postponed on the Friday. Also, a lot of other activities, including exams, were postponed.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me see what I can reasonably get on that.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'd like to know the number of schools that had an impact directly as a result of this industrial action potentially being proposed on the Wednesday and then stopped late Thursday.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me see what we've got available.

ANSWER

No school was reported as non-operational or as moving to learning from home due to the proposed Transport industrial action.

QUESTION 7 PAGE NO 9&10

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You may not know this; you might have to take this on notice. Do you know how many school students catch trains in the Sydney region?

MURAT DIZDAR: I wouldn't have that data.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Could you take that on notice? I'd imagine it would be well into many thousands.

MURAT DIZDAR: We're close to 800,000 students, so it would be a large number.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: It would be a large proportion of that, right?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I can only imagine that if, suddenly, there are no trains on the Friday—the vast majority of these 800,000 students possibly take some sort of public transport, if not trains.

MURAT DIZDAR: It would definitely have an impact on school attendance and what it means for families. Some would make other arrangements to get them there. In my experience, it would have an impact.

ANSWER

Questions relating to the usage of the public transport system in NSW should be referred to the Minister for Transport.

QUESTION 8 PAGE NO 10

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: If a school tells their students that they've got to do remote learning, presumably a parent has to take a day off to manage that at home on a Friday.

MURAT DIZDAR: I do not believe that that came into play at all in any of our contexts, but I am happy to go check that.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'd like you to take that on notice, Mr Dizdar. Without going into detail, I am aware of some remote learning having taken place on 22 November.

MURAT DIZDAR: Okay. Let me check that, Ms Mihailuk.

ANSWER

No school was reported as non-operational or as moving to learning from home due to the proposed Transport industrial action.

QUESTION 9 PAGE NO 10&11

MURAT DIZDAR: Can I also give you another data point you might be interested in?
The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Yes, if there is more data, I'd be happy to have it. You can take it on notice. Any data you have about the mobile phone ban I'd like it.

ANSWER

Input from other stakeholder groups, such as teachers, support staff and parents will be collected to provide further feedback on the mobile phone ban. Further information will be available in 2025.

QUESTION 10 PAGE NO 11&12

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Dizdar, I just want to go back to some more staffing numbers. Just before our time finished before, I was mentioning an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* that was published on 19 November this year that said there were 2,604 resignations and retirements in 2024 compared to 2,860 in 2023. I appreciate you said you wanted to take that on notice, but could you just take on notice for me, firstly, whether that data that was provided to *The Sydney Morning Herald* was correct and, secondly, the breakdown of those numbers of how many were resignations and how many were retirements?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 5.

QUESTION 11 PAGE NO 12

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Last time we got some data from Mr Ruming about the overall numbers of permanent, temporary and casual teachers employed by the Department of Education. Are there any updated figures that you can provide for us with that breakdown? Again, I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get the breakdown for you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, you're going to take it on notice? When you said you'd get the data for me, I thought you were looking at your—

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. It's not at my fingertips. Let me get it for you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide it on notice. There was a table that we got last time, so if we could get an update of that.

MURAT DIZDAR: We'll update the table.

ANSWER

For the latest Workforce Profile 2024 figures, please refer to the answer to question on notice 43 from the 27 August 2024 Budget Estimates hearing.

QUESTION 12 PAGE NO 12

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And then also just the latest vacancy data that you have for public schools. I know that the Minister recently has been using figures from the start of term 3, but you would appreciate that is now a few months old. Do you have any of the latest vacancy data for us? Just across the system of what the current vacancy numbers are.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me have a look at what I have that I might be able to give to you. I have term 3, week two.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But we're term 4, week seven or eight now. You don't have any updated data?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm just having a look for you, Ms Mitchell. No, that is what I have in front of me, so let's go back and take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take it on notice. If you can get us that even before the end of the hearing today—if possible. It is only a statewide number. It shouldn't be too difficult to get for us.

MURAT DIZDAR: We will see if we can do that.

ANSWER

Please see answer to supplementary question 65.

QUESTION 13 PAGE NO 13

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have any data that you can provide on notice—and it might be next year and I appreciate what you are saying about terms 4 and 1 and the changes—of how many have actually been made permanent but are being transferred to another school or have then chosen to leave the department altogether because they haven't been able to stay at their preferred school?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, we can look at that. It's a difficult piece, but we can look at it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Because, again, I've had reports coming from colleagues and others that it is a great idea in theory, but a lot of people are finding that the roles at those schools aren't there anymore because of staffing changes. People are either leaving or going to non-government schools because, while they've been made temporary, there isn't a position for them at the school they want to be teaching at. That has come back as a concern.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me look at that, but it wouldn't be until the end of term 1 when that staffing process is all done. Also, maybe this piece of information will help: It's not a last in, first out process.

ANSWER

Approximately 70 Temporary Workforce Transition (TWT) teachers have been nominated to transfer in 2024. All TWT teachers retain their permanent employment.

A teacher who has been nominated for transfer continues at their current school until a suitable vacancy in another local school arises.

QUESTION 14 PAGE NO 13

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: What avenue is available to a parent in a situation where they are not comfortable reporting this breach in their child's school directly to the principal? What else is available in terms of the code of conduct and parents?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I respect that. I find it comes into play very seldom but, if needed, they can refer it to the Director, Educational Leadership, which oversees the school. They might refer it to the Deputy Secretary, Deb Summerhayes.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: How would parents know that this is available?

MURAT DIZDAR: That's part of our complaints procedures.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Where do parents find that?

MURAT DIZDAR: They publicly sit on our website facing the entire New South Wales community.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: So there is an avenue there for parents to report?

MURAT DIZDAR: Definitely, yes. I find it seldom comes into play. I find that parents often report to the school, which is a great way because you can get all sorts of things reported and sorted out at the school level. It doesn't require further intervention. When it requires further intervention, it's made clear.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Can you not recognise instances where, in your local school community, you're not comfortable reporting to the local school as a concerned parent?

MURAT DIZDAR: I want parents to feel comfortable—

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: You don't recognise circumstances that could be in place?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Point of order: Ms Merton is asking questions and starting another question before Mr Dizdar is able to start an answer to the first question. She could keep her questions to one at a time and allow the witness to answer the questions as they're asked.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Sorry, thank you. I'll provide time. Thanks, Mr Dizdar.

MURAT DIZDAR: There are 1.6 million parents, carers and guardians whose entrust us with their children in public education. Largely, I find that they are comfortable approaching the school. But if they're not, because there can be particular circumstances—I appreciate that, Ms Merton—it's very clear in our complaints procedures, publicly facing on our website, who they can report that to.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Could that information be made available to the Committee? How do parents navigate this? What communication is available to them and how do they know where to go?

MURAT DIZDAR: We're happy to send you the link. It is on our website.

ANSWER

Any person can raise an issue or concern about any aspect of the services provided by the Department of Education. Concerns can be raised in person or by email, telephone, in writing or through the department's online feedback and complaints form. The action taken depends on the nature and seriousness of the issue.

The department's Community Complaint procedures are available on the department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0051-01>.

Information in relation to how parents and carers can make a complaint about the department is available on the department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/your-feedback>.

The department's website also includes specific guidance for parents and carers about how to raise a concern about the department's products, services, employees and complaint handling, at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/your-feedback/guide-for-parents-carers-and-students>.

QUESTION 15 PAGE NO 15&16

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: How many alleged breaches have been reported in the last 12 months relevant to the code of conduct?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'd have to take that on notice. I'm not sure if we have the totality of that data.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Could you share with the Committee a recent—where there has been a reported alleged breach of the code?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to take it on notice. We're a very large system: 95,000 teachers, 800,000 students, 1.6 million parents. So there can be things that are referred.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: So just to let parents know, in the instance of an alleged breach being reported—and we've gone down the department reporting line on this, which you acknowledge is available.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: What is the process around it?

MURAT DIZDAR: There's an allegation that's put forward and then PES receives that allegation and goes about their independent work of the school and will, in my experience, interview relevant people if needed, including the family that made the referral, and interview the teacher in the scenario you gave and the school principal and any other parties that might come out of that interview process that they need to speak to. Then, once they've got all the material and information around them, they assess that information and then make a finding.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Sorry, I just missed the acronym as to who drives this. The PES?

MURAT DIZDAR: The Professional and Ethical Standards directorate.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Directorate?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Who is responsible for that? Is there one individual or—

MURAT DIZDAR: We've got an executive director that oversees that division and a deputy secretary that oversees that area.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: So they are pretty much overseeing and managing the code of conduct?

MURAT DIZDAR: All of us are managing and enacting the code of conduct. It's incumbent on the entire workforce. But, if there are allegations of potential breaches, we work with PES around that.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: In terms of the number or examples of alleged breaches in the last 12 months, that's not available to us?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't have that here but I'm happy to take it on notice for you.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Is there a register or a table or records kept within the department or from PES as to reported breaches?

MURAT DIZDAR: We make all of our required reporting, including to the Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I sign off on all of those reports. So then we go back and get the data that you're after to see what we've got.

ANSWER

Minor breaches of the Code of conduct and ethics are handled in the workplace under usual management processes. The Professional and Ethical Standards directorate (PES) provides guidance to principals and workplace managers about what should be reported to PES as allegation of employee misconduct.

The department proactively releases information in relation to Teacher Conduct and Performance on an annual basis. This is available at <https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/nsw-education-teacher-conduct-and-performance>.

QUESTION 16 PAGE NO 17

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr D'Adam, for that. Yes, I certainly was not suggesting that the secretary was ignorant or racist, and I will leave it there. Turning to something different, early childhood education and care and the regulatory authority for the ECEC sector—how many staff sit in that department?

MURAT DIZDAR: Just bear with me, Chair, and I'll give you the exact number. I know I've got it in front of me, but I want to go to the right spot. Close to 450 full-time staff.

The CHAIR: So 450 full-time staff?

MURAT DIZDAR: Close to.

The CHAIR: Do you have any details as to how they are geographically broken down? Have they got different offices in different places or are they all centrally located?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'd have to take that part on notice—where they're located.

The CHAIR: If you could tell me how many of them are actively going out and doing site visits and how many are back office functions or any other details you can give me around that, that would be very useful.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

ANSWER

As at December 2024, the NSW Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Regulatory Authority has 435 full time equivalent (FTE) roles.

Of the 356 FTE frontline staff, 211 FTE frontline roles undertake visits and other duties. This includes roles that are assigned geographically and roles that deliver functions on a statewide basis.

The regions that staff cover are: Regional North, Regional Mid North Coast, Newcastle, Central Coast & Hornsby, North Sydney & Beaches, Sydney West & Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury & Hills, Parramatta, Campbelltown & Southern Highlands, Bankstown, Canterbury, Sydney Central & East, Sutherland & Wollongong, Regional South East and Regional South West.

QUESTION 17 PAGE NO 17

The CHAIR: It's been reported that the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the ASQA, has closed three colleges recently and intends to cancel 17,000 qualifications issued by those institutions, including qualifications in early childhood education. Those colleges are Luvium, Gills College and the International Institute of Education and Training. Do you know how many early childhood workers in New South Wales will be impacted by that cancellation of qualifications?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. Luvium is the one that we've been working with our Federal counterparts. It cuts across other States as well. We've been working with the Office of the Children's Guardian. We've been working and communicating with the sector here in New South Wales. We've been at that one for a couple of weeks now, Ms Boyd, and I am pleased to report that, at this stage, it has not impacted on the viability or operations of any of the services in New South Wales, because it was quite an alarming initial position that we've had to work through. We're only in the early stages of doing the same work with the next two providers that the Commonwealth has put on notice.

The CHAIR: Has there been any thought given to providing some sort of training for those students who have had their qualifications cancelled in order to get them back into the workforce?

MURAT DIZDAR: It's certainly been a consideration in the discussions we've had around Luvium. We've had to be very careful and work on an individual basis because of possible claims of, in laymen's terms, cash for credentials. If someone has knowingly partaken in that, it might be questionable whether we should then be giving them support to get a credential because of how they've gone about obtaining it in the first place.

The CHAIR: But genuine students?

MURAT DIZDAR: For genuine students, I certainly think there's a case for how we might support them. The only way to get to each individual has been to check on the Working with Children Check, then liaise with the sector, communicate with the sector, encourage contact so we can support. What I can tell you today is that, coming in, I know that there has been no service that has been materially impacted by way of not being able to operate. The numbers became quite small of who we were trying to pin down and liaise with at an individual level. There was a first number bandied about—because Luvium was across qualifications and across different States—of about 7,000 or thereabouts, Ms Boyd. But the numbers were much, much smaller when it came to early childhood in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: Did you find a concentration in any particular service of students with these qualifications?

MURAT DIZDAR: Not that I'm aware of.

The CHAIR: Could I perhaps ask for that on notice, just if there are any details around numbers of students who were working within ECEC services?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

The CHAIR: I don't need the details of the service, but if it's possible to tell me what the numbers are and if they clustered in a particular service.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm more than happy to. I just want to put a disclaimer that, on the grounds that I'm allowed to through the Commonwealth et cetera, I just want to check that and not breach anything there.

The CHAIR: Understood.

MURAT DIZDAR: But if I can, definitely.

ANSWER

As at December 2024, less than 150 individuals with cancelled qualifications have been identified as working within the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in NSW. In all cases, the provider has taken appropriate action to mitigate any risks associated with these individuals. The individuals are identified as having worked across a number of different services.

The NSW ECEC Regulatory Authority response to the cancellation of these registered training providers is ongoing.

In relation to the International Institute of Educations and Training Pty Ltd (IET, trading as EDU VET 40993), ASQA advised that they did not provide qualifications relevant to the ECEC workforce in NSW.

QUESTION 18 PAGE NO 18

The CHAIR: I asked some questions on notice in relation to the numbers of show cause notices and other notices that were issued to ECEC services in New South Wales. It appeared that there was a disproportionately large number of show cause notices and cancellations of for-profit ECEC providers as opposed to not-for-profit ECEC providers. Do you know if the regulatory authority has been doing anything additional to ensure that those profit-driven centres are not cutting corners and putting children at risk?

MURAT DIZDAR: I want to commend the regulatory authority for the way they enact their role. It's been quite an eye-opener for me in the 20 months as secretary. I've actually gone and done three field visits with the regulatory authority so I can get a strong hold on what takes place in a visit and have a firm understanding of how they embed and enact the national Commonwealth standards. Their visitation rates are almost like beyond 90 per cent of the entire sector in a year. They are always in a continuous improvement operation as well. But I'd have to go back and see specifically if the data we've given you has led to any difference in action.

The CHAIR: Yes, that would be useful. I think there is a number of very concerning reports that have come out recently about children being harmed and neglected and abused in New South Wales early childhood and education services. I guess what we are particularly concerned about is whether there is any risk analysis being applied to those for-profit centres, where corners are more likely to be cut. Is that something that the regulatory authority has been looking at?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. Let me see if there's any specific action that has been any different. But I know you know, Chair, that we're also enacting the *Review of Child Safety Arrangements* that came out of Operation Tenterfield, which has been the subject of the Education Ministers Meeting, and we're working with every jurisdiction in the country around that.

The CHAIR: I think it has been reported as being a little similar to the risks that are inherent in the aged-care sector as well, that when you have big profit takers coming into the market that there is more risk to our most vulnerable people. I'm just interested if there has been some sort of risk matrix or some analysis done by the regulatory authority that is particularly looking at those private operators.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me find that detail out. The really comforting part, in my view, around show cause is exactly that—that means the risk rating of that site for us has now increased. It means our line of sight to that site is stronger and it means you've got to demonstrate the improvement to address the show cause. That's the part that I take a lot of heart out of, the fact that we saturate what the visitation looks like—well over 90 per cent. But I think it's a good, specific question. If the data has shown that there are higher rates of show cause in one particular service provision arm of the sector, then let me go back and see if there has been any discernible difference in action we take.

ANSWER

Our approach to risk-based regulation

Over the last two years the NSW Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Regulatory Authority has put significant effort into data modelling to identify the services that pose a greater risk to the safety of children. This risk modelling is applied to all approved services regardless of whether they are for profit or not.

This data is used to inform resource allocation towards the higher risk services as a priority whilst still ensuring all services are visited at least once within an 18-month timeframe.

Noting this, some services receive a much higher visit rate than once per 18 months to enable us to have effective oversight of their compliance and quality improvement. This means we are visiting services that present a higher risk, more often. Higher risk services are more likely to be non-compliant with the National Law and Regulations, resulting in breaches and compliance actions.

Data on the breakdown of visits and show cause notices between for profit and other management types is presented below. This is data reflecting the previous 12 months of practice.

Number of show cause notices broken down by provider management types for 01/12/2023 – 30/11/2024:

Provider Management Type	Total Show Cause Notices issued
Private for profit	109
Other Management Types	28
Grand Total	137

Number of visits to services during this period broken down by provider management types:

Provider Management Type	Total Visits completed
Private for profit	5628
Other Management Types	2940
Unknown Service/Provider	151
Grand Total	8719

Data Source: NQAITS, 01/12/2024

Large providers

The NSW ECEC Regulatory Authority conducts periodic analysis of large providers’* portfolio of services to identify any services that are exhibiting indicators of persistent non-compliance and are deemed higher risk. The Authority uses various risk indicators to determine which specific services to discuss with large providers including: the frequency and nature of any compliance actions taken against a service, the types and occurrences of confirmed breaches, the frequency of visits, a service and/or provider’s responses to serious incidents, and other risk factors. The Regulatory Authority meets with large providers to discuss concerns about services in their portfolio and to discuss actions they will take to address concerns.

** Large providers are approved providers that have a portfolio of ECEC services. Starting Blocks defines large providers as any approved provider that operates more than 25 education and care services under a single provider approval or when combined with more related approved providers. Providers may be related if they have a structure or a legal entity that is managed by the same person(s).*

Working with other jurisdictions regarding large providers

The NSW Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Regulatory Authority only regulates services in NSW, but the Authority does engage with other jurisdictions if further information is required about a large provider for which there are shared concerns. This is primarily due to the federated nature of the ECEC system – a provider can be granted a provider approval in one Australian state or territory which will permit them to operate a service in any state or territory.

The Regulatory Authority is also collaborating with other jurisdictions on identifying systemic non-compliance by cross-jurisdictional large providers. National data is analysed to identify those providers who are under performing. The providers will then be offered an opportunity to meet with the relevant jurisdictions to discuss the issues and identify measures to improve quality and compliance across their portfolio. Subject to the provider's response, further compliance action against the Approved Provider may be initiated.

QUESTION 19 PAGE NO 20&21

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Dizdar, there was a pre-election commitment to establish the Screen Use and Addiction Research Fund. I asked Ms Read about that in previous hearings. Again, I appreciate that she's not here. Can you tell me how much has been allocated out of that \$2.5 million fund and how many successful applicants there have been so far?

MURAT DIZDAR: Do you mind, Ms Mitchell, if I take that on notice? I think we've finished the process and are about to or have communicated it, so I want to take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate you taking it on notice. So there has been a process, people have been able to apply and it's going to be announced shortly or what is—it's been a couple of years, so I am wondering where it's up to.

MURAT DIZDAR: We may have already informed the providers that have been successful in their application, so I don't want to get it wrong, and I don't actually have the details in front of me.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide that on notice, that would be great.

ANSWER

Information, including key dates and the fund application process is available publicly on the Department of Education's website.

QUESTION 20 PAGE NO 23

The CHAIR: Before I pass to my colleague, you mentioned before 11 pieces of correspondence in relation to the Middle East conflict and schools. Could you provide those on notice—just what the 11 are?

MURAT DIZDAR: That's what we've issued to our schools since October 2023.

The CHAIR: Are you able to table copies or provide copies?

MURAT DIZDAR: Of each of the correspondence?

The CHAIR: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. They exist out there.

ANSWER

Copies of the following correspondence in relation to the Middle East conflict and schools are attached.

QUESTION 21 PAGE NO 23

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Can I also ask, Mr Dizdar, what is the cost? Do you know what the cost of these lockers are? You can take it on notice.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm very happy with your support. What we did advertise, when we went with the one position across the State, is we said to our principals, "Here's the range of options. If you make a particular choice around an option that works for your school community, and you find you cannot implement it, then please reach out and we'll support you." We have had no-one in that position.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: As far as you know.

MURAT DIZDAR: As far as I know.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: How much do they cost? Do you know what it cost Ashfield Boys?

MURAT DIZDAR: I couldn't give you a cost, because it depends on the school size.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Can you take on notice what it cost Ashfield Boys to put through these lockers?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

ANSWER

The lockers installed at Ashfield Boys High School were school funded at an approximate cost of \$45,000. After extensive consultation with staff, parents and students, mobile phone lockers were chosen from the five options available for schools to use.

QUESTION 22 PAGE NO 24 & 25

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can you tell me how many schools have been put into recess this year?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes. I'll just check so I can give you accurate numbers.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I am going to follow up and ask you to say for the last five years as well.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I can let you know the schools that closed in 2023. We had five of them. There are two that have been closed this year already. There are some schools that are in consultation moving forwards towards the end of this year and early next year. I'm really happy to give you those precise numbers, if that's what you would like, on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When you say "closed", do you mean put into recess or actually closed?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: No. Actually closed were the numbers I just gave you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What about put into recess?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Let me just do a quick count.

MURAT DIZDAR: I can help there. There's currently 19 schools in recess.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How long have they been in recess for?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Some since 2017.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What I'm trying to work out is, say in 2023 and so far in 2024, how many have been put into recess for the first time?

MURAT DIZDAR: In 2023, it looks like there were four schools that were put into recess.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And this year?

MURAT DIZDAR: In 2024? I don't have any figure in front of me, so we'll check.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You'll take that on notice?

MURAT DIZDAR: We'll check.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: To your point just then, Ms Summerhayes, about further consultation happening for recess, specifically, in 2025, how many are on that list to be consulted for closure or recess in 2025?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: On which list, sorry, Ms Mitchell?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You just said that there's also a number of schools that that process is happening for towards the end of this year and early next year. I just want to know how many schools are on that list, and which schools are they.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I'll provide that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there a list that you have—to know which schools are being looked at to go into recess?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you be able to provide a copy of that list to the Committee?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: Can I just add to that something that might help the Committee? Those 19 schools that are on recess at the moment are out of a footprint of 2,216. Some of them date back to 2017. Sometimes schools can come out of recess and reopen.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. I'm very aware of that.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sometimes schools can then, from recess, be closed. We only do that if there's zero enrolments for consecutive years.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I know that. I didn't ask about that. What I would like is the list of new schools that are intended to be put into recess either from the end of this year or early next year. That exists and that can be provided.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I can give you the list of schools we are consulting on, if you'd like that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that would be great.

ANSWER

Four schools, Durrumbul Public School, Turntable Creek Public School, Carool Public School and Goolmangar Public School, moved into recess in 2023. One school, Koorawatha Public School, moved into recess during 2024, and one school, Tirranna Public School, will move into recess at the end of 2024 following local community consultation. Schools in recess can return to operation should prospective enrolments rise substantially.

Community consultation regarding local educational provision is underway at Avoca Public School, Bribbaree Public School, Stroud Road Public School and Tambar Springs Public School. These consultations will continue in Term 1, 2025.

QUESTION 23 PAGE NO 25&26

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just on that, there are a couple of specifics that I wanted to raise. Avoca Public School, just out of Moss Vale—is that one that is slated to be put into recess next year?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: It is.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is it likely that that will not be operational for the start of the school year next year?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I'm not sure yet, Ms Mitchell. We are just finishing the consultation on Avoca.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When were parents first informed of that consultation or that consideration of recess?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I'd need to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What is the normal time frame you would give parents?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I'm not sure there is a normal time frame.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding is that it's recent, sort of within this term, that parents have been made aware that that school might not be operational next year. That is not a lot of time for families to get their head around in terms of any changes. When will that decision be made about that school next year and whether it will be operating day one, term 1?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's come back to you with where we are up to in the consultation. It is week eight in the term, so I imagine we're moving quickly.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: To that point, I guess parents are wanting to know what will happen next year for their children. In a similar vein, the consultation around Bribbaree Public School—my understanding is there is a consultation session this afternoon for those families, but, again, it has only been in very recent days and weeks that that was ever slated with those families. I guess my overall question is why are people finding out so late that their children's school might not be operating next year?

MURAT DIZDAR: I might be able to add to that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great.

MURAT DIZDAR: Anticipated enrolments for the following school year are due in mid-term 3 for each year, and the actual enrolments come out about week 5, term 1. Normally what happens is you are in the middle of term 3, you put in what numbers you are anticipating and then off the back of that you will get into territory around viability. As you have dropping enrolments or no enrolments coming through or no kindergarten or no year 7, there will be a natural point where there is discussion at the leadership level of the principal and the DEL to maybe look at these procedures to look at the best education provisions. It is not unusual that late term 3, early term 4 a process would start.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I accept that. What we are talking about, though, is late term 4. We are already in week 8. My understanding is, through conversations with some of the local community members and parents, that this has all come about in the last week or two. You're a parent; I'm a parent. If you're told midway through term 4 that your child's school might not be open day one, term 1 next year, it is not a lot of time for them to make decisions. That is the feedback we've had.

MURAT DIZDAR: I really respect that. I totally understand that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So when will there be certainty? Again, there are two examples, being Avoca and down at Bribbaree. When will those final decisions be made so parents have certainty about what's happening?

MURAT DIZDAR: We'll have to take the process fully and let's go check where we're up to on the ground with that. We won't be rushing any process. If it means we have to make a recommendation that we're operating, that's what we'll normally do, but we'll have to consult with the community and get the views. I am not even sure of the size of those schools. Let me go back and see. We make sure we speak to all the parents that are at the school and the prospective parents. You are not talking about a lot of parents because often these schools are very small in size.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but they still should be respected as parents regardless of if they're at a small school.

MURAT DIZDAR: But that's what I mean by speaking with each of those current enrolments. You might have four students but we would want to talk to all those parents as well as any prospective parents. We will make sure we go check where we are up to, and we are doing that process thoroughly.

ANSWER

Please refer to answer to question 22.

QUESTION 24 PAGE NO 26&27

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You talk about those 19 schools that are currently in recess, and you mentioned that some of them reopen. How many schools have gone into recess and then reopened in the past five years?

MURAT DIZDAR: We can go back and check on that. I know one or two off the top of my head that have opened, but let me go get you the names and the accurate number of those. That is why we stay in recess for a period of time, because school communities can regather by way of population and size, before we make a move to close. It goes to show that one of ours currently in recess has been that way since 2017, a good seven years, and we haven't closed it

ANSWER

The Department of Education routinely reviews the status of schools placed in recess to assess any changes in the surrounding area and community. A school may remain in recess until the department conducts a future-focused consultation regarding asset-related and demographic analysis, as well as engagement with local community, principals, Primary Principals' Association/Secondary Principals' Council and the NSW Teachers Federation.

Where there is strong indication from demographic trends that there will be a viable and sustained increase in school or pre-school aged children within the community, the department will evaluate the feasibility of reopening the school, continuing to hold the school in recess, or closing the school. While the school is in recess, regular site maintenance continues.

Premer Public School was placed into recess at the end of 2018 due to low enrolments. In 2021, in response to local insights and demographic trend data, the school re-opened in 2022.

QUESTION 25 PAGE NO 27

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate that. For Ivanhoe, my understanding is—and I appreciate there's a transport element here as well—that as of next year there won't be a bus service available for students to go into Ivanhoe Central School. Do you know if that is correct?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I just know that there have been conversations around transport for Ivanhoe. I know the Director, Educational Leadership has been working with local transport and the principal. I'm happy to come back on where those conversations are up to.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding from some of the communities is there used to be three bus routes, this year there is one, and then apparently next year there won't be any, which is obviously very challenging—large distances, isolated community.

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: Yes, indeed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If there is anything on notice you could provide for that, that would be great.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has had discussions with Transport for NSW regarding the school. Queries regarding the provision of school bus services in regional areas should be directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads.

QUESTION 26 PAGE NO 27-29

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of that data, how many of those students have been suspended for bullying or bullying-related incidents?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm not sure if we've got the categories in front of us.

MARTIN GRAHAM: That's preliminary data. We don't have the breakdown of those categories for that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There's no way to tell, of the preliminary data, how many of those children have been suspended for bullying? You don't have a record of that?

MARTIN GRAHAM: Not that I have here today.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you have that on notice?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We can have a look and see what data we have.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's have a look at what we've got.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will that be available in the data that comes out in the first half of next year—a bullying breakdown?

MARTIN GRAHAM: We do have a breakdown in our published data.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take on notice how many of those 40,861 have been suspended specifically for bullying, that would be great. Is there still a higher representation of Aboriginal children and children with disability in suspension data?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't have it in front of me. But, remember, this is preliminary for two terms, so we make sure that's available. We're very transparent in our reporting around suspensions, as you would know.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. My concern is what's being presented in the public is that all of these children have been suspended and it's in line with some media commentary around—the heading is, "Tougher rules ban bullies from schools." But what you're saying today is you don't have a breakdown of how many have been for bullying. We don't know which young people are being suspended. We're not sure if that will be consistent across the year. Is it a bit preliminary using that data in media saying that tougher rules are banning bullies from school? Because that is what's being presented.

MURAT DIZDAR: As a department, we provided that data to the Minister's office for the first half of the year. It is factual that that first half of the year data is higher than a similar comparison the year before.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did the Minister's office ask for a breakdown of how many of those students had been suspended specifically for bullying?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'd have to go back and see what data was requested and we provided, but that's data that we provided as a department.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's possible, from those numbers, that there hasn't been an increase, for instance, in young people being suspended for bullying, because you can't tell me—because it's preliminary data—what the breakdown is?

MURAT DIZDAR: I can only speak to what we provided and what's factual. For the two terms for this year, terms 1 and 2, the preliminary data says that that's higher on suspensions—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But you don't know for what categories?

MURAT DIZDAR: We don't have that all available in front of us. We can get that if needed. We do publish—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but that's going to be sometime in the last—my point is you've got the Government in November saying these tougher rules are

banning bullies from school. But as I hear it today, there is no data you can provide to the Committee that backs up that claim.

MURAT DIZDAR: We don't have it in front of us.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It does exist, though?

MURAT DIZDAR: We'll see what we've got.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But if you've provided it to the Minister's office for media, surely it must exist and, therefore, you can provide it to the Committee. How many students in the first six months of this year were suspended for bullying?

MURAT DIZDAR: I stand by that data we provided.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But can you provide it to us? I want bullying, specifically. Can that be provided to us? If it was able to be provided for a media article, surely you can provide it for this Committee.

MURAT DIZDAR: I said I'm happy to do so, and I said that what's factual is that for the first six months—the two terms—of this year, compared to the two terms last year, suspensions have been higher.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but suspensions can be for a range of reasons, as you know, Mr Dizdar.

MURAT DIZDAR: They can.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm interested in bullying, specifically, and whether there has been an increase.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's go back and get that for you.

ANSWER

The Semester 1 factsheet outlining validated suspension data for the first two Terms in 2024 will be published in early 2025. This factsheet will provide the break-down of suspensions by the grounds for suspension and will be released publicly on the Data.nsw - <https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/nsw-education-suspensions-and-expulsions-in-nsw-government-schools>.

QUESTION 27 PAGE NO 30

The CHAIR: Do you have some data that maybe you could provide on notice in relation to how many teachers and principals who have alleged misconduct claims against them have received pay or are on leave with pay for conduct matters that involve children versus those that are more of an administrative—

MURAT DIZDAR: We should have that data, so I am happy to come back to you on those who have been stood away from duty, whether it is child related or not child related. I'm happy to come back to you.

ANSWER

The Department of Education complies with Premier's Memorandum M1994-35 Suspension of Public Employees from Duty (<https://arp.nsw.gov.au/m1994-21suspension-public-employees-duty/>) which sets out the requirements in relation to suspension with or without pay.

All employees placed on alternative duties are provided with meaningful work and supervised by a senior officer. 96 permanent teachers, principals and school executives are directed to alternative duties or suspended with or without pay as at December 2024.

QUESTION 28 PAGE NO 30&31

The CHAIR: Thank you. How many legal settlements with secondary or primary principals have been made out of court since the Tedeschi report, in the period 2019 to 2024?

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, we might need a bit more specific—when you say "legal settlement", are you saying their performance or conduct has been put into question and there has been a PES process and the outcome of that PES process was a legal outcome?

The CHAIR: Yes, a legal settlement.

MURAT DIZDAR: I've understood the question. Let me get that on notice for you.

The CHAIR: Do those settlement sums come out of the department's budget or is it an icare issue?

MURAT DIZDAR: Normally if there is a legal matter at hand, it would have our government insurer icare involved. We pay a premium like every agency would into that.

The CHAIR: Could you come back to me on notice with how many settlements and also what the cost of those settlements have been over the last five years?

MURAT DIZDAR: Definitely, with what's available—definitely I'll come back.

ANSWER

From 1 January 2020 to 10 December 2024, only one Deed of Release executed in respect of legal proceedings commenced by a primary or secondary principal in the NSW industrial Relations Commission in respect of disciplinary decisions for performance and misconduct matters, included a financial component. Specific details are not able to be shared for privacy reasons.

QUESTION 29 PAGE NO 31

The CHAIR: Can you also tell me if non-disclosure agreements are being signed by principals and teachers in that five years since the Tedeschi report, again, in relation to these sort of settlement claims?

MURAT DIZDAR: My general understanding of these as well—I'll come back on notice with the data—is that that's at the request of the individual. By far and wide in these matters, it's at the request of the individual. Let me come back to you with that data if it exists.

ANSWER

Generally, Deeds of Release executed by the Professional and Ethical Standards (PES) Directorate include a confidentiality clause. A Deed of Release is sometimes executed between an individual and the Department of Education:

- at the conclusion of a performance process or at the conclusion of a misconduct investigation (Pre-litigation Deed of Release),
- in respect of legal proceedings commenced after a decision is made (Litigation-Deed of Release).

From 1 January 2020 - 10 December 2024:

- 59 Pre-litigation Deeds of Release have been entered into with teachers or principals.
- 27 Litigation Deeds of Release have been entered into with teachers or principals.

QUESTION 30 PAGE NO 31

The CHAIR: Can you also come back to me with how much the department has paid in the last five years because of costs awarded against the department after a civil claim from a teacher or a principal because of the PES process? So they've gone through the PES process and then they've claimed against you for damages. How much has been spent in the last five years?

MURAT DIZDAR: Again, I just want to make sure I understand it so our people can get the right information. These are PES matters—teachers, principals—and as a result of the matter there has been a civil claim come forward and how much has the department paid for that civil claim?

The CHAIR: Yes.

ANSWER

The only civil claims the Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES) deals with are Unfair Dismissal Applications and Public Sector Disciplinary Appeals in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in respect of disciplinary decisions imposed after a performance process or a misconduct investigation. The NSW Industrial Relations Commission does not award damages.

QUESTION 31 PAGE NO 31

The CHAIR: I hear what you're saying. I wonder if there's data that shows, of the people that were going through a PES process and then resigned, how many of them, for example, then launched a civil claim against the department or how many of them put some other kind of complaint in, just so we can see the implication—the worry here is that the PES process has driven people to leave, whereas I understand from what you're saying there could be very valid reasons as to why a person would leave after having seen the allegations against them or whatever. Is there any data that you keep that we can—

MURAT DIZDAR: If that data exists, I'm happy to provide it to you as Chair of the Committee. I want to go back and see if that exists. I certainly know that we've got case data. Whether it goes to the extent that you're covering—because you're saying, "How many there has led to a civil claim and then what were the payments to that claim?" If that data exists, I'm happy to hand it over.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 28.

QUESTION 32 PAGE NO 31

The CHAIR: Are you able to tell me how many principals in New South Wales public schools were on formal principal improvement programs for each of the years in the last five years? Is that something you keep data of?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, quite a small number. There are 2,216 principals. A formal performance and development program, a formal improvement program—I'm happy to go back and get the number, but it would be quite a small number and that's not surprising to me. We're talking about one of the most educated and skilled workforces—all tertiary qualified. To become a principal in the system, you've been an exemplary teacher, you've demonstrated your capacity coming through at head teacher, AP, DP level. Generally they're really high performing, which is fantastic for the public education system. You'll find it's very small numbers, but I'm happy to get you the exact number.

ANSWER

From 1 January 2020 to 6 December 2024 less than 10 Principals have commenced an improvement program.

QUESTION 33 PAGE NO 32

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'll come back to that. I want to follow up a couple of questions from my supplementary questions that I put to you and the Minister last time. You might recall I asked you specifically about legal issue bulletin 55.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Transgender students, kids. When you go online—I think from memory the response you provided me was that the document was currently being reviewed and an updated bulletin would be available in 2025. It says the last time it was issued was in 2014, with some minor amendments in 2022. Why is it being reviewed? Is this to reflect that there have been two pieces of legislation passed by the Minns Labor Government—the conversion practices ban and the equality legislation Act, i.e., the self-ID changing sex legislation? Is that why there is a review of that bulletin?

MURAT DIZDAR: We have a continuous cycle of review of all of our legal issues bulletins so it's part of that cycle. And I just want to say this—

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: It said in there you made some changes in August 2022. Prior to that you hadn't made any changes since 2014. It's not a document that's always under review, because for a very long period there was no review. It was always publicly available. How long has this review been taking place for this particular bulletin?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll see if any of our people have got any—do you have any information to this review, Mr Martin? But there is a regular cycle of review, where we look at our legal issues—

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Do you know how regular? Because from 2014 to 2022—

MURAT DIZDAR: It's normally a five-year cycle.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: —there was no review of that document.

MURAT DIZDAR: I take what you're saying. Normally there is—

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Well, it's on your department website. I can read it out for you. It says there that from 2014 the next time there was a change was 2022. So it's clear as day on your department site there. How long has this document been under review for now?

MURAT DIZDAR: I want to go back, if our people don't have the detail. Do you have any detail, Mr Graham?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I don't have any further detail, but I understand it is under review.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's come back to you.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Because you've said, in my question to you about the legal issues bulletin—

MURAT DIZDAR: I think we said early '25, did we?

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You said that it would be available. I asked you that question on 27 August. The document is still under review. When did that review start for the bulletin? Can you take that on notice if you don't know?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get you all those details, yes.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I assume the reason it's under review is because the Minns Labor Government has recently moved two specific bits of legislation, the conversion practices ban and the equality legislation Act, which is specifically about self-ID and changing sex and so forth. I'm assuming that's the reason why there's a delay in this review, is that right?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, plus we'll be getting the views of our schools and our schools communities. I also want to say this on record to our transgender students: We see you, we embrace you and we welcome you as part of the public education system.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Okay.

MURAT DIZDAR: And I want to get it right for you in supporting you.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'm not making any comments in a disparaging manner in relation to that. You don't need to make any additional statements; you can at the beginning of these sessions, usually. It's more about, as you embrace transgender kids, you might want to make sure there's a legal issues bulletin available for them that they can peruse. At this point in time, it's locked away and there's no access to any bulletin in relation to this issue at the moment. **When do you expect that to be made available in '25?**

MURAT DIZDAR: I think you read out that we said early '25. Let me go back and see that we're on track for that.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Can we get any kind of date in '25, or is it just '25?

MURAT DIZDAR: I think my understanding was term 1, '25. Let's make sure we get that right.

ANSWER

The Legal Issues Bulletin (LIB) referenced will be finalised in early 2025.

QUESTION 34 PAGE NO 33 and 39

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: All right, we'll come back to that. I am trying to think of any other supplementary questions that we might have had. I might also ask you—and I appreciate this is a very new issue—about the social media ban that was passed federally. I'm sure you're well on top of that issue. There was a process there where for 24 hours they allowed the public—and, presumably, departments and others—to make submissions. Did the NSW Department of Education make a submission to that inquiry that was held federally by the Senate?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go back and check. It's not ringing a bell. We might have contributed if there was a Government submission.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Can you also check for me whether you were invited? You're the largest education department in Australia. I'd be interested to know whether you or the department were invited to make a submission to the inquiry that was held by the Senate.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I'm happy to check.

.....

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: There has been no correspondence to date? I don't expect there to be, but there has been nothing from the Federal communications Minister or department at all? Are you going to come back to me on whether you were invited as a department, given how large your department is, to make a submission?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, we took that on notice.

ANSWER

The NSW Government made a submission to the Joint Select Committee's Inquiry into Social Media and Australian Society. The Department of Education contributed to this submission. A copy is available on the [Inquiry's website](#).

QUESTION 35 PAGE NO 34

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I just get some clarification on my last round of questions—this probably goes to you, Mr Graham—on some of the data that was in this article in *The Daily Telegraph*. The 59,814, they say it's students—this is from last year's data—but that's total number of suspensions, isn't it?

MARTIN GRAHAM: That's right.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And students was 33,000. That's what's reported.

MARTIN GRAHAM: That's right.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Or 33,900.

MARTIN GRAHAM: It is 34, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So with the 40,861, which I appreciate is preliminary and you're taking that on notice, is that number of suspensions or number of students suspended?

MARTIN GRAHAM: My understanding is that that was the number of suspensions. But, I must say, I don't have in front of me the information we provided to the Minister.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide that on notice, that would be great.

ANSWER

40,861 refers to the number of suspensions in Semester 1, 2024 in NSW Government schools.

QUESTION 36 PAGE NO 34&35

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide that on notice, that would be great. I wanted to turn quickly to the Student Wellbeing Innovation Fund. Are there any further rounds of that funding intended to be made available at this point?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I understand at the moment we don't have any further rounds of that funding.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: For some of the organisations that did receive money—I wanted to ask specifically about Gotcha4Life. I think they got \$160,000. Have there been any conversations about continuing the work that they do in any public schools in New South Wales?

MURAT DIZDAR: We have—Mr Graham will get the right terminology—an approved list of providers in the wellbeing space. They might be on there, I'm not sure. We could check.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Graham, do you know if they're on that list?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I'm not sure if they're on the list. I think they might be on our wellbeing provider list, but schools would then purchase directly from them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you had any conversations with other agencies—I'm thinking, specifically, mental health or through Health—about any specific support packages for Gotcha4Life for the next school year for public schools?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I'm not aware of them, but that doesn't mean that they're not taking place. We can check to see if that's happening.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take that on notice, that would be fantastic.

ANSWER

The Student Wellbeing Innovation Fund was announced in December 2022. Unfortunately, the former Liberal National Government did not provide funding for the Student Wellbeing Innovation Fund to continue beyond 2023.

Gotcha4Life are not currently on the Student Wellbeing external program catalogue, however the Department of Education has met with the Gotcha4Life Foundation and provided advice about the quality assurance process. The Foundation will be directly notified of any future tender opportunities for the catalogue and have also been advised to register on Buy NSW for any NSW Government tender opportunities.

QUESTION 37 PAGE NO 35

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate the consultation is still ongoing for another couple of weeks, but those who are providing feedback on the current draft have been told that that external assessment will still occur from NESA now, so they should not worry about that when they put in their feedback on other parts of the syllabus. Is that the messaging?

PAUL MARTIN: That's my understanding. It certainly was heavily reported in the media. I'd have to take on notice what information we've provided to drama teachers in relation to that. A lot of the consultation responses that we're receiving are, in whole or in part, around that external assessment. I think that's ongoing. We'll deal with every single consultation piece when they come in and when they're finalised, and look through them very closely.

ANSWER

NESA has heard the concerns relating to the draft Drama 11–12 syllabus regarding the proposal in the draft assessment requirements to examine a group performance as a school-based assessment rather than an external, NESA-marked exam. In response to this feedback, NESA will retain a group performance as part of the external HSC exam. This decision was publicly communicated by NESA CEO Paul Martin at the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales on 25 November 2024 and at the 'Our syllabus, Our stories' Drama teachers meeting at the Seymour Centre on 25 November 2024. The retention of the external group performance exam was also communicated in stakeholder focus group meetings on 27, 28 November 2024 and 2 December 2024.

NESA is continuing to consult on the other proposed changes to the draft Drama 11–12 syllabus and assessment and exam specifications.

All stakeholders are welcome to provide feedback via NESA's public online survey available at <https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/> which will remain open until 20 December 2024.

QUESTION 38 PAGE NO 36

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was the Minister or her office, though, briefed on the draft syllabuses and their content?

PAUL MARTIN: I don't think there were any formal briefings in relation to the 50 syllabuses going forward. I'd have to double-check that because my staff conduct briefings. But my understanding is that all of the draft syllabuses—50 have so far gone through and there are another 61 to go—have proceeded from NESAs through our curriculum assessment committee and gone out from there. It's not until they're close to finalisation and actually signed off that the Minister gets the final copy.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take on notice—presumably the Minister's office know that this is about to be released on this day or there's some communication between NESAs and the Minister's office in terms of when things are coming out.

ANSWER

It is NESAs standard practice to provide the Minister's Office with a media Q&A document prior to consultation on a draft syllabus, for information. NESAs typically responds to media enquiries relating to draft syllabuses as these matters are operational.

A media Q&A was provided to the Minister's Office on 10 October 2024 prior to consultation beginning 28 October 2024 for 19 draft syllabuses, including Drama and Music 11–12. This summarised key content changes between the current and draft syllabuses, and outlined contentious issues for each syllabus released during this round of consultation.

For the draft Drama 11–12 syllabus, this included recognising the possible contention surrounding the proposed change to the assessment and exam requirements of a group performance. NESAs rationale for this proposed change was also outlined in the media Q&A. Contentious issues regarding the inclusion of Western Art music and proposed changes to the assessment and exam requirements for Music Extension were also identified in relation to the Music 11–12 syllabuses.

NESAs also provides the Minister's Office with a draft schedule of syllabus release dates and consultation periods in each Term. The most recent update of this schedule was provided on 18 July 2024 which included details of the 8-week public consultation period commencing 28 October 2024 and ending 20 December 2024.

QUESTION 39 PAGE NO 36

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have a question back on small school closures. I've been told that Tirranna Public School have been told this morning that they will be closing or going into recess next year, and that Avoca Public School will be told the same thing on Wednesday. Are you able to clarify whether that is correct, Ms Summerhayes?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I know Tirranna and Avoca have been consulting this week, Ms Mitchell. I'm happy to follow up on that information you've received.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great.

ANSWER

I am advised that following local community consultation, Tirranna Public School will be placed in recess from the end of Term 4, 2024.

Regarding Avoca Public School, please see answer to transcript question 23.

QUESTION 40 PAGE NO 37

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you tell me how many schools currently have bottled water provided to them for their main water source?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'd be happy to go back and take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As of December 2022, it was 31. I'm just wondering if there's any updated figures. Could you provide that on notice?

MURAT DIZDAR: Was that 2020?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: December 2022. I think there were 31, but I'm wondering if there's any more.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to get an update for you.

ANSWER

The number of schools using bottled water may fluctuate, due to floods, drought, or other local factors. The Department of Education is currently considering the best options to meet the needs of schools in this area.

QUESTION 41 PAGE NO 37

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You might remember, Mr Dizdar, that there was a pilot that we did—I think it was back in 2021—with hydropanels and looking at opportunities for collection of water rather than relying on bottled water. There hasn't been any further work in that space as far as I know. Are any alternative methods or new technologies being investigated along those lines for those smaller, remote schools that don't have access to water?

MURAT DIZDAR: I do recall that work. Let me go back. There are a number of initiatives, particularly in that outer-school infrastructure, around sustainability stuff that we've been doing. Let me go and see.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: This was specifically for those remote schools that don't have access.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide any information about that on notice, that would be great.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 40.

QUESTION 42 PAGE NO 37

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Also, is there any data around how regularly water tests are undertaken, particularly at regional and remote schools, in terms of water quality for the drinking water?

MURAT DIZDAR: I think it would be on a risk matrix. Let's go see what we've got. Those that might be at more risk of geographical factors would have a closer examination than those that are not.

ANSWER

The Department of Education ensures safe drinking water in compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines through a comprehensive water monitoring program covering all NSW school facilities that use rainwater tanks as their primary drinking water source. Water quality testing is conducted biannually, including in regional and remote schools, to ensure drinking water meets safety standards.

QUESTION 43 PAGE NO 37&38

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm conscious of the time, so I'm going to race through a couple of quick ones if I can. With Bungendore High School, there was an announcement to change the location. How much additional funding has been allocated to that school? The original budget listed in the budget papers is \$71 million, but that was obviously with the old site. How much extra has been allocated for the new site and the new school?

MURAT DIZDAR: This is the Birchfield Drive site that we've acquired as the new site. Design and planning work are underway with an anticipated opening in early 2027. In terms of the land cost, let me take that on notice, because I don't have it in front of me.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you provide on notice how much the new site cost was? Also, what is the overall increase to the initial budget of \$70 million, given that, as I think the budget papers said, \$16.9 million had been spent until the end of the last financial year. You've obviously got less than \$70 million left in the kitty. I'm keen to know what the new funding allocation will be. Are there also any time frames for when plans for the new school site will go on public exhibition for the community?

MURAT DIZDAR: I think we've got work underway now. It's only been very recently that we secured the site. Given that we have secured the site, I think we've got design work that is underway. As soon as that's available, we will go through the steps in the process where there's public viewing, a call for submissions, et cetera.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you take on notice when you expect that to be?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to take that on notice, yes.

ANSWER

An information session was held on 12 December 2024 for the community to view the concept designs for the new school. Updates on the project, including regarding the confirmed site, will continue to be made available via the School Infrastructure website. Funding for the project is reported in the NSW Budget.

QUESTION 44 PAGE NO 38

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Another new school is Medowie High School. I understand there's been some community consultation in the last few weeks. Is there any update in terms of whether that school will start with year 7 students only?

MURAT DIZDAR: We're a way away from opening there. Do you know, Ms Summerhayes?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: No.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's come back.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you are taking that on notice, can you also indicate how many enrolments you expect there to be for Medowie, when construction will begin and also when a principal will be appointed?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. I can tell you the principal part, if you like?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's normally about a year out.

MURAT DIZDAR: Normally we go about a year out for the principal. I'll go back and find out how big the school is going to be.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And the catchment intake area, as best as you can, as well.

MURAT DIZDAR: We probably won't have that nailed down, but I'll see what we've got available, and then with what year groups we'll start with.

ANSWER

Information on the new high school the Minns Labor Government is delivering for Medowie can be found on the Department of Education's website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/new-schools/new-high-school-for-medowie.html#about-project-tab>.

QUESTION 45 PAGE NO 38

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With preschool capital funding, there is currently the Building Early Learning Places Program that's out. I think it's through the early childhood education and care fund. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get the details for you. Mr Barakat will be all across that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take it on notice? My advice is that services have been told that this grant is part of a test-and-trial program, and that beyond that there are no guarantees for future capital works grants for community preschools. I would like some clarity on that.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll get the detail. It's not unusual for us to want to test and make sure that there's an evidence base that it works before we—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is unusual for there not to be a capital works grant available for community preschool. That has been in place for some time. I am just curious to know whether that will continue for community preschools separate to the 100 department preschools. I'm talking about specific community preschools that run independently. We've had some concerns raised—also from areas that are recovering from natural disasters—that the funding opportunities are not there. We'd like to know where that's all up to.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me come back to you.

ANSWER

The Building Early Learning Places Program (the Program) and the 100 new public preschools initiative are part of the suite of initiatives being implemented by the NSW Government to ensure more families across the state can access affordable, quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) close to home.

More information about the Program can be found on the Department of Education's website at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/building-early-learning-places-program>.

QUESTION 46 PAGE NO 38

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great, thank you. The issue around the number of non-government schools—this is still in the early childhood space. There was an election commitment that there would be, I think, \$60 million for 50 early childhood services on non-government school sites to support families who choose to send their children to non-government schools. Is there any update as to where they will be and when they will be built? My understanding is it was an election commitment for this term of government. We're nearly halfway through, and it has been fairly quiet.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go get the detail. I must admit, I've been fixated on the 100 public preschools and what is under my purview to deliver, but that's an election commitment. We have to deliver on it. It's still there. Let me get the update for you.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is working closely with the non-government school sector to deliver the NSW Government election commitment to provide \$60 million for at least 50 new and upgraded preschools at non-government school sites in high-growth areas.

The location of the new and upgraded preschools will be informed by grant applications from non-government schools. The first round of approved projects will be announced in 2025.

QUESTION 47 PAGE NO 38&39

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Martin, I might come back to you in the one minute and 20 seconds I have left. In terms of students learning about financial literacy—things like superannuation, taxation et cetera—there is still, I think, a program running in government schools where schools can elect to be part of the Financial Literacy Challenge. I'm assuming that still exists? Where specifically in the curriculum do students learn about those areas of general financial literacy?

PAUL MARTIN: I think that there are elements of the K-6 HSIE syllabus, but I will take that on notice and have some specific details for you. It is certainly in commerce and probably in other parts of the year 7-10 syllabuses. Of course, there is economics as an elective subject.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take it on notice and provide a breakdown of the specifics and what gets taught in what year groups? Are there any changes to that with any of the new syllabuses that are rolling out as well? Is there more or less of that content?

PAUL MARTIN: I will. Absolutely, of course. There would also be applications in maths that relate to things like percentages and being able to calculate things that would have application in terms of financial literacy. I'll get that list for you.

ANSWER

Content related to financial literacy has been strengthened in the new mandatory Mathematics K–10 syllabus which is currently being implemented in schools. Students learn essential content related to money, financial transactions and risks, investments and income. The newly reformed Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K–6 and PDHPE 7–10 syllabus (implemented from 2027) incorporate financial literacy from Stage 1, providing all students with an understanding of the connection between financial management and personal wellbeing.

Students in Years 1–2 (Stage 1) apply knowledge of numbers to money problems and represent money values in multiple ways in the new mathematics K–10 syllabus. With the introduction of the new PDHPE K–6 syllabus students will also identify how money can be saved, and the benefits of responsible saving and spending for personal wellbeing.

In Years 3–4 (Stage 2), students recognise the relationship between dollars and cents and perform calculations with money in mathematics. In the new PDHPE K–6 syllabus, students will describe the personal wellbeing benefits of responsible saving and spending.

In Years 5–6 (Stage 3), students calculate and use mental strategies to estimate percentage discounts of key benchmark values, 10%, 25% and 50% in mathematics, while in the new PDHPE K–6 syllabus they will also consider the benefits of saving, goal setting and decision making to manage finances for personal wellbeing. The foundations developed in primary school are further extended in high school. Across Years 7–10, students learn about personal financial management, managing debt, purchasing, personal loans, investing, budgeting and saving. These concepts are included in a range of newly reformed mandatory 7–10 syllabuses (Mathematics, Geography, PDHPE) ensuring all students develop their financial literacy.

In Years 7–8 (Stage 4), students examine profit and loss in financial contexts and learn about the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the new mathematics syllabus. In the new Geography 7–10 syllabus, students will explore the economic factors that affect the liveability of places. Across Years 9–10 (Stage 5), students interpret tax tables, solve investment and borrowing problems, and calculate the cost of buying on terms in mathematics. In the new PDHPE 7–10 syllabus, students will learn to analyse how economic factors influence health behaviours including personal finance, financial independence and wellbeing.

In addition, students have the opportunity to develop their financial literacy in Years 7–10 if they elect to study Commerce. In the newly updated Commerce 7–10 syllabus students learn about consumer choice, consumer protection, payment choices, earning an income, spending and saving, borrowing, managing finances and investing, including investment planning and superannuation. The new Commerce 7–10 syllabus places greater emphasis on practical financial skills such as strategies to maximise financial security and minimise financial problems.

QUESTION 48 PAGE NO 39

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there any data on the Financial Literacy Challenge and how many schools are taking part in that?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I don't have it.

MURAT DIZDAR: We'll go back and see.

ANSWER

The Financial Literacy Challenge are resources provided for schools and have been viewed over 12,000 times in 2024. The resources are publicly available and no longer require school registration to access.

QUESTION 48A PAGE NO 40

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You don't remember who they were. Can you name anyone? I imagine most of them were Australian speakers, weren't they? They couldn't have sourced everybody from overseas.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to go back to the agenda.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Thanks for that bit of info about the Social Media Summit.

ANSWER

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/social-media-summit>

QUESTION 49 PAGE NO 40

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Just a couple of quick things I want to wrap up and information I'd like to get back. Just on that legal issues bulletin that I raised earlier, if you can come back to me on the date that you expect that. You said term 1 of 2025.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I'm expecting term 1.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'd also like to know who undertook that legal issues bulletin review within the department, which section of the department, or if you are relying on any external parties to help with preparing that bulletin?

MURAT DIZDAR: It will be led by our legal directorate, but I'll get advice to you.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: If you can let me know. I'd like to know if any external parties' advice or assistance was, is or will be relied upon in preparing and finalising that bulletin, please. And if you do undertake external support or assistance with that bulletin, I'd like to know what the cost of that will be.

MURAT DIZDAR: If we have engaged anyone, I'll let you know—and the costs.

ANSWER

The Legal Issues Bulletin (LIB) related to gender diverse students will be finalised in early 2025. The Department of Education Legal Services team led the review of the LIB in consultation with a broad range of internal stakeholders. External feedback is also being sought, including from the NSW Children's Advocate, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, NSW Ombudsman, Federation of P&Cs, NSW Teachers Federation, Public Service Association, Special Education Principals' and Leaders' Association of NSW, the Primary Principals Association, the Secondary Principals Council and the Children's Legal Issues Committee of the NSW Law Society. These agencies and organisations do not charge the department for feedback on its draft resources.

QUESTION 50 PAGE NO 40

The CHAIR: Can I ask you some questions about the Smart and Skilled program?

MURAT DIZDAR: You can.

The CHAIR: Can you tell me what the priority groups of learners are for the Smart and Skilled program?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll make sure I get you all the correct details, but there are our equity groupings, there are our learners with disability, Aboriginal learners and learners that are rural and remote. But let me get you all the accurate categories. There are loadings that are applied to those learners. I'll come back on notice, Chair.

ANSWER

Smart and Skilled is the NSW Government's subsidised training system that helps people get qualifications in in-demand skills and industries.

Smart and Skilled improves access to training for eligible disadvantaged students by providing government-subsidised training up to and including Certificate III, as well as funding for higher-level courses (Certificate IV and above) in targeted priority areas.

To be eligible for Smart and Skilled a student must meet the following criteria:

- be 15 years old or over
- no longer at school
- living or working in NSW
- be an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident, humanitarian visa holder or New Zealand citizen.

Disadvantaged groups that have access to fee-free training under Smart and Skilled:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are eligible for a fee exemption and receive additional support through needs-based loadings.
- Students with a disability (and eligible dependants) are eligible for a fee exemption and receive additional support through needs-based loadings.
- Refugees and asylum seekers (and their eligible partners) are eligible for fee exemptions for qualifications up to and including Certificate IV.
- Students eligible for a concession fee (i.e. an Australian Government benefit recipient) and aged between 15 to 30 years (inclusive) are eligible for fee-free scholarships for full qualifications up to and including Certificate IV.
- Students who are in out-of-home care and are aged between 15 to 17 years are eligible for fee-free scholarships for full qualifications up to and including Certificate IV.
- Students who have previously been in out-of-home care and are aged between 18 to 30 years are eligible for fee-free scholarships for full qualifications up to and including Certificate IV.
- Students who are experiencing or have experienced domestic and family violence and are aged 15 years and over are eligible for fee-free scholarships for full qualifications up to and including Certificate IV.

Other disadvantaged groups that may be eligible for discounted fee training through waivers, scholarships and concession fees, as well as be supported through equity loadings:

- Regional, rural and remote students are supported through location loadings, which are available to training providers to cover additional costs associated with meeting the needs of these students.
- Long-term unemployed students are similarly supported through a needs-based loading.
- Disadvantaged students have access to multiple needs-based loadings where appropriate - this recognises that students may have intersectional needs and allows providers to receive multiple needs-based loadings per enrolment.
- Students receiving specific Australian Government benefits or allowances, and their dependants, are eligible for concession fees. This includes Youth Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Family Tax Benefit Part A (maximum rate), Parenting Payment (Single) and the Age Pension.

Fee free training is also available at the course and program level for:

- Foundation Skills qualification students are entitled to fee free training for identified full qualifications on the NSW Skills List.
- Part qualifications under the Targeted Priorities Pre-Vocational and Part Qualifications (TPPQ) program.
- Apprenticeship qualifications, under the NSW Government's Fee-Free Apprenticeship Initiative, are fee free for eligible NSW apprentices enrolled in Smart and Skilled subsidised training until 30 June 2025.
- Traineeship qualifications, under the NSW Government's Fee-Free Traineeship Initiative, are fee free for eligible NSW trainees enrolled in Smart and Skilled subsidised training until 30 June 2025.
- Identified full qualifications on the NSW Skills list that are funded under the NSW Fee Free initiative.

QUESTION 51 PAGE NO 41

The CHAIR: Did Try a Trade sit under the Smart and Skilled program?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me check that. Is there something specific you want me to check in relation to it?

The CHAIR: I want to know if under that Smart and Skilled program there was funding for VET service provision in Youth Justice centres?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me check for that.

The CHAIR: If you could come back then on what current skills and trades programs are running in the Youth Justice centres and how much the Department of Education is funding them for.

MURAT DIZDAR: Definitely. I'm happy to do that, because I've been to a number and there are trade training centre type operations in some of these Youth Justice centres so that students can come out with qualifications and skills to enhance employability. I'll come back to you with what's in play at each of our Youth Justice centres.

The CHAIR: Thank you, that would be really useful. If you could also tell me what the evaluation of that Try a Trade program has been like, how it has been assessed and what the results have been, that would be very useful.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

ANSWER

Try a Trade is a generic term given to the delivery of hands-on experiences across a range of different trades to raise awareness and understanding of career opportunities. These types of programs are delivered by industry partnerships and are not funded under Smart and Skilled, which focuses on completion of accredited training. Smart and Skilled eligibility requirements are focused on people who are no longer at school.

The Department of Education works with schools, including those in Youth Justice centres, to support trade experiences through a range of programs, supporting pathway programs for students to connect with local industry for training and employment pathways. These programs include the Regional Industry Education Partnership (RIEP) program as an introduction to VET training. Commencing in 2025, RIEP officers will actively engage with six Youth Justice schools across NSW to continue to deliver skills pathways programs.

QUESTION 52 PAGE NO 41

The CHAIR: I have a couple of other random ones. The Auditor-General released a report into internal controls and governance, and one of the issues identified was the governance of gifts and benefits. Are you able to provide a copy of the department's gifts and benefits register—this is something I've been asking a few different departments.

ANSWER

Individual schools and Department of Education business units maintain local workplace registers for all staff declarations. For declarations made by PSSE and Nominated Employees, the Chief Risk Office collects and collates declarations into central register. This register is available on the department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/rights-and-accountability/corruption-prevention>.

QUESTION 53 PAGE NO 41

The CHAIR: I have a couple of other random ones. The Auditor-General released a report into internal controls and governance, and one of the issues identified was the governance of gifts and benefits. Are you able to provide a copy of the department's gifts and benefits register—this is something I've been asking a few different departments—and also any information that you hold in relation to lobbyists and lobbyist meetings?

PAUL MARTIN: Sure.

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 54 PAGE NO 41&42

The CHAIR: There is another eTendering record for Accenture being awarded a contract to do business process automation for almost \$273,000. Can you tell me what that business process automation project is, and are we expecting jobs to be cut as a result?

MURAT DIZDAR: Is this in the Department of Education or NESAs?

The CHAIR: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: Department of Education?

The CHAIR: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go back and get details for you, but it has nothing to do with the structures that I've been doing. I have brought no-one in to work on the structures. We have been working ourselves as deputy secretaries and secretary on the structure.

ANSWER

The focus of the project is to reduce the administrative burden on staff, by automating repetitive administrative tasks and removing manual work for teams across the department.

QUESTION 55 PAGE NO 42

The CHAIR: Last year the department engaged MKG Consulting to deliver a procurement operations manual. Has that been delivered?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go back and check with procurement.

ANSWER

MKG Consulting Pty Ltd t/a Procurist was engaged on 27 September 2023 until 30 December 2024 under the Performance and Management Services Scheme (SCM0005) for the development of a Procurement Operations Manual (POM).

The delivery of the Procurement Operations Manual was impacted by the *Inquiry into Procurement practices of government agencies in New South Wales and its impact on the social development of the people of New South Wales*, and the NSW Government procurement reform. The POM is anticipated to be completed by 30 June 2025 with no further extension to the contract.

QUESTION 56 PAGE NO 42

The CHAIR: Back to you again, Mr Martin. In relation to that project with the review, are you able to make the terms of reference for that review available to the Committee?

PAUL MARTIN: Whatever was involved in the tender process, we can of course provide.

The CHAIR: Will a version of the report be made public when it comes back, do you know?

PAUL MARTIN: I can't answer that question at the moment, but I'll take that on notice as well.

ANSWER

A copy of the Review of NESAs Higher School Certificate Disability Provisions Program Terms of Reference (ToR) is publicly available on the NESA website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2024-11/nesa-review-of-hsc-disability-provisions-program-terms-of-reference.pdf>.

A final report from the Review will be completed in 2025.

A summary of the report, including findings and recommendations, will be published on the NESA website.

QUESTION 57 PAGE NO 43

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: On this specific one, when would you anticipate on giving the Government advice about the implementation of running the IB?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't want to nail myself to a time frame. We'll work on it. I'm happy to come back to the Committee. We come back in March. We should be closer on some of the work around it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'll ask again for complete clarity: In 2027 will public schools in New South Wales be offering the IB?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll need to meet the election commitment. That's the expectation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So that's a yes? They will be?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll need to meet that election commitment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So is it a yes?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll need to do the work and present to Government how we would meet that election commitment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many of the 78 election commitments that you're talking about have been delivered so far?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll get you the exact number on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. And which ones have been met already?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure, we should have that. The temp to perm one is an example.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but work had started on that, to be fair, prior to the election.

MURAT DIZDAR: But I'm happy to take it on notice and come back to you with which ones we've met.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great, thank you.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is overseeing 78 election commitments across the Education and Early Learning and Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education portfolios. 72 of these commitments are in the Education and Early Learning portfolio.

The Minns Labor Government has already delivered on several of these commitments, including:

- Banning mobile phone use in all NSW public schools
- Securing an agreement with the NSW Teachers Federation to deliver competitive salaries for teachers in NSW public schools
- Converting 10,000 temporary teaching roles to permanent
- Conducting an audit of enrolment growth across NSW to improve school planning for growing communities.
- Establishing an ongoing, targeted Literacy and Numeracy tutoring program, funded through the Education Future Fund, and
- Increasing NSW's contribution to the School Resourcing Standard

QUESTION 58 PAGE NO 43&44

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Going back to another election commitment—one of your 78—prior to the last election, again, the Minister made some public commentary around a new co-ed high school in the eastern suburbs and said that that would be delivered. Where is that work up to?

MURAT DIZDAR: Are you referring to the Randwick consultation?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I'm talking about prior to the election. The Minister is on the record—and I can pull up the article—saying that a Labor Government would provide a co-ed school in the eastern suburbs.

MURAT DIZDAR: I want to go back and check the wording. My understanding was that we'd look at co-ed provision. We've undertaken the Randwick consultation and the Randwick merger is commencing next year. We're up in year 7 enrolments, which is fantastic. It will be a growing school. I want to make sure I can get the accurate wording, unless you've got the wording in front of you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I do. In November 2022 in a *Sky News* interview, now Minister Prue Car said:

We're certainly not going to be closing any single-sex schools or anything like that.

...

It's something that we have said we're going to do in the first term of the government—is find a way to build a co-ed high school in the eastern suburbs ...

I'm asking about that commitment, on the record in November 2022, that they would build a co-ed high school in the eastern suburbs.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me check the exact wording in the Government commitments, not what's reported in *Sky News*.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's a direct quote from the Minister on *Sky News*, so it's from her mouth. It has not been made up by a journalist, and it was reported again in *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm not trying to not answer the question. I'll come back and give it to you on notice.

ANSWER

Following extensive community consultation, Randwick Boys and Girls High Schools are coming together to form a new co-educational high school in Randwick from 2025. The decision was made following specific consultation with the local community in the Eastern Suburbs.

A co-educational high school setting was preferred by the majority of those surveyed. There was particularly strong support from local public primary school parents, carers and students. An increase in the student population of the co-educational school will expand the range of curricula and co-curricular opportunities.

QUESTION 59 PAGE NO 44

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay, I'll rephrase it. Has the department provided any advice to the Deputy Premier about a potential public/private school proposal to be built at the Edgecliff Centre?

MURAT DIZDAR: Not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Has School Infrastructure had any consultations with that Federal member, Allegra Spender, about a proposed school.

MURAT DIZDAR: Not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check that.

ANSWER

Please see answer to LC Question on Notice 2975.

QUESTION 60 PAGE NO 45

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I wondered whether the Department of Education has been involved at all or been asked to participate in the drug summit. The Sydney one is this week and there have also been Griffith and Lismore meetings. Has there been any involvement from the department in that?

MURAT DIZDAR: We have, yes. Mr Graham might have details.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes, Laura Milkins, the executive director of inclusion and wellbeing, is attending that summit.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Has the department been asked to provide any insight or is it more attending and gathering feedback.

MARTIN GRAHAM: I'm not sure about any background work that took place. I can get back to you on that.

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

ANSWER

Updates are being made available as the project progresses on the Department of Education's website. The Minns Labor Government will open the new high school on Day 1, Term 1, 2027.

QUESTION 61 PAGE NO 45

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take that on notice, that would be great. I have one quick one and then I'll hand back over to my colleague. We don't have a lot of time left. Actually, I have two quick ones. Googong High School—is there a start date yet for the construction of that project?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll find out and come back to you, if that's okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine.

MURAT DIZDAR: We do update all our projects on our website for the school community, so let me go back.

ANSWER

Construction is anticipated to start in mid-2025. Planning and design work is currently continuing for the new Googong High School. The Department of Education's website will be updated as the project develops. The new high school will open on Day 1, Term 1, 2027.

QUESTION 62 PAGE NO 45

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. For Jindabyne Education Campus, is there a completion date for the high school and the primary school there?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to come back, if that's okay, Ms Mitchell?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's okay. When you're taking that on notice, could you also provide whether there have been any changes to those plans in light of the Government's decision to effectively abandon the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct? You'd remember a lot of that was linked within the new school and there was community infrastructure work that was happening around that as well. My understanding is that the SAP part of it has been put on hold, and I'm wondering if there will be an impact then on the school delivery there.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to come back. We're committed to building the primary and high school. Are you asking about the specifics of where that funding—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just whether there has been any impact in terms of those projects. But from the educational perspective, you're saying no.

MARTIN GRAHAM:

MURAT DIZDAR: No. We've still got the funding to build both schools.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did you want to add anything, Ms Summerhayes, or not?

DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES: I was just going to add, Ms Mitchell, that the schools are preparing to make the move for day one, term 1 next year at the end of this year.

ANSWER

Jindabyne Public School and Jindabyne High School will be operational on their new sites Day 1, Term 1, 2025.

QUESTION 63 PAGE NO 46&47

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just quickly back to the IB, Mr Graham, has there been any work done on what the costings would be to run the IB at an individual high school?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I don't have any costing for an individual high school for how much it would cost to run the IB.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you done any work for costings across the system to offer the IB?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I've been in this role for 12 months so I'm not sure about the costings that might've been done to run the IB.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take on notice whether any work has been done and any figures that you have around the costings to run the IB?

MURAT DIZDAR: We're happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

To offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) schools must pay a candidacy fee, authorisation fee and application fee. In addition, teachers must complete IB professional learning. Specific costs per school vary based on the courses offered.

QUESTION 64 PAGE NO 47

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have any updated data in terms of teacher vacancy numbers, Mr Dizdar, as of today or more recently than term 3?

MURAT DIZDAR: I only have that term 3, week two data. Please let me come back on notice. We'll do it quickly.

ANSWER

Please see answer to supplementary question 65.

From: [Secretary, Premier's Department](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: A message from the Secretary, Premier's Department
Date: Monday, 3 June 2024 9:00:58 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: NSW public sector employees



Dear colleagues

As you may have seen reported in the media, there is an open letter circulating from public servants across Australia in relation to the Israel and Gaza conflict.

We understand that many people hold strong feelings on this matter and that the violence in the region has had a terrible impact on communities with connections to Israel and Gaza.

We also respect the right of public servants to advocate and participate in public debate as private citizens.

However, our core public sector values require us to be impartial and apolitical. It is not in line with our values to undertake public advocacy on matters using our position as public servants or using the authority of our agencies.

We are bound to serve all members of the community and ensure that all feel included and respected. All members of the community should also feel safe to access public services, no matter what their background. That also

goes for our colleagues.

The reputation and authority of our public institutions cannot be used for political advocacy, lest trust in Government is put at risk.

NSW is a strong, welcoming and connected society in which different views, faiths, backgrounds and cultures are respected. The NSW public sector is committed to building on the strengths of our communities to foster social cohesion and reduce hate and extremism so that every person living in our state feels safe.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak to your manager or to the people and culture teams in your agency.

Simon Draper
Secretary, Premier's Department

Kathrina Lo
NSW Public Service Commissioner

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From: [Shaun Ruming - Chief People Officer](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Conflict between Israel and Palestine
Date: Friday, 13 October 2023 11:35:46 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: Education support staff

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Support for staff and families

lorem



Dear colleagues

Escalation of the conflict between Israel and Palestine

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge that the recent escalation in the conflict between Israel and Palestine may be distressing for many of our department's people – especially those with family, friends, or communities in the region. Our thoughts are with all of you.

Please reach out for support if you need it. Remember that you and your immediate family can access independent and confidential counselling services through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) to help you through both personal and work-related matters. The direct number to call is **1800 060 650**.

Embracing diversity and practising compassion

Here at Education, we are proud of the diversity of our staff and the way we come together from all walks of life for the important work of transforming lives through education.

We embrace staff diversity in all its forms, as that means we are truly representing the community we serve. That includes diversity of respectful thought, as different perspectives often lead to better outcomes for our learners.

However, there are certain times when we all need to take extra care with how we might discuss sensitive issues. Please be mindful if talking about the conflict, as your colleagues may be distressed by such conversations.

This escalating conflict may also trigger strong emotions and expressions of views among colleagues who have affected family and friends or links to the region. Please try to respond with a mindset of compassion and sensitivity.

Finally, a reminder that **intolerance and racism have no place in our department**. Everyone has the right to a safe workplace free from discrimination or harassment. If you experience or witness threats, intimidation, or violence, please make a report to the department's [Incident Report and Support Hotline](#) on **1800 811 523**. To report racism, please refer to the [Reports of racism intranet page](#) for guidance.

Let's lead with respect and care for all our colleagues.

Kind regards

Shaun Ruming
Chief People Officer

If you need support or assistance, the department's confidential Employee Assistance Program can be accessed at any time by calling **1800 060 650** to speak to a qualified and independent clinician. You can also access staff wellbeing support and resources on the department's [Being Well hub](#).

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From: [Murat Dizdar - Secretary](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Conflict in the Middle East
Date: Thursday, 9 November 2023 11:06:02 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: All staff

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Conflict in the Middle East

lorem



Dear colleagues

It has been a number of weeks since I wrote to principals, and the Chief People Officer wrote to Education support staff, about support for students and staff in these times of global conflict. I wish to reiterate our support for all affected staff navigating this difficult period.

In a multicultural society, many people have strong connections to other homelands around the world. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is

affecting staff, families, and friends across our whole Education community. This is happening on top of the war in Ukraine, and many other conflicts around the globe. My thoughts go out to all our staff impacted by these events.

Please take the time to **look after your own wellbeing and reach out for support** if you need it. You and your immediate family members can access independent and confidential counselling services through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) to help you manage both personal and work-related matters. The direct number to call is **1800 060 650**.

Remember to look out for your colleagues too. Please be mindful of discussions in the workplace as we never know how these might affect our colleagues, whether they have connections to the region or not. What might be seen as a casual remark about a news item to one person might be deeply distressing to another. We all have an important role to play in supporting one another at work.

Racism and intolerance have no place in our workplaces. Everyone has the right to a safe workplace free from discrimination or harassment. If you become aware of threats, intimidation or violence, please make a report to the department's [Incident Report and Support Hotline](#) on **1800 811 523**. Your principal or manager can also provide support, so please discuss any concerns as they arise.

If you witness something concerning in your workplace, school, or community that you think should be reported to the **NSW Police Force**, you can make contact in a number of ways:

- For all emergencies, dial triple zero (**000**).
- If you witness a crime or suspicious activity, including hate crimes, contact your local Police Area Command (police station).
- For non-urgent police assistance, reporting minor crime, and all general enquiries, contact the Police Assistance Line on **131 444**.
- To make an anonymous report, contact Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000**.

Look after yourselves and one another, and reach out for support if you need it.

Regards

Murat Dizdar

Secretary

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From: [Deputy Secretaries - School Performance](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Conflict in the Middle East
Date: Thursday, 9 November 2023 10:42:14 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: DELs
CC: School Performance EDs

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Leading our schools through conflict in the Middle East

Dear colleagues

Shortly, the Secretary will send an email to principals about the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and will copy you as usual.

We wanted to share the following messages to share with your principals only as needed.

We trust you will use your best judgement as always to ensure these messages are used appropriately in the right context.

Subject: Student community wellbeing during the current conflict in the Middle East

We are committed to ensuring schools remain among the safest places in the community for children and young people.

The loss of all innocent lives in the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is a tragedy.

In our multicultural society many people have strong connections to other homelands, with the current conflict affecting many students, staff and families in school communities.

Racism or intolerance have no place in public education. Everyone has the right to feel safe at school, which is why, in the current circumstances, it is more important than ever that students and their families report to the school any threats, intimidation or violence they are subjected to.

Such reports will be taken seriously and action taken, including referral to police as required.

Supports such as counselling, are also available to students targeted by inappropriate behaviour.

Students are reminded regularly about how to report such conduct. If you believe your child/ren have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour, please contact **[for school to include]**.

Please remember that support is available to you and your immediate family members through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) to help you manage both personal and work-related matters. The direct number to call is **1800 060 650**.

Thank you again for your work in in leading your principals, schools and communities through these challenges.

Regards

Cathy Brennan, A/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – North

Deborah Summerhayes, A/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – South

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From: [Deb Summerhayes – Deputy Secretary, Public Schools](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Conflict in the Middle East reminders and resources
Date: Monday, 21 October 2024 10:37:53 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: All school staff

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Promoting safety and respect

Dear colleagues

We recognise that some staff and students may be experiencing feelings of distress as the conflict in the Middle East continues. I want to remind you that support and resources are available for you.

It is important schools remain neutral places and present thoughtful, balanced views in response to issues that arise. Racism and religious intolerance have no place in our public schools. We all have a role to play in preventing racism, as outlined in our [Anti-Racism Strategy](#). As always and especially in heightened times like this, we must undertake our duties in all our contexts to ensure that this remains the case.

Staff must balance their role as a government employee with their right to participate in political and community activities in a personal capacity. The [Code of Conduct](#) sets out our clear duty to retain public confidence in public education and ensure the department remains apolitical and professional. Our work in schools contributes positively to social cohesion.

Resources and advice to help you meet the needs of your school community

- [Support in times of crisis.](#)
- [Strengthening harmony and building resilience in school communities: Advice for schools \(PDF 635 KB\).](#)
- [Countering racism.](#)
- [Controversial issues in schools policy.](#)
- [Engaging communities.](#)

If you become aware of threats, intimidation or violence, speak to your principal and/or make a report to the department's [Incident Report and Support Hotline](#) on **1800 811 523**.

Support and resources for you and your family

Remember to look after your own wellbeing and please reach out for support if you need it. You and your immediate family can access independent and confidential counselling services through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) to help you manage both personal and work-related matters. The department's new Employee Assistance Program provider is TELUS Health. You can contact them on **1800 951 198**.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and efforts in promoting safety, respect and social cohesion in our schools.

Kind regards

Deb Summerhayes
Deputy Secretary, Public Schools

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as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.



From: [Murat Dizdar - Secretary](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Conflict in the Middle East
Date: Thursday, 9 November 2023 10:47:43 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: Principals
CC: DELs, PSLs, School Performance EDs, SPN SSSP All Directors,
Learning Improvement Executive, Professional Support Officers

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Conflict in the Middle East

lorem



Dear colleagues

I would like to thank you for the thoughtful and measured leadership of your school communities throughout the conflict in the Middle East.

In a multicultural society, many people have strong connections to other homelands, and the conflict in the Middle East is affecting students, staff,

families and friends across our schools and wider communities. We have a duty to serve our diverse communities and support one another in times of need. Our communities look to us and hear our words when conflicts arise. We need to remain informed, measured, compassionate and, most importantly, connected.

Our [Controversial Issues in Schools Policy](#) and procedures support us to lead and manage sensitive and difficult issues in schools. We must be guided by these to ensure schools remain neutral places for learning, while meeting student needs with balance and care in every classroom.

Work is happening across government to support affected communities and promote community cohesion. The NSW Police Force are highly visible and are working hard to engage with communities and exercise judgment, while being resolute on addressing violence, intimidation and hate speech.

NSW Police Force reporting options

- For all emergencies, dial triple zero (**000**).
- If you witness or report a crime or suspicious activity including hate crimes, contact your local Police Area Command (police station).
- For non-urgent police assistance, reporting minor crime and all general enquiries, contact the Police Assistance Line on **131 444**.
- To make an anonymous report, contact Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000**.

Racism and intolerance have no place in NSW public education.

Everyone has the right to a safe school and workplace free from discrimination or harassment. If you become aware of threats, intimidation or violence, make a report to the department's [Incident Report and Support Hotline](#) on **1800 811 523**. Your Director, Educational Leadership can also provide support, so please discuss any concerns as they arise.

We all have an important role to play in supporting the needs of our staff, students and their families. Remember to look after your own wellbeing as well, and please reach out for support if you need it. You and your immediate family can access independent and confidential counselling services through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) to help you manage both personal and work-related matters. The direct number to call is **1800 060 650**.

Thank you again for your work in leading your school through these challenges, and please remember that support is available.

Regards

Murat Dizdar
Secretary

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From: [Murat Dizdar - Secretary](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Harmony Week
Date: Monday, 18 March 2024 3:42:27 PM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: Principals
CC: DELs; Public Schools Executive; Teaching, Learning and Student Wellbeing Executive

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Advice on Harmony Week

lorem



Dear colleagues

We value the cultural diversity of our communities in NSW public schools. I know each of you promotes respect and understanding every day, which helps maintain harmony within your learning and working environment, and our broader community.

Harmony Week demonstrates our continued focus on celebrating the rich diversity of backgrounds in our public schools and the important role our schools play in society – embracing the theme ‘Everyone Belongs’. The expertise, compassion, dedication and professionalism of our school leaders and teachers are integral to ensuring that activities during Harmony Week reaffirm the inclusive nature of public schools, build intercultural understanding and belonging, and oppose racism.

Intolerance and racism have no place in NSW public schools.

Wars and international conflicts, such as the current conflict in the Middle East, can heighten people’s sense of insecurity and evoke a range of emotions. Given the current international tensions, there is a heightened risk that the wearing of national colours, the display of flags and conducting similar activities that may be interpreted as dividing students on national, cultural or religious grounds may unintentionally impact on the wellbeing of students, staff and/or the community and their sense of safety within the school environment. This risk needs to be carefully managed.

Schools play a critical role in supporting community harmony during periods of community unrest and uncertainty. Harmony Week provides an opportunity for schools to implement activities which bring students, staff and families together to build understanding of cultural diversity, different perspectives, mutual respect and trust in safe and supported ways.

We always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. As you celebrate Harmony Week, please be mindful of your local communities with planned activities and events. I encourage you to communicate explicit advice to students, staff and families about your activities and behaviour expectations.

Consult with your Director, Educational Leadership if significant problems arise in your school concerning the management of these issues.

You can also refer to a range of department resources:

- [Harmony Week resources](#)
- [Support in times of crisis](#)
- [Countering racism](#)

Engaging communities

Thank you for your ongoing work and commitment to ensuring that our public schools are inclusive, culturally safe, support belonging and reject all forms of racism.

Regards

Murat Dizdar
Secretary

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From: [Deputy Secretaries - School Performance](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: New resources to support you with your students and communities
Date: Wednesday, 29 November 2023 4:02:50 PM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: Principals
CC: DELs, PSLs, School Performance EDs, SPN SSSP All Directors,
Learning Improvement Executive, Professional Support Officers

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New resources to support you

Dear colleagues

We are aware of increasing reports of community disharmony and distress affecting students and staff as a result of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

We have developed additional advice to assist in supporting communities significantly impacted. This includes:

- [advice \(DOCX 233 KB\)](#) on what school leaders, teachers and support staff can do to support student wellbeing, address difficult topics and

facilitate communication with families

- [a letter \(DOCX 18 KB\)](#) you can use as a model to communicate with parents and carers about the conflict. This will be available shortly translated into relevant languages.

You are best placed to understand the local context of your school. We encourage you to work in partnership with local communities to promote safety and respect within the school community.

Schools must remain neutral places and present thoughtful, balanced views in response to issues that arise. We need to ensure fairness in how we respond to student behaviours relating to expressions of support for Palestine or Israel.

Please reinforce the message that racism, religious intolerance and political activism have no place in NSW public schools.

Support is available for all staff and immediate family members through our Employee Assistance Program on 1800 060 650. Look after yourselves and one another and reach out for support if you need it.

Thank you for your ongoing measured, calm leadership and support for your school and wider communities.

Regards

Cathy Brennan

R/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – North

Deb Summerhayes

A/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – South

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- [advice \(DOCX 233 KB\)](#) on what school leaders, teachers and support staff can do to support student wellbeing, address difficult topics and

facilitate communication with families

- [a letter \(DOCX 18 KB\)](#) you can use as a model to communicate with parents and carers about the conflict. This will be available shortly translated into relevant languages.

You are best placed to understand the local context of your school. We encourage you to work in partnership with local communities to promote safety and respect within the school community.

Schools must remain neutral places and present thoughtful, balanced views in response to issues that arise. We need to ensure fairness in how we respond to student behaviours relating to expressions of support for Palestine or Israel.

Please reinforce the message that racism, religious intolerance and political activism have no place in NSW public schools.

Support is available for all staff and immediate family members through our Employee Assistance Program on 1800 060 650. Look after yourselves and one another and reach out for support if you need it.

Thank you for your ongoing measured, calm leadership and support for your school and wider communities.

Regards

Cathy Brennan

R/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – North

Deb Summerhayes

A/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – South

NSW Logo



We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present

as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.



From: [Deputy Secretaries - School Performance](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Responding to planned rallies on Friday
Date: Wednesday, 22 November 2023 11:21:09 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: Principals
CC: DELs, School Performance EDs

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Responding to planned rallies

Dear colleagues

As you know, NSW public schools are neutral places for rational discourse and objective study. Discussion about [controversial issues](#) in schools allows students to explore a range of viewpoints and should not advance the interests of any particular subject and/or group.

We have been advised there may be organised events on Friday 24 November in relation to the conflict in the Middle East.

As the conflict continues to affect students, staff and families across our

schools, we need to maintain our role serving our diverse communities, providing informed, measured and compassionate support.

We know students are passionate about a variety of topics and some may be planning to participate in a demonstration. The department's clear position is that all students who are enrolled at school are expected to attend that school whenever teaching and learning is provided. Any student not in class will be marked absent and unexplained absences will be followed up by the school in line with the attendance and behaviour policies.

Please remind staff that department employees must not participate in such events while on duty, and are not entitled to apply for paid leave to participate in such events.

It is important that all staff balance their role as a government employee with their right to participate in political and community activities in a personal capacity. The [Code of Conduct](#) sets out our clear duty to retain public confidence in public education and ensure the department remains apolitical and professional.

Racism or intolerance have no place in public education. Any reports to the school of threats, intimidation or violence should be taken seriously and acted upon, including referral to police as required.

Please also remember support is available for all staff and their immediate family members through the Employee Assistance Program via **1800 060 650** to help manage both personal and work-related matters.

Thank you for the thoughtful and measured leadership of your school communities and for supporting our students and staff to act according to department policy and procedures.

Regards

Cathy Brennan
R/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – North

Deb Summerhayes
A/Deputy Secretary, School Performance – South

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From: [Murat Dizdar - Secretary](#)
To: [Internal Communication](#)
Subject: Supporting students and families affected by the conflict between Israel and Palestine
Date: Wednesday, 11 October 2023 8:01:06 AM

[View this email in your browser](#)

To: All principals
CC: DELs, School Performance EDs, SPN SSSP All Directors, Learning Improvement Executive, Professional Support Officers, Dep Secs

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Support and resources for our students and families

Dear colleagues

The cultural diversity in our NSW public school communities is something to value and be proud of. Our schools promote respect and understanding, which supports community harmony. With the recent escalation in the Israel and Palestine conflict, I want to share the resources and support available for you and your schools.

Anxiety about the possible implications of the conflict and concern for the safety of relatives may trigger strong emotions and expressions of views

among staff and students who have affected family and friends or links to the region.

Students and staff should be encouraged to continue to focus on their core business of teaching and learning in a supportive learning environment.

Staff should be sensitive to the feelings and reactions of all students and should continue to respond decisively to ensure that no student or staff member suffers from discrimination or harassment. Intolerance and racism have no place in our schools.

In relation to students, principals are encouraged to implement their student wellbeing procedures to monitor and support student wellbeing. Where necessary, students should be referred to school counselling staff.

Support and resources for staff

Please remind your staff they can access support through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) on 1800 060 650 if required.

You should consult with your Director, Educational Leadership if significant problems arise in your school concerning the management of these issues. A notification to the Incident Report and Support Hotline (1800 811 523) may be required.

To help you meet the needs of your students and staff, you can also access:

- [support in times of crisis](#)
- [strengthening harmony and building resilience in school communities: Advice for schools \(PDF 635KB\)](#)
- [countering racism](#)
- [engaging communities](#).

For further advice and support please contact Nell Lynes, Leader, Multicultural Programs on

Please share this information with your staff members and make sure they have the opportunity to discuss the issues involved, if they so wish.

I encourage you to continue to make sure all our students and staff feel safe

and supported within your school community.

Regards

Murat Dizdar

Secretary

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